

New Course Proposal:  
**ENGL 3420: Post-War British Literature**

Catalog Description:

Representative prose, poetry, and drama from the United Kingdom after World War II. 3 credits.

Rationale:

This course augments and completes the historical breadth of our British literature offerings within the English department, ensuring coverage from Old English language and grammar through the present day. Inasmuch as the English department has recently hired a tenure-track Assistant Professor, James Arnett, to explicitly cover this material, this course is being proposed with an eye to his offering this course periodically. Other courses that have been offered in the past – and Gregory O’Dea’s “Booker Prize Winners” special topics course comes to mind most readily – would have fit under this particular umbrella, and added depth to English majors’ curricular understanding under the proposed title and guidelines.

In light of the tsunami of literatures emerging from former British colonies, British literature after World War II has received much less attention than its postcolonial counterparts. But British literature after the war has helped shaped and form debates in the nature and value of contemporary literature, and for every significant American or postcolonial writer, there’s an undervalued, underappreciated British writer whose skills and production are equally valuable. Indeed, several contemporary British writers have received the highest possible international honors – William Golding, Seamus Heaney, Doris Lessing, Harold Pinter, to say nothing of the host of Anglophone writers who participate in the British literary tradition – amongst them, V. S. Naipaul and Nadine Gordimer.

The contemporary moment in literature has been subsumed under the organizing lens of postmodernism, as outlined largely by Lyotard and Jameson; the former argues that the postmodern novel aims to reject ‘master narratives’ of modernity, whereas the latter grounds his analysis in the increasingly-virtual developments of late capitalism. Both agree that the postmodern novel is one that self-consciously rejects the formalist attainments of modernism, and seeks to incorporate more self-consciousness, self-effacement, irony, pastiche, and collage in their literatures. But postmodernism is only one aspect of the rich literature in Britain after the war, and this class will explore other, more subtle and local movements within British literature, like the explosion of class consciousness in the 1950s and 60s, and the return of the ‘novel of ideas’ in the 80s and 90s, as well as the body of literature that emerged as a critique of Thatcherism and neoconservative political values in the 80s (concurrent with the rise of punk music).

This course maps to the learning outcomes of the department/program as a whole by filling in a significant gap in British literature coverage that takes the program as a whole up to the present day. The course, like all other temporally-demarcated course, will serve as a general elective for majors; it does not alter or augment the degree maps that English majors use to determine the completion of their major.

### Pedagogical Objectives:

1. To familiarize students with the historical trends and developments in post-World War II British literature in poetry, drama, and prose
2. To contextualize post-war British literature against international literary and aesthetic movements (modernism, postmodernism, speculative fiction, etc.)
3. To encourage students to develop, hone, and evolve their literary analysis skills and use of secondary sources (including literary criticism and theory)
4. To develop the ability to think critically, independently, and creatively about their own personal and ideological relationships to literature
5. To build the skills necessary for conceiving of, planning, executing, and revising a substantial literary research paper

### Learning Outcomes:

1. To become more competent at performing literary analysis of the texts assigned, with attention to developing thesis-driven writing on the texts.
2. To become more familiar with literary and aesthetic movements in British literature after World War II.
3. To be able to reflect knowledgeably about the differences among the genres of poetry, drama, and prose.
4. To be able to develop an independently-created research paper on relevant texts using secondary literary-critical and literary-theoretical texts to situate one's literary analysis.
5. To be able to make informed syntheses of multiple texts across genres with an eye to recurring themes, motifs, and problematics.

### Learning Outcomes Assessment Practice:

Assignments and their grading weights and scales are available in the attached syllabus. Essentially, the four short papers are exercises in close-reading textual analysis, and will serve to judge the students' knowledge of and responses to the texts over the course of the semester. These papers will be construed as measuring the progress and success of the student as they move through the course, and allow the instructor to make adjustments to pedagogical approach as needed, and as revealed by the cumulative student success on these short paper assignments.

The final paper is meant to measure the students' ability to corral and make use of secondary and research materials in the crafting of a more substantial, and independently-guided final research paper. The final paper proposal is a speed bump in the process to force students to think critically in advance about their approach to the final paper, and to receive feedback from the instructor about useful research materials that might assist in completing the final paper. By the 4000-level, we as an English department are eager to hold our students to the cumulative weight of their major-level experiences and instruction, and the culminating research paper is a standard assignment at this level.

