ARE YOU PREPARED FOR THIS COURSE? PLEASE READ THIS FIRST:

The study of poetry brings with it some special challenges. Although poetry is generally comprised of perfectly recognizable words, poets tend to arrange those words in unexpected syntactic patterns, endow them with metaphorical and symbolic significance, and playfully subvert their ordinary “dictionary” meanings, all of which make the experience of reading poetry quite different from that of reading a novel, a short story, a history text, or a newspaper. Poetry tends to be a highly condensed form of expression, with poets attempting to capture a complex moment of experience (real or imagined) in as few words as possible—but words that are richly connotative. In presenting that moment of experience, a poet may have conflicting feelings about it, and thus the tone of the poem may be difficult to identify (is the poet being sarcastic or sincere, angry or resigned?). And that is why reading poetry aloud is vitally important—both so that the speaker’s voice in the poem can emerge more clearly and the music of the language (which is often the poet’s chief concern) will become evident. For all of these reasons, poetry cannot be read quickly; multiple readings of poems are necessary before one can begin to grasp the whole work. Thus students of poetry must have considerable patience and be prepared to spend plenty of time reading, thinking about, and re-reading each work.

A very erroneous notion exists about poetry, too: namely, that a poem has no fixed meaning and that it can therefore “mean” anything that a reader thinks it does. To arrive at a valid interpretation of a poem, much must be known about the author and his or her literary development, the social and historical background of the author’s times, the inherited conventions of writing with which the author would have been familiar and to which he or she may have been responding. In an introductory poetry course, we begin at the beginning and do
not assume any kind of prior knowledge; students gradually acquire close reading skills, learn
the technical language of poetry, and the relationship of the inner and outer contexts of a poem to
its overall meaning. But an upper-level poetry course, such as English Romantic Poetry, does
require some prior background in the study of poetry and particularly in the art of close reading.
The instructor usually takes for granted that students already possess this understanding.

Poetry also exists within a lengthy tradition of established writers and literary forms, with which
poets often presume a reader will be familiar. And this, too, is why poetry frequently seems
ambiguous, as if it were written by an “insider” for another insider, leaving the ordinary reader
out in the cold. For all of these reasons, this course has a prerequisite of an introductory
poetry course. If you are unfamiliar with poetry and the technical vocabulary used to describe
it, you may find the readings to be exceptionally difficult. Rather than being able to read the
poems with pleasure and relate them successfully to their historical context, you may spend most
of your time simply trying to comprehend the poems themselves. Writing coherently about them
may also prove inordinately difficult. Most people wouldn’t think of walking into a calculus
course without having taken basic math or an intermediate-level French course without having
had elementary French. An upper-level course in poetry is no different: some background study
is necessary to optimize your experience in English Romantic Poetry. I very much want you to
succeed in my class; but I also want you to understand that it isn’t possible to acquire this basic
knowledge and master the assignments in this course in a single semester. Students who wish to
take the course only for non-credit need not be as concerned if they lack this background.

DISTANCE LEARNING AND THE WEBSITE
(URL: http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~engle150c)

This semester, the class will be available only as a distance course. Each weekly lecture exists as
a videotape that is accessed through the course website and follows the calendar shown on the
syllabus. After the first two weeks of class, access to the website and the videotapes will be
password protected.

Many ancillary materials, designed to enrich your study of the Romantic period and its poetry,
are also on the website, and we invite you to make use of all of them. These include numerous
paintings from the Romantic period, by artists such as David, Ingres, Delacroix, Constable, and
Turner, grouped around important themes that also occur in the poetry. Under the lectures on
William Blake, you will find the beautiful full-color illustrations of SONGS OF INNOCENCE
AND EXPERIENCE and THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL, painted by Blake
himself. Under the Coleridge lectures, you will find Gustave Dore’s exquisite illustrations to
“The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” and, by Gainsborough, a “conversation” painting--the genre that
inspired Coleridge’s “conversation poems.” In a previous semester of this course (taught live as
well as distance), the students and I took a spring-break trip to the English Lake District and
London and visited many of the homes and haunts of the Romantic poets. You will find several
images of these places on the website, to give you an idea of the landscapes that inspired the
writers we’ll be studying.

You will also find a number of musical selections on the website by Romantic composers such as
Chopin, Beethoven, Schumann, and Liszt, representing the many moods and remarkable
experimentation that characterizes the music of the period. We invite you to listen to these as
you do some of your reading. The soft lyrical melodies of Chopin, with their changing moods, seem to take us into the private meditations of the composer—much like the quietly beautiful but introspective poetic musings of Wordsworth and Coleridge; while the grandly scaled, titanic emotion of Beethoven in his 3rd and 5th symphonies and the sheer showmanship of Liszt’s “Transcendental Etudes” remind us of the search for the grandiose in nature and the heroic action of the past in Byron’s poetry.

