

## British Literature: Love, Desire, and Defiance



Instructor: Laura Yeck

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Meets: Tuesdays & Thursdays at 11AM -12:20 PM

Classroom: CURRY 211

Office hours: T/TR from 2-4 PM or by appointment

Office: (Almost) anywhere on campus

**Course Description:** Love is an emotional and cataclysmic force that drives human nature and experience. Love is oftentimes characterized by desire and many of literature's greatest characters, authors, plots, and poets attempt to capture this staggering and elusive feeling. The old adage "all's fair in love and war" illustrates the extremes of love as an emotional state while linking love to war's violence and justifying the suspension of normal ethical or moral motivators and constraints. Doing something "in the name of love" can be quite treacherous and this is why love in literature is also deeply connected to defiance. Achieving one's desires through acts of defiance is practically hardwired into our narrative understanding of passionate love (thanks to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and before that *Tristan and Isolde*). Within these grand themes issues of gender and sexuality permeate the literary landscape. Our course will explore how shifting ideas surrounding love, desire, identity, and sexuality appear in British Literature throughout time and across genre.

This survey course explores multiple genres including works of film, drama, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. The assigned readings are out of chronological/historical order. I will do my best to help historically situate authors and texts, but our main focus is on how these readings relate to the major themes of the course.

**Required Texts:**

All texts will be Open Educational Resources and linked in Canvas, students may procure a hard copy if they wish. Shorter pieces (poems, essays, etc.) will be distributed in hardcopy and/or linked to in Canvas.

**Sensitive Content:** The readings in this course may contain disturbing content, including, but not limited to, sexual abuse, violence, forms of discrimination/harassment, historical racism and classism, and depictions of self-harm and death. I cannot be responsible for your personal feelings and perceptions as you encounter the coursework. If you know of a sensitive issue that you find triggering and would like me as your instructor to be aware of the issue, feel free to email me (no personal details/stories necessary) just an indication of what content may be problematic. I am happy to meet with you individually about troubling content specific to this course and I can also connect you with appropriate mental health resources and student support services provided by UNT, but ultimately part of appreciating great literature is being able to reckon with the difficulties, struggles, and injustices of the human experience on different emotional and intellectual levels.

**Assignments:**

- 20% — Close-reading essay, 750-1000 words
- 25% — Signature assignment paper, 1000-2000 words
- 25% — Activities (discussion lead, journals, quizzes, group work, etc.)
- 20% — Final Exam
- 10% — Attendance and Participation

*Close-reading essay:* The close-reading essay asks you to analyze a short passage from one of the texts we've read for the course (e.g. a monologue or passage of dialogue from *Romeo and Juliet*, or a paragraph of fiction/nonfiction, or a poem). The essay has two optional approaches: 1) can be argumentative in that it makes a well-reasoned and supported claim in response to the text, or 2) pivot into a creative reinterpretation of the chosen passage. Each option must provide a "zoomed-in" look at a specific passage with plenty of textual evidence and demonstrate proper use of MLA format (in-text citations and a Works Cited page). Ideally your essay will connect with the themes of love, desire, and defiance in relation to gender and sexuality. Detailed assignment instructions will be posted in Canvas.

*Signature assignment paper:* 1000-2000 words, the signature assignment for this course is an essay that answers one of these two questions: (1) What complex idea about an ethical conflict does one of our course's literary works present? or (2) What different but mutually illuminating ideas do two of our course's literary works present about an ethical conflict? The essay should also make an argument and be supported with MLA citations. Detailed assignment instructions will be posted in Canvas.

*Activities:* Class activities will occur inside the classroom during class time and outside of the classroom during your own time. You will be asked to take reading comprehension quizzes and complete short reader response journals in Canvas. **You will be responsible for leading the class in discussion about an assigned reading at least once during the course.** These activities move the class forward as you demonstrate your understanding of the reading material. Completing these activities will help you learn more about the literary terms, craft elements, and contextual forces that shape the English discipline while allowing you to interact deeply with the texts we are studying.

