

**Masterpieces of British Literature:  
Audiences and Actors**  
College of the Holy Cross, Spring 2001  
T/TH 8:00-9:15 am, Smith 201

Instructor: Paige Reynolds  
Office Hours: Fenwick 230, T 9:30-10:30 or by appointment  
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**Texts:** Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-)  
Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer's Night Dream* (1600)  
Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest* (1611, 1623)  
\*Pepys, Samuel. *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (1660-1665)  
\*Burney, Fanny. *Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (1791-1840)  
Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789, 1794)  
Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park* (1814)  
Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights* (1847)  
\*Browning, Robert. *Selected Poems* (1842-1855)  
\* Eliot, T. S. *Selected Poems* (1917-1942)  
Joyce, James. *Dubliners* (1914)  
Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts* (1941)  
\*Osborne, John. *The Entertainer* (1957)  
McCabe, Patrick. *Breakfast on Pluto* (1998)  
Hacker, Diane. *Writer's Reference*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bedford)

\*handouts provided in class

**Course Objectives:** How does the audience for a “masterpiece” – the readers, the listeners, the viewers – shape the form and content of that literary work? Does it matter that Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* are imagined as stories told by pilgrims to their fellow pilgrims? Why does Shakespeare place a play within his play *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*? Are the diaries of the eighteenth-century writers Samuel Pepys and Fanny Burney really private and for no audience at all? In Joyce’s *Dubliners* and Woolf’s *Between the Acts*, do the characters regard “real life” as a site where they are “actors” performing a “role” for their “audiences” of family, friends, and fellow citizens? How does our own membership in the audience affect our understanding of a play like Osborne’s *The Entertainer* or the film of Austen’s *Mansfield Park*? To begin to explore questions like these, we will read a variety of British “masterpieces” from different time periods and different genres. Through a combination of lecture and discussion, we will delve into not only the texts themselves, but also their cultural and historical contexts. We’ll also work to hone your writing skills, focusing in particular on learning to build, support, and sustain an argument in written analysis.

**Coursework:**

**Class participation (10%):** Come to class having read the material closely and be prepared to participate actively in discussion. The rapid pace of the class lets us discover all kinds of authorial voices -- but that means you must keep up with all of the reading and attend all the class meetings – poised, even as they are, near sunrise. Unexcused absences jeopardize your grade; more than four absences mean you likely will not pass the course. No kidding.

**Reading Quizzes (20%):** Each week, I will give you one reading quiz to make certain you’re reading closely. If you miss a class when I collect these, you will receive a zero for that particular quiz; however, I will drop at least one of these grades before determining your final cumulative grade.

**Critical Papers (10%, 20%):** You will be required to write two short papers. The first (2-3 pgs) will be a close analysis of a short textual passage. The second will be a longer critical paper (5-7 pgs). We will discuss further the expectations for the each paper in class prior to the due date.

**Theatre Review (10%):** You will write a short review of *The Tempest* staged at Fenwick Theatre 4/11-13 and 4/18-20. Again, we will discuss the standards for the review prior to the due date.

**Final Exam (30%):** This cumulative final exam will have two components – an identification section and a longer essay question.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** For these written assignments, I will expect your paper to be in proper MLA form. These papers will be typed, double spaced, stylistically and grammatically correct.

**Basic Ground Rules:**

- Plan to meet with me during office hours at least once this semester. Also, please feel free to talk with me about reading or writing during office hours.
- Be prepared for a few changes in the syllabus, if we see that class needs demand those changes.
- Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, see Hacker 82-85 or ask me questions.
- Late papers are penalized 1/3 of a grade for each date they are late, including weekends. So Friday's A- is Monday's B-.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

T 1/15 Introduction

R 1/17 Chaucer, *Prologue* (pgs. 3-26); *Miller's Tale* (pgs. 86-106)

T 1/22 Chaucer, *Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale* (pgs. 258-292)

R 1/24 Shakespeare, *Midsummer* (Acts I-III)

T 1/29 Shakespeare, *Midsummer* (Acts IV-V)

R 1/31 Shakespeare, *Tempest* (Acts I-II)

T 2/5 Shakespeare, *Tempest* (Acts III-epilogue)

R 2/7 Shakespeare, *Tempest*

**F 2/8 Paper 1 Due**

T 2/12 Pepys, Burney diaries (handouts)

R 2/14 Blake, *Innocence and Experience* (Innocence)

T 2/19 Blake, *Innocence and Experience* (Experience)

R 2/21 Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Volume 1)

T 2/26 Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Volume 2)

R 2/28 Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Volume 3)

**M 3/4- F 3/8 Spring Break!**

T 3/12 Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (chs. 1-11)

R 3/14 Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (chs. 12-18)

T 3/19 Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (chs. 19-end)

R 3/21 Browning, Eliot

T 3/26 Joyce, *Dubliners* (“Sisters”–“Boarding House”)

**R 4/28 – M 4/1 Easter Recess!**

T 4/2 Joyce, *Dubliners* (“Little Cloud”–“Grace”)

R 4/4 Joyce, *Dubliners* (“The Dead”)

**4/5 Paper 2 Due**

T 4/9 Woolf, *Between the Acts* (pgs. 3-76)

R 4/11 Woolf, *Between the Acts* (pgs. 76-173)

T 4/16 Woolf, *Between the Acts* (pgs. 173 – end)

R 4/18 Osborne, *Entertainer*

T 4/23 McCabe, *Breakfast* (pgs. 1-116)

R 4/25 McCabe, *Breakfast* (pgs. 117-end)  
**Tempest Review Due**

**T 4/30 Study Period**

**M 5/6 Final Exam**