Most of the course handouts are on the website (some are too lengthy to be posted in this manner—and these will be distributed by mail), as are most of the poems on the reading list, and many of the visual images that will be used in the lectures. We will also occasionally post memos that focus on writing and the analysis of poetry that should help you with the written assignments, along with some model papers that will illustrate how a well-developed paper should be structured.

The teaching assistant and I will run an open bulletin board on the website that will give you the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion with your classmates about the poems. All credit students MUST participate in bulletin board discussions weekly as part of their grade. Questions and comments are expected to be intelligent, thoughtful, and serious and directed to formal, thematic, or historical aspects of the poetry—not trivia.

Credit students taking the course over the web must scrupulously follow the syllabus and be attentive to all deadlines for reading and writing assignments. To succeed in the course, you must conduct your work as if you were a student coming to a live class each week, performing weekly homework assignments, and adhering to the deadlines indicated on the syllabus. Students must email their papers to their TA by class time on the due date of each assignment.

Before the course begins, please make sure that you have the fastest possible internet connection and that your email functions properly. Papers should be sent to us as email attachments in WORD. If we are unable to open your attachment or if it appears as gobbledygook on the screen, we will consider your paper to be un-sent.

GOALS OF THE COURSE: In addition to the primary goal of investigating the literature and history of the Romantic Period (1789-1832), this course will also explore some of the ways in which Romanticism influenced other disciplines, such as art, music, science, psychology, philosophy, and politics. We will consider the Janus-faced nature of Romanticism—its looking backward to the Classical era for inspiration and stability, while fomenting revolution and the birth of the modern in virtually every cultural institution. Furthermore, we will engage with the poetry through a variety of written assignments that involve not only close reading exercises but also contextual considerations that bear on the ideas expressed in the literature of this period.

IF YOU WANT TO GET A HEAD START IN THE COURSE:
Before the first class meeting, students should acquaint themselves with the background selections in the Mellor and Matlak anthology that deal with the French Revolution and Rights of Man (all), the Rights of Woman (Hays and Polwhele), Slavery and the Slave Trade and Abolition (all), Society and Political Economy (Godwin, Malthus, Cobbett),
Science and Nature (Hartley, Shelley, Lyell), and Aesthetic Theory (Winckelmann, Reynolds, Burke, Gilpin). These provide an excellent introduction to the many social and political issues that defined the period and influenced the art of the 6 writers we will study.

I also strongly recommend that students read the essays by the following authors in Gleckner and Enscoe’s ROMANTICISM: POINTS OF VIEW before the course begins: Pater, Babbitt, Hulme, Lovejoy, Lucas, Brooks, Wellek, Fairchild, Wimsatt, Peckham, Hartman, Frye, and Abrams. Each writer attempts to define the elusive and multi-faceted concept of “Romanticism,” emphasizing surprisingly different characteristics. Their diverse arguments will provide you with a useful theoretical basis from which to consider the works of the 6 poets. Since you will be asked to write specifically on these essays on the final examination, you will find that task to be facilitated by having completed this reading very early in the course, before the longer weekly reading assignments occur.

COURSE TEXTS

(sold at the Harvard Coop; on reserve at Grossman Library, 3rd floor, Sever Hall; also available through amazon.com)

REQUIRED FOR ALL STUDENTS:

Gleckner & Ensocie, ROMANTICISM: POINTS OF VIEW, 2nd edition only (Wayne State U P)—esp. the 13 selections indicated above

Mellor & Matlak, BRITISH LITERATURE, 1780-1830 (Harcourt Brace)—chief text


REQUIRED FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY:


All literature students are encouraged to purchase a copy of the MLA HANDBOOK (6th ed.) or the MLA STYLE MANUAL, which provides valuable information about writing a paper, style and grammar, and documenting sources.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

(N. B. All readings are from Mellor & Matlak unless otherwise noted; The Prelude is a separate text)

Sept. 22 Introduction to course: Romantic history, art, music, literature
Sept. 29 Read handout "On Reading Romantic Poetry" (Swingle)—download from course website immediately;
**BLAKE**: From SONGS OF INNOCENCE (all)—film and slide show in class

Required, **ungraded**, typed 1-page close reading of Blake’s poem “London” from SONGS OF EXPERIENCE due. You will receive comments on your paper from Rob Fox, and next Monday’s section meeting will be devoted to a discussion of close reading and ways of organizing a literary analysis. This exercise will help you to prepare for the first graded essay due on October 13.

