English 252. Survey of British Literature II

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Date of departmental approval: The course has been on the books for decades. It was approved by the department for Perspectives RL on October 27, 2010.

Catalog description: A historical study of the diversity of British literature from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century, encompassing a range of writing by women and men from various cultural, ethnic, and popular traditions.

Added description: English 252 engages students in the careful reading of representative literary works written by important figures in British literary tradition during the Neoclassical, Romantic, Victorian, and early Modernist periods. Students examine the ways in which literary texts and authors respond to each other within a changing historical and cultural context. In considering a variety of works written by women and men from different British religious, social, and political traditions, students learn to recognize and appreciate the cultural and aesthetic diversity of British literature.

**Justification**

252 is one of five surveys, with 251, 253, 254, and 255, that cover British and American literature from their beginnings to the twentieth century, as well as global literatures in English; they have been required of English majors for many years and have also been open, and accessible, to non-majors. 251, 253, and 255 have already been approved as RL courses, and 254 is also being submitted this semester (Fall 2010).

The following statement will appear on all the syllabi of all sections of the course, as it will on all sections of RL courses in English. "English xxx fulfills the Perspectives (PLAS) requirement in the area of Reading Literature. Students will become familiar with the disciplinary norms associated with literary reading. They will learn to pay close attention to language and be familiar with the reasons for the writer’s particular choice of language. They will learn how the writer uses the techniques and elements of literature and the particular resources of genre to create meaning.  They will learn how texts differ from one another and how they interact with the larger society and its historical changes.”

More particularly, 252 gives students the chance to read closely important literary works within the large context of cultural, aesthetic, and historical developments in England from the time of the English Civil War to about World War I. Within the liberal arts, the course helps students understand the contribution of the literary imagination and the value of literary study. The perspective of the course is both panoramic, enabling students to study change and the different ways in which human experience and human values have been constructed, represented, and communicated over a large period of time, and close-up, helping students enlarge their reading abilities through the critical analysis of literary texts from a variety of historical and cultural settings and the comparison of those texts. Students learn that the asking and answering of questions in the study of literature requires both textual and contextual considerations: the careful observation of the stylistic and thematic patterns and details of the literary work itself and the study of the relations of the work with other works and with the larger society and its changes. The emphasis throughout the course is on the process of developing knowledge through provisional and revisable interpretations grounded in textual evidence that supports inferences and conclusions. The course uses primary documents, the literary texts themselves, and, through discussion and papers, engages the students in active inquiry.

252, like the already approved 251, is proposed as a European Traditions course. In its voyage through the Neoclassical, Romantic, Victorian, and Modernist periods, 252 gives students an understanding of the most influential literary and cultural traditions in Western Europe from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.

**Course Materials, Assignments, and Activities**

The course is offered in many sections, and instructors will choose their own texts and assignments and organize the course as they see fit. All sections will include texts from the Neoclassical, Romantic, Victorian, and early Modernist periods. See the sample syllabus below. Class sections will include discussion and informal writing exercises designed to stimulate discussion. Students will have an opportunity to improve their written language skills by producing essays and receiving detailed written feedback. All sections will include instruction in specific writing issues, including organization, documentation, and integrating quotations. Exams will include essay questions.

**Assessment**

Assessment will be conducted as part of the department's ongoing assessment program, overseen by the Curriculum Committee. This committee will routinely collect syllabi form all Perspectives courses and evaluate whether those courses fulfill the designated learning goals of the General Education program.

**Administration**

The administration and assessment of the Perspectives English courses will be led by the Chair or her designee, most likely either the chair of the Curriculum Committee or the Director of Undergraduate Studies (Associate Chair). The Chair or her designee will collect syllabi to make sure that the Perspectives criteria are being fulfilled and to maintain a file that other instructors can consult. The Chair or her designee will meet with part-timers assigned to Perspectives courses in advance of their teaching the courses to make sure they understand the Perspectives criteria and to offer help in developing syllabi. Any changes in the course, like curriculum changes in general, would be proposed by the Curriculum Committee and voted on by the Department.