Sample Syllabus:

**ENGL 3420:  
Post-War British Literature [3 cr.]  
James Arnett**

[James-arnett@utc.edu](mailto:James-arnett@utc.edu)

Holt 230

Office Hours: M/W 1-3pm

Office Phone: 423.425.4602

Course Catalog Description:

Representative prose, poetry, and drama from the United Kingdom after World War II. 3 credits.

Course Description:

In this class we will explore movements, flashpoints, significant texts, and movements in post-WWII British literature, from the Angry Young Men of the 1950s to the explosion of transnational, immigrant, and minority literatures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this class, we will read and address a variety of different genres, including, but not limited to, poetry, prose, and drama. The course will proceed (more or less) chronologically, and is organized thematically under a variety of ideas that function as coalescing aesthetic movements or thematic concerns. The pace of reading in this class will be brisk, and you will be expected to keep up, participate in class, and complete the writing assignments for the class.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. To become more competent at performing literary analysis of the texts assigned, with attention to developing thesis-driven writing on the texts.
2. To become more familiar with literary and aesthetic movements in British literature after World War II.
3. To be able to reflect knowledgeably about the differences among the genres of poetry, drama, and prose.
4. To be able to develop an independently-created research paper on relevant texts using secondary literary-critical and literary-theoretical texts to situate one's literary analysis.
5. To be able to make informed syntheses of multiple texts across genres with an eye to recurring themes, motifs, and problematics.

Required Texts:

- Beckett, Samuel. *Happy Days*. Grove Press. ISBN: 978-0802144409.
- Durrell, Lawrence. *Justine*. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0143119241.
- Spark, Muriel. *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Harper. ISBN: 978-0061711299.
- Delaney, Shelagh. *A Taste of Honey*. Grove. ISBN: 978-0802131850
- Sillitoe, Alan. *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0307389657.
- Pinter, Harold. *The Homecoming*. Grove. ISBN: 978-0802151056.

- Ballard, J. G. *Crash*. Picador. ISBN: 978-0312420338.
- Churchill, Caryl. *Top Girls*. Methuen. ISBN: 978-0413622709.
- Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber*. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0140178210.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. Modern Library. ISBN: 978-0812976533.
- Fitzgerald, Penelope. *The Beginning of Spring*. Mariner. ISBN: 978-0395908716.
- Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*. Faber & Faber. ISBN: 978-0571169344.
- McEwan, Ian. *Amsterdam*. Anchor. ISBN: 978-0385494243
- Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Random House. ISBN: 978-0375507250.

### **Required Assignments:**

#### *Attendance and Participation – 10%*

Attendance is required in this class, although over the course of the semester, you're allowed to take three absences without penalty. A fourth absence sinks your participation grade 10%, a fifth absence sinks it a further 20%. A sixth absence means you've not completed the base-level expectations and will not pass the class.

But more than just coming to class (which I would hope is obvious!), I need you to participate in class. I don't want to kill ten minutes of each class painfully soliciting responses from you. It's true that, inevitably, some students will eagerly participate, but don't retreat behind the cover they're throwing down. If I don't know your name, or your interests in the class, then you're not doing your job. Bring the book to every class; read and mark it in advance; be prepared to bring at least one question (that isn't just plot clarification, although do bring in those questions, too!) into each class that you can float out there for class discussion.

#### *4 Short Papers – 15%/15%/15%/5%*

4 pages; 12-pt Times New Roman, Calibri, or Cambria; 1-inch margins; MLA 2009 parenthetical citations and Works Cited page; creative title; last name and page number on every page

In these papers, I expect you to create a thesis-driven short essay that explores one passage of a novel in light of the criticism we've read in conjunction with that text. Although there are five units over the semester, you will be able to choose which four of those units you want to respond to, giving you a measure of flexibility to align this course's work with your other coursework. Also, the lowest grade you receive on these papers will be accorded the least percentage (5%, as opposed to 15%) in order to encourage you to take risks, be creative, and fail forward.

I want you to be creative and to work on developing your close reading skills in these papers. That is to say, that I want you to attend really closely to what the text is saying, be specific in your claims, and avoid generalizations and stereotypes. I want you to learn the skills of working with literary criticism.