Oct. 6 Read handout "The Romantic Emergence" (Swingle);
**BLAKE**: From SONGS OF EXPERIENCE (all)—slide show in class

[Discussion in next Monday’s section meeting on how to write a comparison paper, using Blake’s “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” as examples]

Oct. 13 **BLAKE**: THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL
Letter to Rev. Dr. Trusler—slide show in class

**WORDSWORTH**: from LYRICAL BALLADS (1st edition, 1798):
Advertisement (handout); Lines Written at a Small Distance; Simon Lee; We Are Seven; Lines Written in Early Spring; The Thorn; Expostulation & Reply; The Tables Turned; Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey (see Hartley and Gilpin handouts)

**ESSAY ON BLAKE’S SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE DUE:**
Blake's SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND EXPERIENCE frequently manifest an ironic perspective, upsetting the reader's expectations about what constitutes an "innocent" or an "experienced" point of view. Among other things, Blake demonstrates that innocence and experience, as contrary states of the human soul, are not related to age alone; for many of his characters frequently reveal a level of understanding or a mindset that seems inconsistent with their age and status in the world. Choose one of the following pairs of companion poems from SONGS OF INNOCENCE and SONGS OF EXPERIENCE—“Nurse’s Song,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” “Holy Thursday,” or “The Human Abstract”—and explore the ways in which the tensions between these two states of being are dramatized. (2 pages)

Oct. 20 **WORDSWORTH**: From LYRICAL BALLADS (2nd edition, 1800):
*Preface (573ff.); Strange Fits of Passion; She Dwelt Among th' Untrodden Ways; A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal; Nutting; Michael THE PRELUDE (Norton Critical Edition), 1799 version (the two-part poem)
From POEMS IN TWO VOLUMES (1807):
Resolution & Independence; Composed on Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1803; The World Is Too Much With Us; It Is a Beauteous Evening; Composed by the Sea-Side, near Calais; Calais, August, 1802; I Grieved for Buonaparte; To Toussaint L’ouverture; London 1802; To a Butterfly
(p. 600); My Heart Leaps Up; I Wandered Lonely; Elegiac Stanzas...Peele Castle; Ode: Intimations of Immortality


**REVISION OF BLAKE PAPER DUE TONIGHT!**

Nov. 3  **WORDSWOORTH**: THE PRELUDE, 1805 version, Books VIII-XIII (*Long assignment)

Nov. 10  **COLERIDGE**: From LYRICAL BALLADS (1798): The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere; The Nightingale
From SYBILLINE LEAVES: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
From CHRISTABEL, KUBLA KHAN, THE PAINS OF SLEEP (1816): Christabel; Kubla Khan
From BIOGRAPHIA LITERARIA (all selections)

**GRADUATE STUDENTS' BOOK REVIEWS DUE ON ABRAMS' THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP**: Students should summarize the principal hypothesis or argument of the book and describe the organization of its various chapters, concentrating upon answering the following question: **To what extent is it valid to speak of a "Romantic school" of literary theory?** In what ways does this "school" differ from its predecessors? Are there notable differences, as well as similarities, among the Romantics themselves? Who is the assumed audience of this book? What did you find its greatest strengths and shortcomings to be? Aim for a balanced review of the book. (4-5 pages)

Nov. 17  **COLERIDGE**: From POEMS (1797): Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement
From FEARS IN SOLITUDE (1798): Fears in Solitude; Frost at Midnight
From ANNUAL ANTHOLOGY (1800): This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison
From POETICAL WORKS (1828): The Eolian Harp; Work Without Hope
From *The Morning Post* (1802): Dejection: an Ode, Written April 4, 1802 (+ the 2 other versions of this poem—handouts)

***MID-TERM ESSAY TOPIC TO BE EMAILED TO YOU TODAY: PLEASE WATCH FOR IT. YOU WILL HAVE 2 WEEKS IN WHICH TO PREPARE THE ESSAY.***

Dec. 1  **BYRON**: From Parliamentary Speeches in the House of Lords (1812)
From CHILDE HAROLD’S PILGRIMAGE, from Cantos I and II (1812); Canto the Third (1816); Canto IV (1818)
Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte (1814)
From POEMS (1816): When We Two Parted; Fare Thee Well

**MID-TERM ESSAY DUE BY 7:30 p.m. (5 pages)**
Dec. 8  **BYRON**: From THE PRISONER OF CHILLON AND OTHER POEMS (1816): Sonnet on Chillon; The Prisoner of Chillon (handout); Darkness; Prometheus MANFRED (1817) from DON JUAN, Cantos I-II, 1819 (*Long assignment)

Dec. 15  **BYRON**: from DON JUAN, Cantos III-IV, 1821 (*Long assignment) On This Day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year

**SHELLEY**: Read handout, Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" From ALASTOR (1816): Alastor; Feelings of a Republican From HISTORY OF A SIX WEEKS’ TOUR (1817): Mont Blanc From The Examiner: Hymn to Intellectual Beauty; Ozymandias From PROMETHEUS UNBOUND (1820): Ode to the West Wind; To a Skylark

