
CONTENT: This course will focus on English Romantic poetry. The Romantic Movement itself—in all of the arts—was a broad one, dramatically affecting most of Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; the English Romantic poets in particular reacted against the legacy of the Enlightenment and determined to a great extent the specific directions of Twentieth Century American poetry, as well as the direction of American literature in general. Through representative poems you will become familiar with four of the period’s most influential writers: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Keats. We will begin with a quick look at Blake during our initial attempts to characterize the Romantic tradition. We will spend a bit longer on Wordsworth because his poems and his poetic career so clearly exemplify the Romantic themes the course is designed to examine.

This class will combine lecture, discussion, and group work. You will be assigned a number of poems by each writer and will be expected to have read these poems carefully and thoughtfully prior to each class. Your primary jobs this term will be, through the reading, writing, and class activities, to become demonstrably familiar with the intellectual and artistic issues of Romanticism, to develop some basic broader context of literary history, and to develop your own ability to comprehend poems in general as well as those of the Romantics in particular.

READING ASSIGNMENTS: I am providing no specific calendar of reading assignments; instead, I will make reading assignments in class as we go from day to day. You need to complete this reading prior to class, and with some degree of aesthetic attention. If you miss a class session, you are responsible for finding out what the next day’s reading assignment is. Get to know others in the class who can give you a reliable summary of what went on in class during the day you missed.

MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS: A series of 5 one-page, single-spaced response papers (500 pts.); a 30-minute group presentation on one of the major poets and a central poem (100 pts); and a final exam (take-home, 100 pts). TOTAL=700 pts.

GROUP PRESENTATIONS: Once we get the groups established and the presentations assigned, I’ll give you guidelines for the presentations.

RESPONSE PAPERS: I’ll ask for five one-page response papers during the term, one on each of the four major poets we study. I’ll assign the due date for each as the course progresses. The fourth response, a retrospective, will be due at the end of the tenth week. I will discuss these response papers in greater detail soon and give you some more specific guidance, but for the time being think of them as informal writing-for-learning explorations.

FINAL GRADE: The grade will be based pretty much on a percentage of the total points for the class: 92% or above for an A, 88%-91% for an AB, 82%–87% for a B, 78%-81% for a BC, 70%-77% for a C, etc.

ATTENDANCE: I expect you to be in class with your personal copy of the text and well-prepared all of the time. I will take attendance regularly. Anything beyond two absences (unless they are officially University-excused) will reduce your final grade by 15 points per miss. You are always responsible for missed work and assignments.

COLLABORATION: A good deal of the work in this class will stress collaboration, i.e., working together to formulate conclusions. I will do what I can to guard against some of the most obvious abuses of collaborative assignments, but I will need your help in keeping me informed if someone in your group is shirking his/her responsibilities. Nevertheless, such an approach can create the potential for unfair distribution of work load. If you are not comfortable with such an emphasis and my measures for trying to prevent collaboration’s potential abuses, this may not be the class for you. Enough said?

NOTE: MTU’s Affirmative Action Officer has asked that all faculty include the following statement on each course syllabus:

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disability Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, (2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action Office (3310).