Each of these short papers will be due on the first class day following the completion of a thematic unit. There are six units, and four short papers; please plan well for these papers, and don't delay writing them until the final four units.

### *Final Paper Proposal – 10%*

The final paper proposal will be required before you embark upon completing the final paper project for the class. This paper proposal will contain a tentative outline of the paper and a tentative thesis statement, as well as three annotated bibliography entries (of two paragraphs each) for sources you estimate will be useful in completing your final paper.

### *Final Paper – 30%*

The final paper in this class will be a 15-20 page paper exploring the relationship between various texts we've read in the class, and the extant body of literary criticism relevant to those texts, ideas, or themes. You will be required to use at least five (5) outside/secondary sources in your paper.

### Grade Breakdown:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Short Papers:	15%   15%   15%   5%
Final Paper Proposal	10%
Final Exam	30%

### Grades:

90%-100%	A
80%-90%	B
70%-80%	C
60%-70%	D
<60%	F

### Class Attendance Policy

You are encouraged to attend all classes, and you will be permitted three (3) absences over the course of the semester without penalty. The fourth absence will result in a letter grade reduction in your attendance and participation portion of your grade. A fifth absence will reduce that portion of the grade to an 'F,' and the sixth absence will translate to a failing grade for the course. Any appeals must be routed through your advisor and/or department chair. If any long-term, unexpected, or emergency issues arise, please contact the instructor as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements, if they are possible or relevant.

### Late Paper/Make-up Policy

It is the policy of this professor not to accept late work. All papers and exams must be completed by/on the date specified in the syllabus, unless previously arrangements have been made with the instructor.

### Communication Policy

To enhance student services, the University uses your UTC email address for all communications. Please check your UTC email on a regular basis. If you have problems with accessing your UTC email account, contact the Call Center at

423.425.4000. Be mindful that I typically check my own UTC email between 8am and 7pm; emails sent after that time will likely be answered on the next day.

HONOR CODE PLEDGE (from the UTC Student Handbook)

I pledge that I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid on any test or assignment. I understand that plagiarism constitutes a serious instance of unauthorized aid. I further pledge that I exert every effort to ensure that the Honor Code is upheld by others and that I will actively support the establishment and continuance of a campus-wide climate of honor and integrity.

ADA STATEMENT:

Attention: If you are a student with a disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) and think that you might need special assistance or a special accommodation in this class or any other class, call the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 425-4006 or come by the office, 102 Frist Hall  
<http://www.utc.edu/disability-resource-center/> .

Counseling & Career Planning

If you find that personal problems, career indecision, study and time management difficulties, etc. are adversely affecting your successful progress at UTC, please contact the Counseling and Career Planning Center at 425-4438 or  
<http://www.utc.edu/counseling-personal-development-center/index.php> .

Writing Center:

The Writing Center at UTC is a free service offered to all members of the University community. The Center is staffed by peer tutors, graduate students, and English instructors, and offers various services to writers, including tutorials, workshops, and access to resources. Please visit the Writing Center in Holt 119.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### **Weeks One, Two, Three, Four – Modernism and After: Unit One**

Beckett, *Happy Days*  
Auden, selected poems [Bb]  
Durrell, *Justine*  
Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*  
Larkin, selected poems [Bb]

{unit one paper due @ end of week four}

### **Weeks Four, Five, Six – Class Matters and the Angries: Unit Two**

Delaney, *A Taste of Honey*  
Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*  
Pinter, *The Homecoming*

{unit two paper due @ beginning of week seven}

### **Weeks Seven and Eight– Postmodernism: Unit Three**

Ballard, *Crash*  
Churchill, *Top Girls*  
Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*

{unit three paper due @ beginning of week nine}

### **Weeks Nine and Ten – The Empire Writes Back: Unit Four**

Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

{unit four paper due @ beginning of week eleven}

### **Weeks Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen –Literature of Ideas: Unit Five**

Fitzgerald, *The Beginning of Spring*  
Stoppard, *Arcadia*  
McEwan, *Amsterdam*

{final paper proposal due at beginning of week thirteen}

{unit five paper due @ beginning of week fourteen}

### **Weeks Fourteen & Fifteen – Welcome to the Anthropocene: Unit Six**

Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas*

{unit six paper due on last day of class}

{final paper due on day of scheduled final exam}