**REQUIRED REVISION OF MIDTERM ESSAY DUE TONIGHT!**

Dec. 22  **SHELLEY**: From A DEFENCE OF POETRY (1821) PROMETHEUS UNBOUND (all) ADONAIUS (1821) (*Long assignment)

***TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION TO BE EMAILED TODAY SO THAT YOU WILL HAVE 3 WEEKS IN WHICH TO COMPLETE IT. (6 pp. for UNs, 8 pp. for GRs)***

WINTER HOLIDAYS: IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO ALREADY, THIS WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO READ THE ESSAYS IN GLECKNER & ENSCOE ON WHICH YOU WILL HAVE TO WRITE ON THE FINAL EXAM


**KEATS**: From POEMS (1817): On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer; from Sleep and Poetry From The Examiner (1817): On Seeing the Elgin Marbles From The Indicator (1820): La Belle Dame sans Mercy (compare with second version in 1848 volume below) From ISABELLA, LAMIA, THE EVE OF ST. AGNES, AND OTHER POEMS (1820): The Eve of St. Agnes; HYPERION; Lamia; Ode to Psyche; Ode to a Nightingale; Ode on a Grecian Urn; Ode on Melancholy; To Autumn; Ode on Indolence (from the 1848 volume below) Letters (all) (*Long assignment)

Jan. 12  **Posthumous Publications**-- From The Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal (1838): Bright Star, would I were stedfast as thou art (1819),
From LIFE, LETTERS, AND LITERARY REMAINS OF JOHN KEATS (1848):
When I have fears that I may cease to be (1818); La Belle Dame Sans Merci (1819)
From MISCELLANIES OF THE PHILOBIBLON SOCIETY (1856-57): THE FALL OF HYPERION (1819) [to be discussed in conjunction with HYPERION above]

Conclusion: After Romanticism

TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAMINATION DUE BY 7:30 P.M. THIS EVENING--NO EXCEPTIONS! NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. IF YOU WISH TO HAVE YOUR PAPERS AND GRADE RETURNED TO YOU, PLEASE MAIL A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE, WITH SUFFICIENT POSTAGE, TO YOUR T.A.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR CLASS EACH WEEK

You should begin your study of each poet by reading the introductory biographical essay that precedes his works in the text. Especially with this group of writers, a knowledge of the events of their lives and the chronology of their works is crucial to an understanding of the poetry.

The most important, if obvious, advice I can give you is to prepare for class each week. Read carefully all of the works assigned before viewing the lectures, or the lectures won't mean very much to you. Then you should plan to re-read the poems after viewing the weekly lecture. Some of the assignments are rather lengthy (especially the Romantic epics and closet dramas), and I have indicated these in parentheses on the syllabus so that you can plan for a bit more reading time. Make every effort not to fall behind. Trying to catch up is a painful and thankless activity, for Romantic poetry does not lend itself to speed-reading!

Not only for the practice of writing that it affords but for its efficacy in helping to organize one's thoughts and immediate impressions of a text, keeping a reading journal can be very useful in cultivating strong reading skills and will certainly help you to recall important elements in a text later on when you must prepare for the midterm and final exams.

Train yourself to look up and write out the definition of every word you don't know. A work of literature cannot be fully accessible if the reader doesn't know what all the words mean. Remember that the author chose these particular words, instead of many others, for very specific reasons. The reader needs to understand the full range of denotative and connotative meanings that the writer may be exploiting, especially within the context of their signification in the Romantic period (e.g., “Republican” in Wordsworth’s time didn’t mean what it does now—in fact, it meant just the opposite). In addition to dictionary resources such as the Oxford English Dictionary, works such as the Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics can provide you with a tremendous amount of information about literary genres, poetic forms, and technical devices used by poets.
FORMAT OF CLASS and OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION

Each week in class, I shall lecture for most of the evening; but email discussion and comments from students are welcome, whether shared with your TA or me. Not all poems will be discussed in class, but students are responsible for all poems on the syllabus.

We will also offer an optional discussion section every other week on Mondays, 7:30-8:30 pm, at 53A Church Street, to allow for further opportunities to discuss the poetry and prose. If you are able to join us “live,” we encourage you to do so. (Needless to say, there won’t be much of a discussion if no one shows up!) The discussion section will be videotaped and posted on the course website by the following Wednesday. For some of the section meetings, a particular topic for discussion may be designated by us in advance. For others, Rob Fox might ask you to email questions to him before the next section meeting, and they will become the focus of the discussion.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS and REVISIONS

Writing-intensive courses require a special commitment from both the student and the instructor and her staff. Such courses are predicated on the notion that students will write frequently, at regular intervals, submit papers of various lengths, be given the opportunity to revise their work, and to confer with the instructor and her staff about individual writing problems. The emphasis is on practicing the mode of writing appropriate to the particular subject being studied--in this case, the close reading and analysis of poetry. The theory behind this practice is that engagement with the subject matter in writing facilitates a deeper understanding of the material and of the kind of analysis associated with a given discipline. All the writing assignments have been designed to introduce you to a variety of approaches to the study of poetry, to the special techniques they employ, and the unique kinds of insights into the text that they provide. Essays vary in length so that you can acquire the discipline of learning how to focus and develop a discussion within diverse limits.

