SEDUCTION & PERSUASION IN BRITISH LITERARY HISTORY

Course Description:

This course is designed to give students a critical methodology with which to interpret a wide range of important works of British literature of the last 1200 years. Our course theme is “Seduction and Persuasion.” Throughout the semester, we will, naturally, be discussing seduction and persuasion in the most familiar and basic senses—for instance, by looking at a series of poems written to lovers—but we will also broaden the scope of those terms to examine desire, drive, longing, and possession on a collective scale as these concepts manifest in a nation’s literature and change over a long period time. In this way, the course will supply a number of critical lenses through which to interrogate selected readings from specific historical and social contexts.

General Course Objectives:

- Students will develop the ability to recognize and identify significant achievements in British literature.
- Students will understand the relevant social, historical, and aesthetic contexts of these literary works.
Students will appreciate the implications of theoretical and critical approaches to such literature.

Students will develop enhanced cultural awareness and analytical skills. Students will demonstrate their command of academic English and of the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose.

Required Text:


(You may also use the 8th edition of this text, but please note that the pagination will be different in this edition, which may make finding and referring to specific passages more difficult. Perform a mental cost-benefit analysis. Searching for passages will take extra time and be a bit of a headache. The 8th ed. may be cheaper. If you’re an English major, you’ll probably want the most recent edition.)

Assignments & Requirements:

READING RESPONSES (25%) - For each class period’s reading assignment, you will find a discussion topic or a specific writing prompt listed on Course Den. These will often be posted in advance, so you can use them to guide your reading and note taking and get ahead; however, **you are required not only to submit your original response as a new thread, but to respond to 2 other submissions (or threads) on a given reading as well, so you must be attentive to these discussions on a weekly basis even if you submit your own initial post in advance of the due date. All new threads must be submitted by midnight on the date listed for each discussion topic in the course schedule. All replies must be posted by the end of the week (midnight Sunday). At that time, the discussions for that week’s readings will close permanently, meaning**
your participation in these discussions cannot be made up for credit if missed. **You may only miss five of these discussions, in part or in total, if you intend to pass the course.**

In these discussion posts, you will be responsible for demonstrating your knowledge of the reading (my video mini-lectures will help with this) and for constructing clear, succinct critical questions or observations **in paragraph form.** Please note that these are **not** reading responses in the sense that you tell me whether or not you liked the reading or agreed with it unless I specifically ask you to do so. I value your opinions, of course, but the point of these short assignments is to practice literary analysis, like that which you will be required to do in your essays, in a low-stakes setting.

Imagine these discussions as the most substantial replacement of class time. Were we meeting face to face, our class meetings would be discussion-centered. You would come in having read and made notes on the assigned literature, and we would discuss it as a class. Online discussions work the same way, and as such, will be graded for completion and averaged together at the end of the course. This means that all **serious engagements** with course readings and other students’ posts will receive full credit. Exceptional responses will receive extra points. Scant submissions that dialogue with the readings only vaguely will receive only partial credit. You will receive no credit for ungenerous responses to your peers. I will drop the lowest of these from the final grade. I will often, but not always, respond to your posts with questions or helpful comments, as I will be participating in these discussions as well, but your scores for these posts will be kept privately in the gradebook. For select weeks, I will post a video or textual recap of our discussions, too. These will help contextualize the conversation we’re having within the theme of the course.

Should these discussions fall flat because you are not keeping up with the reading or taking care to respond thoughtfully in each case, this discussion-based class format will be replaced by graded quizzes, which will surely be less fun.

**MIDTERM (15%)** – This is a short essay focused, take-home exam covering the texts and concepts from the first half of the semester. You will be allowed to use any and all course materials to complete two 2-page essays in response to essay prompts. There will also be a bonus question.

**FINAL EXAM (25%)** – Your final, much like the midterm, will be a writing intensive, take-home exam covering all class readings, discussions, and lectures. While the exam will be cumulative, it will focus more on the materials covered post-midterm than it will the materials covered through the midterm. The bulk of your final exam grade will come from two 3-page essays in response to essay prompts. You will also be asked to
“pitch” two texts for inclusion on the course syllabus in the future and two you’d remove to make way for your suggested inclusions. These pitches should be creative and thoughtful, reflecting careful consideration of the themes addressed in this course; they will be worth five percent of your exam grade.

