Individual Authors: William Blake

"Read patiently take not up this book in an idle hour the consideration of these things is the entire duty of man and the affairs of life and death trifles sports of time But these considerations business of Eternity"

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Course Description: "I must Create a system or be Enslav'd by another man's," asserts William Blake in an extravagant assertion of individual freedom and protest against cultural oppression. As revolutionary, Blake's poetry engages the reader in defiant rejection of the forces of political, cultural, and sexual oppression. Yet, Blake's visionary writings assert that full liberation must include regeneration of "the doors of perception," and study of his work encompasses philosophy, psychology, theology as well as cultural critique. Blake’s works offer a panorama of virtually all of the sometimes contradictory traits we label as "Romantic," from philosophical and theological revolution (All Religions Are One, Everlasting Gospel) to revolutionary political vision (The French Revolution, America) to radical critique of economic and cultural oppression, especially restrictions on sexuality (Songs of Innocence and Experience, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell) to visionary prophecy (Europe, Urizen, Los, Milton). A powerful influence on radical and visionary art, Blake speaks through the music of such Romantic artists as Van Morrison and U2; he inspired the 1995 Jim Jarmusch film Dead Man where Johnny Depp plays an accountant named William Blake who journeys west to a town called Machine but instead finds Native-American spirituality a liberating force. In this course, we will share an intensive study of Blake's poetry and visual art (using an impressive Web archive) as we study his texts in relation to his revolutionary context as well as contemporary revisions of Blake in music and film, seeking the connection Blake makes between "revolution" and "revelation."

Required Texts:
Selected critical materials on courseden
Online: Blake: The Digital Text Project (link from my web page)

University Policies: Please review each semester.
http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf
**Departmental Course Objectives**

- Students will demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the career of a major figure in literature.
- Students will demonstrate an in-depth understanding of how that writer's work both embodies the literary tradition that precedes it and influences the literature that follows it.
- Students will demonstrate an in-depth appreciation for the ways in which a writer's career and reputation are influenced by social, political, historical, and cultural forces.
- Students will gain an enhanced knowledge of how criticism shapes literary history.
- Students will show comprehension and an application of theoretical and critical foundations for the interpretation of literature of the period through an annotated bibliography and/or oral presentation of 10-12 secondary sources.
- Students will reveal in both oral and written work a discipline-specific critical facility through convincing and well-supported analysis of course-related material.
- Students will display their command of academic English and of the tenets of sound composition by means of thesis-driven analytical prose, including at least 12-15 pages of research-based writing.
- Students will be capable of conducting independent and meaningful course-related research and of synthesizing it in the form of a correctly documented research paper prepared according to current professional standards.

**Specific Course Objectives:**

1. Students will read select poetry from the works of William Blake, from the lyrics to the prophetic books, learning important skills for sustained single-author study, and be able to discuss these texts critically and analytically.
2. Students will read excerpts from the historical, cultural, and literary contexts of Blake in order to consider his work within the contexts in which he wrote, particularly the age of Revolution and democratic liberation, the clashes between Enlightenment rationalism and visionary spirituality, and debates concerning gender and sexuality.
3. Students will read varying critical perspectives on these texts, gaining the ability to characterize strengths and weaknesses for different critical approaches to literature.
4. Specifically, for Blake, students will understand the parameters of the debates concerning mythological versus political readings of the poem as well as current debates in feminist scholarship on Blake.
5. Students will consider the influence of Blake upon literature and art and study contemporary exploration of Blake in modern music and film.
6. Students will demonstrate the synthesis of materials through brief, focused response essays, a researched paper, and through midterm and final exams.
7. Students will demonstrate the ability to write a competent researched paper in accordance with up to date professional style (MLA documentation).

**Course Requirements:**
1. Active participation in class discussion. To ensure this, students will bring to class each day a response to the reading questions or to the assigned reading--whether a series of questions, an opinion, a need for clarification, or a comparison, the response must come from authentic intellectual curiosity and a careful reading of the text.
2. Attendance: an obvious parallel to the idea of active participation, attendance is mandatory in a course like this. Intensive, focused study of a progressive body of work requires that you be a part of all discussion. More than 2 absences will severely affect your grade.
3. Brief response essays: 3-4 page essays which are analytical and text-driven.
4. Midterm and final exams
5. Documented paper, 8-10 pp. undergraduate, 12-15 pp. graduate, on a tightly focused subject chosen in consultation with me
6. Oral Presentation

**Plagiarism Policy:** The Department of English and Philosophy defines plagiarism as taking personal credit for the words and ideas of others as they are presented in electronic, print, and verbal sources. The Department expects that students will accurately credit sources in all assignments. An equally dishonest practice is fabricating sources or facts; it is another form of misrepresenting the truth. Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course; in all cases, any paper with any plagiarism will receive a ZERO. Students will be reported to the appropriate university officials.

**Grades:**
- Participation/responses 10% (attendance, assigned responses, oral presentation / discussion)
- Response essays 30%
- Mid-term exam 20%
- Final exam 20%
- Research paper 20%

**M 26** Introduction to the study of Blake / introduction to the course
**W 28** Overview of philosophical/historical context / "Mock on Mock on Voltaire Rousseau," All Religions Are One, There Is No Natural Religion / Paolazzi sculpture of Newton

M 2 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

W 4 Songs of Innocence and Experience (we will read all, but specific titles announced for each session; also for each session, students are responsible for reviewing the Blake Digital Text Project)

M 9 Songs

W Songs

M 16 Songs
W 18 The Book of Thel
M 23 Finish Thel / assign essay #1
W 25 OUT OF TOWN CONFERENCE

M 30 The Marriage of Heaven and Hell / ESSAY 1 DUE
W 2 MHH cont’d / excerpts from Milton, Paradise Lost 1,3/ assign work on Auguries of Innocence

M 7 Workshop on Notebook poems: “How Sweet I Roamed,” “The Crystal Cabinet,” Auguries of Innocence
W 9 MIDTERM EXAM

M 14 The contexts of revolution: Readings from Price, Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft
W 16 America / Morrison “Let The Slave / excerpt from Night II The Four Zoas “What is the price of Experience

OCT 18 DEADLINE TO WITHDRAW WITH A GRADE OF W

M 21 Finish America
W 23 The contexts of gender: Wollstonecraft, from A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

M 28 Visions of the Daughters of Albion
W 30 Visions / Essay #2 workshop

M 4 The Book of Urizen / essay 2 due
W 6 Modern and Contemporary Blake: Yeats, Terence Malick, / assign research paper

M 11 Dead Man
W 13 Dead Man

M 18 Research Paper workshop / bring abstract, bibliography, and draft so far/ sources workshop
W 20

M 25, W 27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

M 2 Preparation for Final / assign take-home portion of final, a contemporary example of a Blakean theme
W 4 Student Conferences

ONE LAW FOR THE LION AND THE OX IS OPPRESSION

Final Exam: