

Guidelines for 1210/1310 Introduction to British/American Literature

Course Description (from Undergraduate Catalog):

A basic introduction to the concepts, terms, and practices commonly encountered in literary study, presented by way of texts from the history of British/American literature that appropriately demonstrate such concepts, terms, and practices. This course is recommended for prospective English majors.

1. Historical Breadth. A major goal for the course is to improve students' ability to discuss texts historically, situating texts within literary and/or cultural frameworks. To that end, the course should stress active and careful reading across a range of literary texts from each of the following periods:

1210 (British):	pre-1600	1600-1800	1800-1900	1900-present
1310 (Amer.):	pre-1800	1800-1865	1865-1920	1920-present

To provide significant reading opportunities in a given period, a minimum of two weeks of assignments should generally be devoted to each category. It is expected that readings will be assigned for each class period across the entire term.

2. Generic Breadth. The course should introduce the major forms of literary expression--drama, poetry, fiction and non-fiction. Again, it is expected that each genre will have multiple class periods devoted to it.
3. Introduction to Methods and Concepts. The course should offer tools for interpretation, including beginning critical and interpretative vocabulary (e.g. metaphor, meter, plot). (A recommended list of adoptable critical terms is available from the Literature Coordinator.)
4. Evaluation. A variety of instruments (papers, exams, etc.) should be used to assess student performance. In general, students should be evaluated on their acquired skills in interpretation and in making critical arguments as well as on their mastery of content knowledge. Students might demonstrate their skills in interpretation and argumentation through, for example, short papers or more informally through on-line or in-class discussions. Content knowledge might be assessed through, for example, identification quizzes or fact-based writing tasks. For sections taught in the usual format (i.e. with c. 30 students), the grading schema should follow these principles:
 - a. Between 40% and 60% of the course grade should be based on instruments that assess students' skills in interpretation and argumentation.
 - b. Between 40% and 60% of the course grade should be based on instruments that assess students' mastery of content knowledge.

Of course, many instruments will assess both skills and knowledge. An exam, for example, might test content knowledge with short-answer or identification questions but also test interpretative skills through essay questions. A writing assignment that has students analyze a given text will likely also have them demonstrate their familiarity with terms and concepts introduced in class. Instructors should keep such cases in mind as they design their syllabi.

5. Limits on Weight of Individual Assignments.
 - a. Assignments that demand formal writing are appropriate, but no single writing assignment (e.g. the traditional term paper) should count for more than 15% of the course grade.
 - b. No single oral presentation should count for more than 15% of the course grade. If the presentation is based on a writing assignment, the presentation and the paper together should total no more than 15% of the course grade.
 - c. It is expected that instructors will offer final exams, whether take-home or in-class assessments. Individual exams may count for up to 25% of the course grade.

6. Recommended Texts. The use of an anthology or a judicious selection of individual texts is appropriate for this course. Adopting a handbook of literary terms is also highly recommended. (A list of such handbooks is available from the Literature Coordinator.) Significant reliance on additional readings collected by the instructor in coursepacks or through library reserves is discouraged. It is recommended that instructors limit themselves to a maximum of six textbooks and that the combined cost of those texts not exceed \$100.

7. Teaching Evaluations. Instructors are encouraged to seek feedback from students around the halfway point of the semester using the MoCAT program or some other instrument (see the Literature Coordinator for advice). Instructors are required to have students complete course evaluations at the end of the semester using the electronically readable forms (versions A-2, B-2, C-2, or D-2), as well as the Department's narrative forms.