There will be one 2-page essay on Blake’s poetry at the beginning of the course; a mid-term essay of 4-5 pages on the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge; and a 6-8 page take-home final examination consisting of 2-3 essays questions on the works of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. Each must be presented in a well-organized, well-written, well-documented essay, which will be graded for content, style, organization, accuracy, and depth of understanding. Fuzzy, unfocused, impressionistic criticism is not acceptable. Outside research is unnecessary (and discouraged) for the successful completion of the exams, although texts such as Abrams’ and Gleckner & Enscoe’s may be used in support of your ideas. Graduate students will also write a 4-5-page essay on Abrams’ THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP.

There will be two required revisions of papers in the course: the 2-page Blake paper must be submitted in two drafts. And the mid-term essay must be revised; the second version of each essay will be given a grade.

ANOTHER REMINDER: As early as possible in the semester, all students should read and make careful notes on the assigned essays in Gleckner & Enscoe's ROMANTICISM: POINTS OF VIEW, which they will be required to write about on the final exam.
The assignments in this writing-intensive course have been designed to offer you a variety of writing experiences, ranging from short analyses of a single work to more extended essays that ask you to compare the presentation of a major theme or attitude across several literary texts; and, for graduate students only, a book review. Literary works can always be approached from many different angles. The point is that there must be an angle; an essay cannot simply be "about" a work of literature. It must develop a specific point. What follows below is some helpful advice about how to develop a successful literary paper.

Finding a Subject, Asking Questions, Developing a Hypothesis

One must first find a subject, the general topic that will be explored: a text's genre, theme, figures of speech (and there are dozens of types of these), archetypes, myths, characters, narrator, plot, tone, structure, historical or biographical context, setting, conventions, point of view, registers of diction, philosophical concepts, and so on. The general subject of all your papers in this course has already been decided for you on the syllabus. But the next step is yours alone.

This general subject must then be focused into something much more specific--a hypothesis about the subject. The hypothesis is the argument, the proposition, the assertion that you wish to advance about your subject. (Think of it as the "In this paper I will argue [or demonstrate, or prove, or show, or suggest]-that-such-and-such-is-true" portion of your essay.)

EXAMPLES OF HYPOTHESES:

(1) "Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' professes on the surface to be a nostalgic but optimistic nature poem that is entirely apolitical. However, upon closer examination, a disturbing pattern of competing imagery emerges that suggests both a different stance and some alternative concerns. In contrast to the stately, placid voice with which the poem opens, the narrator gradually reveals himself to be an anxious, unhappy person struggling to suppress his feelings of political betrayal and social injustice so that the happier, less volatile theme of nature can emerge. It is the tension between these two contrary impulses that gives the poem its emotional force. NOT "In this paper I will analyze the themes of 'Tintern Abbey.'" (What themes? What about them?)

(2) Several Romantic poems are styled as "fragments," for example, "Kubla Khan," "The Triumph of Life," and HYPERION. But I wish to argue that, rather than being unfinished, each of these works presents a complete experience and manifests an organic unity, despite the works' apparent lack of closure. Examined as a group, these poems constitute a uniquely Romantic genre, which expresses structurally the same philosophical skepticism about the limits of knowledge seen in other forms throughout the age. NOT "In this paper I will write about the Romantic fragment." (What about the fragment? What is its significance?)

(3) The Byronic hero--such as Manfred, Cain, Harold, and Juan--seems to be anything but heroic, at least in conventional terms. Byron's characters are guilty of murder, incest, cowardice, cross-dressing, cruelty, insanity, debauchery, infidelity, and blasphemy; yet on their own terms, they embody a modern, revisionist heroism perfectly suited to the cynicism of the post-Napoleonic age. They question and defy authority, assert the strength and integrity of their own
will, reject hypocrisy and anachronistic social values, and reconstruct their fragmented world out of shards of meaningful subjective experience. NOT "In this paper I will write about the Byronic hero." (What about the Byronic hero?)

(4) Dreamers who dream of fatal attractions occur often in Keats' poetry. What do these dreamers have in common? Why do their dreams turn into nightmares? What can Keats' letters tell us about the poet's attitude toward dreams and fantasies? If we examine "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "Lamia," and "The Eve of St. Agnes," we discover that all of the dreamers in those poems seek to escape from reality and long for a permanent union with the ideal. As his letters attest, while sympathetic to this very human impulse, Keats takes a dim view of those who reject ordinary human experience and of any sustained attempt at escaping the pain and suffering of the real world. NOT "I will write about the dreamers in Keats' poems." (What about the dreamers?)

