

English Literature: Overview up to 1800 (A005757)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Durme, Debora	LW07	staff member
McCausland, Elly	LW07	lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - English)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - German)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Greek)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Italian)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Latin)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Spanish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Swedish)	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - English)	5	A
Exchange Programme Linguistics and Literature	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Dutch - English)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - German)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Italian)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject English - Spanish)	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject French - English)	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

English literature, historical overview literary tradition

Position of the course

This in-depth course aims to familiarize students with the development of English literature between the medieval period and 1800. In addition, students will improve their literary and linguistic competence through the written and oral discussion of literary texts, in which a (critical) use of secondary sources is required.

The course contributes to the core competencies of the bachelor degree in language and literature (specializations with English in two-language combination):

B.1.1 ; B.1.3 ; B.1.5 ; B.2.2 ; B.2.3 ; B.3.1 ; B.3.2 ; B.3.3 ; B.3.4 ; B.3.5 ; B.4.1 ; B.5.1 ; B.5.2 ; B.5.3 ; B.5.4.

Contents

This course offers a broad overview of British literature from the Middle Ages to 1800. The course will focus especially on generic developments (in poetry, prose,

and drama) during this roughly 1000-year period and the relationship between the literary works we study and their historical, political, philosophical and aesthetic contexts. One question we will return to repeatedly is canon formation: Why are we reading these literary texts in particular? How did they become central to the English literary canon? To that end, we will read works that, for hundreds of years, have been central to English literary history, including Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a play by William Shakespeare, John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*; works that joined the canon relatively late, including Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Jane Austen's fiction; and literary works, often by and about women and people of colour, that have only in the last few decades become central to English literary history, including Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*, Mary Wollstonecraft's 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman', and Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*.

Initial competences

English Literature I or having acquired the necessary skills by other means.

Final competences

- 1 The ability to discern a train of thought in a literary text and to recognize the structure and coherence of literary texts, such as a poem, a play, an essay, or a novel.
- 2 The ability to apply knowledge about English-language literary traditions in the analysis of texts and to situate them in literary-historical and stylistic contexts.
- 3 The ability to read without prejudice, to empathize with the writer's socio-cultural world, to reflect on one's own reading habits and to remain open to aesthetic experience.
- 4 The ability to write short essays that demonstrate the acquired linguistic and literary competences and in which a literary subject is analyzed in a scientifically sound manner while making critical use of secondary sources that comment upon or clarify a text's socio-cultural contexts.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Weekly lecture by Prof. McCausland on the primary literary text(s) and its/their historical, literary, generic, philosophical and aesthetic dimensions.

Weekly seminar on primary literary texts, conducted by Dr. Van Durme, built around student conversation, with a focus on close-reading abilities.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Indicative price: € 17

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : No

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Additional information: Students should purchase the Norton Critical Edition ed. Gordon Teskey

Type: Syllabus

Name: Simon Armitage, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*

Indicative price: € 15

Optional: no

Language : English
Available on Ufora : No
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No

Type: Syllabus

Name: Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey
Indicative price: € 15
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : No
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: Students should purchase the Norton Critical Edition

Type: Syllabus

Name: Aphra Behn, Oroonoko
Indicative price: € 13
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : No
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: Students should purchase the Oxford World's Classics edition

Type: Syllabus

Name: William Shakespeare, King Lear
Indicative price: € 16
Optional: no
Language : English
Available on Ufora : No
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Additional information: Students should purchase the Norton Critical Edition

Type: Reader

Name: Other literary works
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Additional information: Available on Ufora: The Canterbury Tales, Utopia, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman

References

Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff, *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010) (Available on Ufora)

Course content-related study coaching

Individual feedback can follow the lessons, via Ufora or by appointment via e-mail with the instructors.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

periodical: exam with open questions

non-periodical: paper (can be taken again in the second examination period)

Calculation of the examination mark

- Research Proposal for Literary Analysis Essay (compulsory but ungraded)
- Literary Analysis Essay (50%)
- Final Exam (50%)

Please note:

(1) To pass the course, you are required to have a passing grade on both (a) the literary analysis essay and (b) the final exam.

Failure of one component: The student must receive more than 10/20 on both the essay and the exam to pass the entire course. If the final score would nevertheless be a number of ten or more out of twenty, then the final grade will be reduced to the highest non-pass score (i.e. 9/20).

(2) If you fail the paper (or fail to submit it) but pass the exam, your exam grade will carry over into the next submission period. You therefore do not need to retake the exam.

(3) Likewise, if you fail the exam but pass the paper, the grade for your paper will carry over: you will only have to retake the exam in the second session.

Facilities for Working Students

- Possibility to make an appointment for feedback during and after office hours