PAPER PROPOSAL (10%) - Before you begin your final paper, you will submit a 2-page proposal of this work listing both the primary and secondary texts you plan to use, explaining what your argument or thesis will be, and justifying the relevance of your argument to the course theme and to the study of British literature more generally.

FINAL PAPER (25%) – This paper should be a 5 to 6 page thesis driven, original essay on a topic related to the texts and themes of the class and developed as the result of your final paper proposal and my feedback. It should relate clearly and directly to the conversations we’ve been having about the material from class and should not utilize any reading guides, either in print or online (i.e. Shmoop, eNotes, Sparknotes). You’ll need to incorporate at least two secondary sources into your argument, and they must both be scholarly, not popular sources.

GRADING SCALE

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Course Policies:

LATE WORK: All late assignments will be graded down by 1/3 of a grade per day (not class period!). An A paper or final becomes an A- if it is one day late, a B+ if it is two days late, etc. Discussion posts cannot be made up. If you fail to contribute to the conversation before the discussion closes, you have missed your opportunity to participate in the class period that discussion represents.

WRITING CENTER: I highly encourage you to visit the writing center for help on essays (from brainstorming to final revisions) and specific writing issues. Call them to set up an appointment at 678-839-6513, visit them in TLC 1201, or email them at writing@westga.edu.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: One of my goals is to help you approach academic work with confidence in your own perspective. Be secure in your own words, don’t rely too much on others’ ideas, and don’t plagiarize! Give credit when you use other people’s ideas (even when paraphrasing) and always quote when using someone else’s ideas. Changing the order of someone else’s words isn’t paraphrasing; it’s plagiarism. If you have any doubts about whether or not something is plagiarism, ask me ahead of time. Also, make sure you are aware of the English department’s Plagiarism policy: http://www.westga.edu/english/index_267.php.

ACCESSIBILITY: If you require any kind of accommodations in order to succeed in this course, please register at the Accessibility Services Office and let me know within the first two weeks of class. They are at 123 Row Hall, 678-839-6428, http://www.westga.edu/accessibility.

OTHER POLICIES: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

Program Goals:

- Oral and written communication will be characterized by clarity, critical analysis, logic, coherence, persuasion, precision, and rhetorical awareness (Core Curriculum learning outcomes I)
- Cultural and Social Perspectives: Cultural and social perspective will be characterized by cultural awareness and an understanding of the complexity and dynamic nature of social/political/economic systems; human and institutional behavior, values, and belief systems; historical and spatial relationship; and,
flexibility, open-mindedness, and tolerance (Core Curriculum learning outcomes III)

- Aesthetic Perspective: Aesthetic perspective will be characterized by critical appreciation of and ability to make informed aesthetic judgments about the arts of various cultures as media for human expression (Core Curriculum learning outcomes V)
- This course fulfills the Area C.2 requirement in the core for all students.
- Area C (Humanities/Arts) Learning Outcomes: 1. To develop the ability to recognize and identify achievements in literary, fine and performing arts; 2. To have an appreciation of the nature and achievements of the arts and humanities; and 3. To develop the ability to apply, understand, and appreciate the application of aesthetics criteria to "real world circumstances.
- This course fulfills an Area F requirement for English majors (all tracks) in the core.
- This course fulfills one of the core-level language arts requirements for Middle Grades Education majors.
- This course contributes to the program goal of equipping students with a foundation in literary history and the issues surrounding literary study in contemporary culture.
- This course broadens students’ desire and ability to take pleasure in their encounter with literature.

Tentative Course Schedule:

Please note that all readings need to be completed by the date they are listed on the syllabus and will be central to class activities/posts required on that day. All readings are found in your anthology unless otherwise specified.

This reading schedule is subject to change as is necessary for the success of the class. I will never add additional required reading or graded assignments. You will be notified of any changes in class and via Course Den.