Notice the common structure of each of these model hypotheses: the writer sets up the argument with an introductory sentence or two, or perhaps a question to be asked, followed by a specific assertion about the text(s) to be considered, along with an indication of the kind of textual evidence to be employed in support of the hypothesis ("I will show X by means of Y").

One seldom knows what this clearly focused hypothesis will be at the beginning of an assignment; first one must carefully read, study, and analyze the work of literature. Only afterwards does the reader usually form an opinion or supposition (i.e., hypothesis) about the subject under consideration. The hypothesis often grows out of a question or series of questions raised by the text: What is there about Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" that causes us to doubt the speaker's claim that he is happy and serene? Why do the images of hermits, vagrant dwellers, and dirty cities disturb the tone of the poem as they do? How can we account for the number of Romantic poems that were never finished? Did these poets have difficulty completing poems? In what ways are these poems incomplete? If traditional definitions of heroism no longer apply to the heroes of Byron's poetry, how are we to think about them--as villains, anti-heroes, or a different kind of hero? One of the generalizations about Romantic poetry often made by critics is that it is a poetry of "escapism," suggesting that escape is viewed by the Romantics in a positive way; yet the dreamer-escapists of Keats' poetry all end badly. Why is this so? What do they do wrong? And what are the larger implications for a theory of Romanticism that acknowledges this disapproval of escapism?

Out of such questions and observations about a literary text, the hypothesis and a structured argument grow. Good literary analysis is always the successful blending of the foregoing components. In some of the writing assignments, you will notice that a number of questions may be posed. You are not expected to answer all of them in your essays; rather you should think about them and use them as points of entry into the topic, as springboards to the formulation of a hypothesis, or as an angle of approach to the work under consideration.

Gathering Information and Taking Notes vs. Writing the Paper

Your initial approach to the topic will probably take the form of "reading notes," which may, in fact, look a great deal like a "plot summary" or an outline of the literary text under consideration.
Gaining a basic understanding of the characteristic elements of a poem is a crucial, **preliminary** stage in the development of any paper topic. But remember that these basic observations alone typically do not constitute an essay with a hypothesis. They are, rather, the materials used to **formulate** a hypothesis.

When analyzing poetry, you must train yourself to go below the surface, asking questions about the "**who-what-why-when-where-how**" of the text. We must enter the "world" of the text, using the questions posed to probe its many layers. Literary works are complex constructions, and only by treating them as such can we hope to say something meaningful about their internal structure, language, ideas, and so on.

Leave yourself enough time to read and think and write, to re-read and re-think and re-write--all necessary stages in the development of a coherent argument. Think of your various sentences and paragraphs as **parts of a puzzle** over which you have complete control and which you can move about at will. Nothing is fixed or cast in stone. A sentence that somehow sounds out of place on page 2 may well make a fine contribution to another paragraph on page 4. If you suddenly realize that you have strayed from your subject and written an entire paragraph that is really off track, delete it without regret. You haven't lost or wasted anything--you've saved your argument from a useless interruption.

**Structuring the Paper**

All papers must have a **beginning, a middle, and an end**. Some writers have glibly described the purpose of these sections in the following way: (1) Tell the reader what you're going to do. (2) Do it. (3) Then remind the reader of what you did.

There must be an **introductory paragraph** in which you clearly state your **hypothesis**, that is, **what you intend to demonstrate or prove in the paper; and how you will go about proving it**, namely the textual evidence you will adduce; and **the conclusions you expect to draw, in the specific order** in which you intend to present them. Without such a clear statement of intent, the reader is lost--and left to wonder what the paper is really about. There should be no mystery about the **intention, direction, and methods** of the paper: the mystery (what prompts the curiosity and interest of the reader) should come from the subtlety and precision with which you make your case.

HELPFUL HINT: Few things are more difficult to write than introductions to papers. Why? Because one seldom knows what one is going to write until one has actually done it. Therefore, illogical as this may sound, the introduction should probably be written last (or at least re-written), after you've completed the main argument. Only then will you know what correctly to introduce.

The **middle or body of the paper**, its main portion, should carefully and logically develop the argument, adducing the evidence (using **concrete examples** from the literature) that will support it. Evidence should be adduced and the argument structured according to the programme outlined for the reader in the introduction. **All of the various parts should cohere**. Attention
should be paid to transitions between paragraphs. Do they flow smoothly and logically from one to the other?

All paragraphs should contain a thesis or topic sentence, i.e., an introductory sentence that indicates the subject of the forthcoming paragraph and that anchors it in the reader's mind to the programme established in the introduction. Each paragraph should have a specific purpose that is evident to the reader, and it should contribute to the argument you are attempting to prove.

