

Intro to British and American Literature Syllabus & Guidelines

Professor Eric Taylor Peking University, Summer 2024

eric.k.taylor@pku.edu.cn

WeChat:



Class Time & Location

Mon-Thurs **Section 1:** 8:00–9:50 AM **Science Teaching Building, Room 317**
Section 2: 10:10 AM –12:00 noon

Meeting Outside of Class

If you need extra help, I'm happy to meet with you. I want to help you succeed in this course. I'm available most weekday afternoons. I don't usually make weekend appointments (except for personal things like badminton, table tennis, game nights, hot pot, etc.), but I may make an exception if you really need it.

If you want to chat over lunch, even if you don't need to talk about the class, I'm also happy to meet. Especially for those of you who are shy, meeting in a less formal context may be more comfortable.

Course Overview

This *reading intensive* class examines novels and other readings that touch on elements foundational to understanding British and American experience over time. Each fictional book chosen for this class glimpses different periods of history and culture. Because we're covering a whole semester in only four weeks, you'll have roughly four hours of reading a day (or possibly more if you are a very slow reader). This reading will need to happen on Fridays and Saturdays as well.

Classes will combine:

- some lecture on the background of these books and important historical and social issues.
- small group discussion on key issues
- whole class discussion
- reading and discussion of poems from these different periods.

Classroom Policies

Language In the Classroom

Chinese is NOT allowed in the classroom (not even to help a friend who is having trouble understanding). Using Chinese in the classroom will drop your class participation score.

Laptops, Tablets, & Cell Phones

You may NOT use laptops, tablets, and cell phones in class. Please take notes on paper. (The research says you learn more this way, and it also says that these devices in class potentially hurt not only your own learning but also the learning of those around you.)

Snacks

Snacks are fine during class as long as you don't distract others or leave a mess.

Attendance and Lateness

Absences: You can't learn from the class if you aren't there. You're allowed one absence without penalty. After that, your grade would drop by one increment (A → A- A- → B+ etc.) for each absence. Five absences results in course failure based on PKU policy.

If you must miss a class, please message me directly rather than messaging the whole class.

If you have an emergency, and you would like your absence to not count as an absence: Watch the recorded class. After you watch it, send me a follow-up email to tell me what parts of the class were most useful/interesting to you and what questions you have. If we discussed certain questions in class, react to those questions. If you don't respond to the recorded class with detail, I have no way of knowing that you watched it. **This is not a substitute for coming to class regularly; this is only a provision for illness or family emergency.**

Lateness: If you're late, you miss introductory material and interrupt other students. If you must be late, come in quietly and don't interrupt the class with an apology. Every three late arrivals counts as one absence.

Academic Honesty

Intentionally submitting someone else's work as your own will have serious consequences.

Submitting work written by Chat GPT or other AI software is a form of academic dishonesty because it is NOT your own work. Work written by ChatGPT/AI will get a zero, Work taken from a website or other published source will also get a zero. Submitting work that isn't your own is grounds for failing the course.

Can I use translation software to write my reading logs?

It makes sense to use translation software here and there to translate a word you don't know. That's fine. It can help you learn new words.

But if you write your assignments in Chinese and use translation software to translate them to English, you aren't really improving your English, and I won't know how to help you because this will hide your struggles.

Grading

Overview

20% participation in class discussions (~300)

40% daily reading response logs (~600 pts)

40% quizzes on readings (~ 600 pts)

Extra credit: Earn extra credit by reading and responding to an extra book. (100 pts.)

This class won't have a final exam.

Detail

Quizzes: 40%: This is an opportunity to show that you've read the books carefully and thoroughly. Quizzes can include any detail from the most recent reading.

Daily reading responses: 40%: Respond to each day's reading using the "Reading Response form" in Canvas. This is NOT a summary of the reading but your response to the ideas in the book and your questions about what you read.

- What ideas in the reading
 - did you find most interesting?
 - do you have questions about?
 - bothered you?
 - are worth discussing further?
- What language was difficult, confusing, or new?

I grade reading responses based on the ideas and thoughtfulness, NOT on spelling or grammar.

Do NOT include summary or long quotes in your response. It's okay to quote a sentence that you want to respond to in detail, but I know the books well, so a quick reference to the idea of the text is enough for me to know what you're talking about.

When the reading response form asks you for ideas to discuss, do NOT go to some website for discussion ideas. I'm not interested in "deep" questions that aren't yours. Think of this as having the chance to talk with me and tell me what you find interesting or to ask me about what you don't understand. I give the highest grades to questions that make me want to talk with you about the ideas, not for "impressive" questions.

Submit all responses in canvas. Because we'll discuss the books in class, I don't accept late reading responses.

Class participation: 20%: Asking questions and participating in class helps your grade.

Extra credit: Talk to the professor about what book(s) are acceptable. Read the book and respond with a longer reading log. (Since this is 4x the credit for a daily reading log, your response should be about 4x the normal reading log length.) The amount of extra credit you get depends on how thorough and thoughtful your response are. You may do up to two extra credit books.

Book List

Book	Author	Historical Era	Social Issues & themes
<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i>	Elizabeth George Speare	American Colonial Era	Puritan roots (reflects ideas important in both American and English history). Religious freedom, intolerance & persecution.
<i>Johnny Tremain</i>	Esther Forbes	American revolution and separation from Britain	self-perception and hopes; some reflections of America as a land with rich/poor distinctions, yet also with opportunity
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Charles Dickens	Victorian England	Struggles of the rich and poor
<i>The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>	C.S. Lewis	Backdrop of WW2 in England	Fantasy writing has become central in both British and American life. This British book was one of the front-runners in that genre.
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee	American South, depression era, 20 th century	Racial tensions, morality and conscience, social class and status

This class explores these novels both as literature and as reflections of different periods and issues that have shaped American and British history and culture.

A key goal of this course is to expose you to contemporary English use, so this course intentionally avoids most classic works that don't reflect fairly contemporary ways of saying things.

We could have looked at more difficult works, but this class intentionally chooses slightly easier material so we can cover a larger volume of reading. Quantity of reading helps increase vocabulary, internalize grammatic rules, and expose you to standard native ways of expressing things.

We will read the books as homework, write daily responses to each day's reading, and spend class time discussing the story, the language, and cultural issues behind the story. This class includes some lecture but also class discussion, small group discussion, and very brief presentations.

Tentative Reading Schedule

Book	Chapters	Submit Reading Response in Canvas BEFORE class on	points
<i>Class Syllabus</i>	All	July 2	25
<i>The Witch of Blackbird Pond</i>	1-3		25
	4-8	July 3	25
	9-15	July 4	25
	16-21	July 8	25
<i>Johnny Tremain</i>	1-8		50
	9-12	July 9	25
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	1	July 10	25
	2	July 11	25
	3-5	July 15	75
<i>The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe</i>	1-5	July 16	25
	6-11	July 17	25
	12-17	July 18	25
<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	1-13	July 22	100
	14-21	July 23	25
	22-26	July 24	25
	27-31	July 25	25