Week 1: Introductions (in person)
8/11 – Syllabus Overview and Historical Coverage
Read (in class): Carol Ann Duffy – “Warming Her Pearls”
Week 2: Poems of Seduction, Sincere & Strange (in person)
8/16 – Read: Marlowe, “The Passionate Shepherd to his Love” (499); Shakespeare, Sonnet 130 (550); Donne, “The Flea” (669), “The Canonization” (673), “A Valediction Forbidding Mourning” (679); Marvell, “To His Coy Mistress” (751); Byron, “She Walks in Beauty” (1726); Keats, “Bright Star…” (1895)

Week 3: Chivalry and Decency in the Middle English Period
8/23 – Read: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (pp. 135-160, to FITT iii)
    Discuss: Sir Gawain 1
8/25 – Read: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (pp. 160-188)
    Discuss: Sir Gawain 2
    View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 4: Double Standards (15th & 16th Century Texts)
8/30 – Read: Geoffrey Chaucer, “The Wife of Bath’s Prologue and Tale” (pp. 230-257)
    Discuss: Chaucer
9/1 – Read: Headnote on Edmund Spenser and the Faerie Queene (pp. 399-404); The Faerie Queene, Book 2: Canto 12 (pp. 463-474)
    Discuss: Spenser
    View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 5: Original Seduction & the Seventeenth Century
9/6 – Read: John Milton, Paradise Lost: Book 1 (pp. 801-819)
    Discuss: Satan
9/8 – Read: John Milton, Paradise Lost: Book 9 (pp. 887-911)
    Discuss: Adam & Eve
    View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 6: Modest Proposals in Prose
9/13 – Read: Jonathan Swift, “A Modest Proposal” (pp. 1199-1205)
    Discuss: Swift
9/15 – Read: Mary Wollstonecraft, “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” (pp. 1504-1529)
    Discuss: Wollstonecraft
    View: Mini-lecture on Course Den
Week 7: Romantic Notions
9/20 – Read: William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” and Preface to Lyrical Ballads (pp. 1536-1552)
   Discuss: Wordsworth
9/22 – Read: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Kubla Khan” (1680-81) and all selections from Biographia Literaria (pp. 1708-1720)
   Discuss: Coleridge
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den
   Review: Midterm Exam Instructions & Writing Prompts

Week 8: Temptation and Angst, Or, What the Victorians Were All About
9/27 – Midterm Exam Due (No extensions or exceptions! This policy is to ensure that you have one major graded assignment in addition to your participation in course discussions to consider before the W deadline. As such, there is no reading/discussion assignment for this class period.)
9/29 – Read: Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market” (pp. 2211-2222)
   Discuss: Rossetti
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den (will include next week’s Tennyson)

*9/30 – Last day to Withdraw with a grade of W from Full Term (non-eCore)-16 week courses.

Week 9: Victorians Cont.
10/4 – Read: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “From In Memoriam A.H.H.” (pp. 2044-2088)
   Discuss: Tennyson
10/6 – Fall Break, No Class Requirements

Week 10: Colonial Desire
10/11 – Read: Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (pp. 2404-2429)
10/13 – Read: Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (pp. 2429-2465)
   Discuss: Conrad
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 11: The Seductive Past vs. the Persuasive Present
10/18 – Read: William Butler Yeats, “The Second Coming” (2481-82); W.H. Auden, “September 1, 1939” (2827-29)
   Discuss: Yeats & Auden
   Review: Guidelines for Paper Proposals, Student Examples of Final Papers
10/20 – Read: Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall” and “Modern Fiction” (pp. 2505-2515)
   Discuss: Woolf
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 12: Modern Love?
10/25 – Read: James Joyce, “The Dead” (pp. 2635-2664)
   Discuss: Joyce
10/27 – Read: T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (pp. 2709-2713)
   Discuss: Eliot
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

Week 13: Postmodernism’s Wanting to Believe/Want of Belief
11/1 – Read: Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot, Act 1 (pp. 2763-2793)
11/3 – Read: Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot, Act 2 (pp. 2793-2819)
   Discuss: Beckett
   View: Mini-lecture on Course Den

   Paper Proposals Due

Week 14: Postcolonial Writers: Longing on a Large Scale
11/8 – Read: Chinua Achebe, “Civil Peace” (pp.2862-2867)
   Discuss: Achebe
11/10 – Read: J.M. Coetzee, “From Waiting for the Barbarians” (pp.2909-2922)
   Discuss: Coetzee

Week 15: A Contemporary Example
11/15 – Read: Zadie Smith, “The Waiter’s Wife” (pp. 2950-2960)
   Discuss: Smith
11/17 – Final Paper Due, No Reading or Discussion Assignment

Week 16: TG
11/22 – Thanksgiving Break, No Class Requirements
11/24 – Thanksgiving Break, No Class Requirements

Week 17:
11/29 – Review: Final Exam Instructions & Writing Prompts
12/1 – Final Exam Due