The conclusion of the paper shouldn't be like falling off a cliff: you should restate for the reader what you have shown, the major points you have made, the conclusion(s) you have reached--but especially the most important ideas that you wish the reader to take away with him/her. Don't try to be cute, melodramatic, or moralistic: you'll undercut the serious argument you've developed. Also, resist the temptation simply to repeat--in identical word choices--the stated goals of the introductory paragraph. Vary your language and sentence structure to maintain the interest of the reader.

While your papers may seem somewhat stiff and formulaic at first, with practice you will learn how to frame and present your argument with more subtlety, without obvious markers such as "My hypothesis is. . . .," "The evidence I will use to defend my argument is. . . .," and "In conclusion, I have shown that. . . ." We are not trying to turn out cookie-cutter papers that look identical. Our goal is to help you write competent literary papers, with all of the requisite rhetorical components, in a style that is distinctly your own. A clear purpose and a well-structured argument, supported by convincing examples, are not mere window-dressing; they are essential to the successful communication of your ideas and to the illumination of the literary text.

Stick to the subject of your paper. Don't allow yourself to wander into irrelevant (however interesting) biographical or historical anecdotes, unless they are germane to your argument. If you've found something especially amusing or clever that you want the reader to know about but that is not pertinent to your subject, put it in a footnote at an appropriate place in the paper. In this way you will not violate the logical integrity of your paper.

Avoid subjective, evaluative, or speculative judgments such as:

"I love Wordsworth--his poems make me feel happy, and they remind me of the back-to-nature-movement in the ‘60s."
"Sonnets seem so anachronistic in the postmodern era."
"Coleridge would probably never have written poetry if he hadn't fallen under the influence of drugs."
"Even though Keats never completed HYPERION, I think that if he had, he would have given it a happy ending, with Apollo and Mnemosyne getting married."
"Byron treated women abominably and that makes me dislike his poetry.”
Such statements either cannot be proved or take your argument nowhere: personal feelings, "what-if" speculations, and sweeping generalizations cannot be validated with concrete evidence. Aim for **precise descriptive criticism** by analyzing **what is actually present** in the text.

Students should be attentive both to **content** and **style**. By **content**, we mean not only what is said generally, but accuracy of information and quality of **insight** that is revealed in your analysis of the poem. By **style**, we mean felicity of expression, logical syntax, correct grammar/spelling/punctuation, appropriate organization and presentation of ideas, unity of the various parts, a clear statement of purpose in the paper that has been fulfilled by the end, an interesting and varied vocabulary. **Papers will be evaluated and graded on the basis of each of these categories**. High honors marks ("A," "A-") are reserved for those papers that reflect exceptional achievement in all areas.

**ON PLAGIARISM:** You are requested **not** to use any secondary sources at all, aside from those specifically assigned, in the preparation of your exams and papers. (We want you to learn how to read and analyze the poetry on your own. Developing a premature dependence on secondary sources will not help you to become a competent reader of poetry. Only struggling with the poetic texts themselves will accomplish this.) If for some reason you do consult and make use of ideas from an outside source, you must scrupulously document it in your paper. “Outside sources” include ANY PRINTED OR ELECTRONIC SOURCES, AS WELL AS NON-PRINT SOURCES. It is now extremely easy to download term papers and scholarly essays from various websites; **but it is equally easy for us to search out the sources from which papers can be downloaded**. Therefore, do not be tempted by the apparent ease of obtaining these packaged essays. The consequences if you are caught cheating are very grave. The penalty for plagiarism at Harvard Extension is a failing grade in the course, rustication from the university, and an RQ notation on your permanent transcript (See Catalogue, "Academic Honesty," pp. 212-13). Academic theft is not a casual matter, so do not make the mistake of treating it as if it were. Most important, remember that we are interested in reading your ideas about the poetry and in watching your writing and analytical skills develop, not those of others. A useful text that describes how to properly cite quotations and employ source material is the Harvard College publication **WRITING WITH SOURCES**, available in hard copy at the Coop and free online at [www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/sources).

**Cosmetic Requirements**

All papers should be given a **title**. Titles can be clever, but they should be sufficiently straightforward that an informed reader can deduce the subject of the paper. Remember also that titles cannot be used as a substitution for the clear statement of your hypothesis in the opening paragraph. Each paper should have a **title page** that features the title of the paper (not in quotation marks or underlined), the student's name and credit status (GR or UG, and the name of your T.A.), the name of the course, and the date. The title of the paper is **not** repeated on page one of the text.