*Final Exam:* This exam will ask you to reflect on the readings from this course that you felt to be most compelling and thought-provoking. You will use textual evidence from your chosen readings to support your answers.

*Attendance and Participation:* See the official attendance policies listed below. At the sophomore level participation in class discussions and group activities is expected and compulsory. Consistent and active engagement determines how much of the 10% you are awarded for your final course participation grade.

**Attendance and Absences:** You are allowed four absences without your grade being affected. After four absences, you will receive a zero (out of ten) for your Attendance and Participation grade. In other words, **after four absences, you cannot receive an A in this class.**

UNT policy 6.039 on student attendance states that no student will be excused for more than 25% of a course for absences. Note that absences for the following reasons are authorized as excusable by the university (policy 06.039): (1) religious holy day, including travel for that purpose; (2) active military service, including travel for that purpose; (3) participation in an official university function; (4) illness or other extenuating circumstances; (5) pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and (6) when the University is officially closed by the President.

Whether your absences are excused or unexcused, **it is your responsibility to find out from a fellow classmate what was discussed.** You are more than welcome to email me if you are unable to attend class, but I will NOT respond to these emails, likewise I will NOT tell you what you missed in class. I'm happy to provide you with copies of handouts or materials used in class, but I do not have time to recreate the lecture and in-class activities on an individual basis. **You are paying for face-to-face instruction, and I expect you to attend class regularly.**

**Late or Missed Assignments:** Preferably all papers are due by class time on the due date (or by the date/time specified in Canvas). **If you cannot meet the deadline, please email BEFORE the deadline passes.** Additionally, I will not grade subsequent assignments from students until all their major writing assignments that are past due have been completed, and you cannot pass the course if you have not received a grade for all major assignments. Work completed in-class cannot be made up.

**ALL major course work must be completed and submitted in Canvas by 11:59 PM of the Sunday before Finals Week: Dec 7<sup>th</sup> 2025.**

**Instructor Responsibilities and Feedback:** My responsibility as your instructor is to challenge you, to help you understand the course material, and to help you grow and learn as a student. I will provide clear instructions for all major writing assignments, answer your questions, and identify additional resources as necessary. I will also provide substantive feedback on your written work. You can expect me to have feedback and grades returned to you **within two weeks** of the submission date for each major writing assignment. If you submit work late your feedback will also be delayed.

**Class Preparation:** Successful completion of this course depends on dedicating an appropriate amount of time to reading, thinking, and writing. You **MUST** read the required reading assignments to actively engage in class. If you find it helpful, you may want to read the text while also listening to audio versions of the material (see <https://librivox.org> or check Audible/YouTube). If you chose to listen, please be sure to also **READ** along. Make it your practice to annotate your ideas, thoughts, and feelings alongside the text. For example, if you disagree with a character or their behavior, rant at them in the margins of your book, or if you are using digital texts, keep a journal of your impressions (be sure to include page numbers/reference info so you can connect your ideas back to the original text/passages that inspired them). Close reading begins in the margins—so annotate away! Don't be afraid to argue, laugh, weep, and live via proxy the texts and characters we will encounter in this class. Deepen your original impressions of the work by thinking about the craft elements involved in creating and writing. We will discuss and define various literary terms, rhetorical concepts, and conventions of genre and as the course progresses.

*Course Outcomes:*

- Students will demonstrate awareness and understanding of the scope and variety of works of British literature.
- Students will read critically and analytically.
- Students will construct informed, organized, and coherent responses to the literary works they are assigned in a variety of rhetorical modes.
- Students will identify conventional literary genres, elements, and devices.
- Students will employ discipline-specific vocabulary in order to recognize the relationship between form and content.
- Students will relate literary concepts, principles, terms, strategies, and styles to a range of literature.
- Students will compare and contrast major literary figures, their situations, and their decisions.
- Students will evaluate the ideas presented in a text, the implications, and the relationship to ideas beyond the text.
- Students will identify relationships between primary texts and their adaptations, discussing intertextuality and allusion.

