

ENGL 3210-002 and -350 (Hons) British Literature to 1750

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British Literature to 1750

Students will gain a broad overview of British literature and its cultural contexts from its beginnings in early Britain up to the middle of the eighteenth century. The class will ask the following questions of a variety of British literary texts and their original audiences: What do *we* consider literature? What did *they* consider literature? Why were certain forms, themes, and plots popular, and how can we learn to appreciate them from a modern perspective? How does a text become “timeless”?

Our special focus will be on how writers position themselves and their writing by imitating or rejecting literary models; in the process we will see a variety of literary traditions and forms, from early English mysticism to Elizabethan sonnet cycles to 18th century satire. Historical context will help us to study how writers respond to, articulate, and even generate political, social, religious, and intellectual change.

From poetry to drama to prose, in an amazing range of genres and intellectual positions, over a grand sweep of time, the works on our syllabus have proven to be of lasting interest and influence for modern thought. Hoping to whet your appetite for more, the course offers just a taste of what is exciting about British literature.