**Students should strictly adhere to the prescribed length of each paper:** a "3-page paper" means three pages only; a "3-4 page paper" means no fewer than three full pages and no more than four. Part of the discipline of writing comes from learning to fit your material into a prescribed length or format. All papers must be **typed and double-spaced** throughout, with **new**
paragraphs properly indented and no extra spacing between paragraphs. There should be a one-inch margin on the left, right, and bottom edges of the paper and a one-and-a-half-inch margin at the top. All pages should be numbered in the upper-right-hand corner or centered at the top or the bottom of the page. Use only a 10-or-12-point font.

If quoting passages in excess of 4 typed lines, quotations should be centered on the page, single-spaced, with no quotation marks around them. Quotations should be footnoted unless they come from course texts, in which case parenthetical references--citing the work, the page number, and line numbers--immediately following the quotation are adequate (Mellor & Matlak, 356, ll. 42-49). Do not waste valuable space with superfluous footnotes at the bottom of the page (use endnotes, if necessary)—OR with excessively lengthy quotations.

CLASS POLICIES

HOW YOUR COURSE GRADE WILL BE DETERMINED: For graduate students, the 2-page paper will count 10%, the mid-term exam 30%, the final exam 40%, the Abrams essay 10%, and bulletin board participation 10%. For undergraduates, the 2-page paper will count 10%, the mid-term 40%, the final 40%, and bulletin board participation 10% of the course grade. These percentages will be keyed to a 100-point grade scale to determine the course grade.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS: In addition to the review of THE MIRROR AND THE LAMP, some of the essays will be one or two pages longer for graduate students than for undergraduates (the equivalent of an additional paper). Graduate students' work will be expected to demonstrate a higher level of mastery of the subject matter, greater insight and sensitivity regarding the interaction of all the elements within a text, and superior writing skills.

POLICY ON LATE WORK:

ALL PAPERS ARE DUE ON THE DATES SPECIFIED. NO EXTENSIONS WILL BE GRANTED, UNLESS YOU HAVE SUFFERED A DIRE PERSONAL OR MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Students who are granted extensions on an assignment by the instructor must submit their work within 1 week of the original due date. This option is available only to those who obtain permission from the instructor. If you suffer such an emergency, contact me, not your TA, immediately: do not wait several weeks to explain why your work is late, for it will not be accepted then. Any unexcused late work will be automatically lowered one full letter grade for every day that it is late (e.g., one day late = no grade higher than "B" possible; two days late = no grade higher than "C" possible, etc.). Papers that have mandatory revisions must be submitted in two drafts; a single draft submitted in such cases will be regarded as the completion of only 50% of the assignment. To pass this course, students must perform ALL of the written assignments and revisions exactly as assigned, on the dates specified. Since all work must be submitted as email attachments, make sure that your email functions properly before the course begins. We recommend that you “cc” your papers to a spouse or friend, or to yourself at your workplace, so that you can retrieve your work and document the fact that it was sent on time, in the event of a technical failure. Please remember also that your actual grade will be based on the quality of the work submitted, not the mere fact of having submitted it.
EXTENSION SCHOOL POLICY ON GIVING A COURSE GRADE OF "EXT":
If a crisis of some kind prevents the timely completion of your work at the end of the semester and you wish to request an EXT in the course, you must first secure the permission of the instructor, then follow the schedule and the formal written procedure outlined in the Extension Course Catalogue, pages 214-15. No exceptions will be made. Students in poor standing in a course cannot be granted an EXT. Please note that INC grades are no longer given.

NON-CREDIT STUDENTS: Students taking the course for non-credit are welcome to ask questions and engage in discussions with the instructor and the TA and to participate in the section meetings. But we will not be able to read the written work of any non-credit students. The Extension School provides support staff only for credit students. Please do not ask us to make an exception for you.

ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONFERENCES, THE WRITING CENTER ONLINE RESOURCES, AND OTHER WRITING AIDS: Graduate students are especially encouraged to confer with me about issues of concern to them. Graduates and undergraduates alike are urged to discuss their writing, as well as any of the poetry, with the course assistant who is responsible for grading their papers and monitoring their progress throughout the term.

Credit students in need of extra help with their writing should also consult Harvard College’s Writing Center website at: www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr/. Click on “Writing Tools” and you will find 18 short essays on diverse aspects of the writing process and the development of expository essays.

For those of you who have forgotten everything you ever knew about grammar (and for those who never knew it in the first place!), some helpful texts are the following, most of which are available in larger bookstores and at amazon.com:

- Gibaldi and Achtert's THE MLA HANDBOOK
- Strunk and White's THE ELEMENTS OF STYLE
- Arthur Plotnik's THE ELEMENTS OF EDITING
- Margaret Shertzer's THE ELEMENTS OF GRAMMAR
- Sheridan Baker's THE PRACTICAL STYLIST
- James McCrimmon's WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

***And finally, we urge you to review the writing guidelines included in this syllabus before every assignment. They are designed to help you organize your ideas in the most efficient manner possible.***

Dr. Sue Weaver Schopf
Harvard, 2004-05