

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & APPLIED LINGUISTICS, UST, BANNU

BS ENGLISH (LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE)-SEMESTER-III

Course Title: History of English Literature-I (670-1798)
Credit Hours: 03
Course Code: ENG-536

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

One of the objectives of this course is to inform the readers about the influence of historical and socio-cultural events on literature. Although the scope of the course is quite expansive, the readers shall focus on early 14th to 19th century literature written during Romantic Movement. Histories of literature written by some British literary historians will be consulted to form some socio-cultural and political cross connections. In its broader spectrum, the course covers a reference to the multiple factors from economic theories to religious, philosophical and metaphysical debates that overlap in these literary works of diverse nature and time periods under multiple contexts. The reading of literature in this way i.e. within socio-cultural context will help the readers become aware of the fact that literary works are basically a referential product of the practice that goes back to continuous interdisciplinary interaction.

COURSE CONTENTS:

THE BRITONS AND THE ANGLO-SAXONS (670-1066)

- **Language:** Old English was the dominant language, with its roots in Germanic tribes.
- **Literature:** Focus on epic poetry, such as "Beowulf," which reflects the culture, values, and beliefs of the time.
- **Themes:** Heroism, loyalty, and the struggle between good and evil.
- **Important Figures:** Study key works and authors, including anonymous poets and early Christian influences.

ANGLO-NORMAN INVASION (1066-1340)

- **Language:** Transition from Old English to Middle English; French influence is significant due to Norman rule.
- **Literature:** Emergence of romance literature, courtly love, and chivalric tales.
- **Cycles:** Explore the French (Arthurian legends), Roman (classical influences), and British (Celtic myths) cycles.
- **Important Figures:** Writers like Geoffrey of Monmouth and the development of early chronicles.

EARLY MIDDLE PERIOD: TRANSITION PERIOD/ CHAUCERIAN AGE (1340-1500)

- **Language:** Middle English becomes more standardized.
- **Literature:** Dominated by the clergy and elite; religious texts, morality plays, and allegories are prominent.
- **Availability:** Literature was costly and limited due to the lack of paper; manuscripts were rare and valuable.
- **Important Figures:** Study Geoffrey Chaucer and his "Canterbury Tales," which began to reflect a broader spectrum of society.
- **Themes:** Religious devotion, social hierarchy, and the beginnings of humanism.

POST-CHAUCER PERIOD (15TH CENTURY)

- **Scottish and English Chaucerians:** Focus on poets who were influenced by Chaucer's style, such as Robert Henryson and John Lydgate. They continued his legacy but often lacked his innovation.
- **Caxton's Printing Press:** Study the impact of William Caxton's printing press, which revolutionized the distribution of literature, making texts more accessible and standardizing the English language.
- **Key Figures:** Explore the works of Thomas More, particularly "Utopia," and Thomas Malory's "Le Morte d'Arthur," which contributed to the development of prose fiction.
- **Literary Climate:** Understand that this was largely a transitional period with few groundbreaking works, often considered a "dark period" in English literature.
- **Origins of Ballads and Drama:** Examine the rise of the ballad form and the early stages of English drama, which began to move away from religious themes.
- **Mystery, Miracle, and Morality Plays:** Study how religious plays evolved, with mystery and miracle plays transitioning into more secular morality plays, setting the stage for later dramatic developments.

RENAISSANCE (1500-1660)

1. Early Renaissance (1500-1558)

- **Sonnets and Blank Verse:** Development of the English sonnet, particularly the works of Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, who introduced blank verse.
- **Themes:** Focus on themes of humanism, exploration, and the rediscovery of classical antiquity.

2. Elizabethan Age (1558-1603)

- **Golden Age of Drama:** The development of drama, shaped by the "University Wits" and Christopher Marlowe's influence, laid the foundation for Shakespeare and other iconic playwrights.
- **Poetry:** Exploring poets like Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sidney.
- **Prose:** Examine Richard Hooker's contributions to English prose, particularly in religious and political writing.