**Respecting the Class Community:** Be on time and be prepared to discuss the writing assignments. Do not let technology hinder your participation, if computers, phones, and tablets become overtly distracting I may ask that these devices be stored away. If your phone rings in class, I may ask if I can answer it. If you must leave the classroom please do so quietly and respectfully;

every time you leave the classroom it creates a disruption, please be courteous and do your best to remain seated and engaged for the entirety of the class, that being said, you do not need my permission to leave to use the restroom or attend to your personal needs/well-being. However, be aware that leaving class early or coming in too late may result in an unexcused absence. I love a lively classroom discussion (*please* feel free to disagree with me and your peers) but personal attacks on classmates will NOT be tolerated. Be self-aware and do not dominate discussion—speak your truth and allow others the freedom and safety to do the same.

**Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences:** According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. The decision of the instructor will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity, which is responsible for maintaining student conduct records. The incident may result in an official disciplinary record for the student(s).

Academic integrity violations can include copying a passage from a source verbatim, but they can also include improper or misleading citations. Please note that all source material must be acknowledged, even if the material is paraphrased. Be careful to always acknowledge the work of other writers and take the time to work out your thoughts and arguments without copying the work of others.

**AI Generated Writing:** The use of generative AI writing tools (such as ChatGPT, GrammarlyGO, GPT-3, GPT-4, BERT, or others) **is prohibited in this class**. Assignments for the course have been designed to help you develop as a writer without the use of these technologies. You will generate ideas, read, revise, and write on your own and/or in consultation with peers, me, or Writing Center tutors, and **you will not use AI at any stage of your writing process**. You are the author of your work for the course and authorship means you take responsibility for your words and claims. Any use of AI technologies in your work will be considered a violation of UNT's academic integrity policy and addressed accordingly. \*Statement composed by Annette Vee, under (Creative Commons By-Noncommercial license).

**Using the UNT Writing Center:** The Writing Center provides both in-person and online appointments through our scheduling software: [WCOnline](#). Once students register for their free account, they will be able to schedule their own appointments by selecting their preferred day, time, and tutor (simply click on the white box and fill in the requested information in your appointment form). If anyone faces an issue while scheduling their own appointments, they can email or call the Writing Center to have a tutor schedule it for them.

- Phone: 940.565.2563
- Email: [writingcenter@unt.edu](mailto:writingcenter@unt.edu)

**ADA Accommodation Statement:** UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion



regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time; however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at [disability.unt.edu](http://disability.unt.edu).

**Emergency Notification & Procedures:** UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

**Sexual Assault Prevention:** UNT is committed to providing a safe learning environment free of all forms of sexual misconduct. Federal laws and UNT policies prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex as well as sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know is experiencing sexual harassment, relationship violence, stalking and/or sexual assault, there are campus resources available to provide support and assistance. If you are a survivor of relational or sexual violence, there is support for you. There are on- and off-campus resources available to survivors at no cost. Counseling and Testing Services can provide confidential mental health counseling. They are in Chestnut Hall 311. You may also call (940) 565-2741 to schedule an appointment. Denton County Friends of the Family is a community agency that offers free counseling and 24/7 crisis hotline services to survivors. Contact them at (940) 387-5131. The UNT Survivor advocate can assist in reporting options, arrange for academic and housing accommodations, schedule appointments and help connect students to UNT and other community resources. They are in Union 409 and can be contacted at (940) 565-2648. To report sexual misconduct to Equal Opportunity & Title IX, visit [report.unt.edu](http://report.unt.edu). The UNT Police Department can be contacted at (940) 565-3000.

**Required Reporting:** As your instructor, I am designated as a responsible employee for UNT, and I am required by law to report any disclosed instances of harassment or discrimination to the university administration.

**Course Schedule:** see Canvas/hard copy distributed in class during the first week (subject to change, go by assignment due dates as posted in Canvas)