3. Jacobean Period (1603-1625)

- **Jacobean Drama:** Focus on the darker, more cynical themes in drama during this period, including the works of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and their contemporaries.
- **Comedy:** Study the different types of comedy, including Jonson's "comedy of humour."
- **Essays:** Read Francis Bacon's essays, which are foundational to English prose and philosophical writing.

4. Caroline Period (1625-1649)

- **Historical Context:** Understand the impact of the Civil War and the rise of Puritanism on literature.
- **Poetry:** Three dominant schools of poetry; Spenserians, Metaphysical poets (like John Donne), and Cavalier poets (like Robert Herrick).
- **Prose:** Investigate how prose writers addressed the political and religious turmoil of the time.

5. The Interregnum (1649-1660)

- **Historical Context:** Focus on the rise of Oliver Cromwell, the impact of Puritanism, and the resulting censorship of literature.
- **Significance of Milton:** religious and political works by John Milton.
- **Prose Writers:** Examine prose writers who navigated the challenges of censorship and the changing political landscape (Thomas Hobbes, Robert Burton and Sir Thomas Browne)

AGE OF RESTORATION (1660-1700)

- **John Dryden:** Focus on Dryden's contributions, including his influence on literary criticism and his works like "Absalom and Achitophel."
- **Historical Context:** Study the political and social backdrop, including the rise of the Whigs and Tories, the Great Fire of London, the plague, and the Popish Plot, which influenced literature of the time.
- **Rise of Neoclassicism:** Understand the emergence of neoclassicism, characterized by a return to classical ideals of order, harmony, and restraint in literature.
- **Origin of the Novel:** Explore the beginnings of the English novel, which started to take shape during this period, setting the stage for later development.
- **Comedy of Manners and Heroic Plays:** Study the rise of the "comedy of manners," which satirized the social customs of the upper class, and the prominence of heroic plays that emphasized grand themes and noble characters.
- **Satire:** Note the increasing use of satire in literature, often aimed at political and social issues, with writers like Dryden and others leading the way.

18TH CENTURY (1700-1798)

This century is divided into two key periods:

1. Age of Alexander Pope or Augustan Age (1700-1744)

- **Alexander Pope:** Focus on Pope's development of satire, particularly in works like "The Rape of the Lock" and "The Dunciad." His writing is marked by wit, classical references, and polished verse.
- **Prose and Satire:** Study the prose of this period, which often took the form of satire, critiquing society and politics.
- **Ban on Dramas:** Understand the significance of the Licensing Act of 1737, which imposed restrictions on drama, leading to a decline in theatrical productions.
- **Schools of Poetry:** Explore the two prominent schools of poetry:
- **Graveyard School:** Poets who focused on themes of death and mortality, such as Thomas Gray.
- **Classical School:** Poets who adhered to classical forms and ideals, continuing the neoclassical tradition.

2. Age of Samuel Johnson (1744-1798)

- **Samuel Johnson:** Study Johnson's contributions to literary criticism, his dictionary, and his essays. He was a central literary figure of the time.
- **Rise of the Novel:** Focus on the emergence of the English novel, starting with Daniel Defoe's works, and the development of the "four wheels of the novel" (Fielding, Richardson, Smollett, and Sterne).
- **Transitional Poets:** Examine poets like William Cowper and Thomas Gray, who served as a bridge between neoclassicism and romanticism, introducing more personal and emotional themes into their work.

Recommended Readings:

- Long, William J. (2006). *English Literature: Its History and Significance for the life of English speaking world*, enlarged edition.
- Evans, Ifor. (1976). *A Short History of English Literature*. London: Penguin.
- Ford, Boris. (1990). *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 1-9. London: Penguin.
- Compton-Rickett, A. *A History of English Literature*. Thomas-Nelson & Sales, 1940 (latest edition).
- Gillie, C. (1977). *Longman. Companion to English Literature (2nd Edition)*. London: Longman.
- Dachies, David. (1961). *A Critical History of English Literature*. Vol. 1-4. London: Secker & Warburg (latest edition).
- Sanders, Andrew. (2002). *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*. Oxford University Press, USA.