

Proposal Narrative:
UTEP Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences Development (U-CURED) Program
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Project Overview

I propose to develop an existing junior-level course in the English Department—ENGL 3360—as a U-CURED offering. English 3360, “Women in Literature,” is currently described in the UTEP course catalogue as “A study of literature by women writers. May be repeated once for credit when the topic varies.” This general description provides ample opportunity for curricular development. I have taught ENGL 3360 once before, and that experience generated the idea for the research project I propose here. As a medieval literature specialist with an active research and publication agenda in women’s writing, I most often teach other courses focused on early British literature, but my department chair supports my proposal to offer a course with a different focus – literature written by women – as a way to combine meaningful research opportunities to a broad range of interested students. My own research centers on recovering women writers who have been long overlooked by masculinist, Eurocentric approaches to the canon. After completing my first monograph on religious women writers in 2020, I have proposed a new project to Broadview Press: an anthology of British women writers for university classroom use. The press has expressed interest in the project and invited a proposal, and I am now beginning the work of identifying, contextualizing, gathering, researching and editing the widest range of women’s writing that might be included in the anthology. Teaching ENGL 3360 in conjunction with work on this project will deeply enhance my research agenda, while offering undergraduate students the opportunity to make original contributions to the field of literary studies by asking new research questions and developing research and writing skills that support a future publication. By involving our undergraduate students in this broad research undertaking, they will meet the student learning objectives of this course in a new way, participate in a tangible professional outcome that will introduce them to the larger professional discourse of our field, *and lay the groundwork for broadening participation in research at the institutional level*. My department chair, Brian Yothers, has committed to offering the course as described in this proposal for the next three years.

Required elements of proposed U-CURED Course

1. ENGL 3360 currently fulfills one of the major degree requirements of the major in English and American literature: Section three/ Cultural Studies.
2. I propose to teach 3360 in three iterations, once a year for the next three academic years. Each iteration of the class will cover women writers from the three sequential time periods of British literary history that will be covered by the anthology:
 - a. Spring 2022: Medieval Women Writers
 - b. Spring 2023: Early Modern Women Writers
 - c. Spring 2024: Restoration Women Writers

The proposed publication project which anchors the course will cover these three time periods. While each version of the course will cover different writers and texts, each will meet the curricular requirements of the class defined by the catalogue as a study of women writers. Ultimately, teaching these three versions of the course will serve as a test of the proposed anthology's coverage of the time period and appropriateness of the material for undergraduate study. Moreover, each version of the course will require new research investment from each student enrolled in the course, as they will be assigned a particular author/text to research and write about over the course of the semester. Finally, a graduate student assistant will provide research assistance in planning for course research and modification during summer 2021, summer 2022, and summer 2023.

3. ENGL 3360 has enrolled at least 18 students over the last three years.
4. My redesigned version of English 3360 will engage undergraduate students in original scholarly research and introduce them to the methodology of the field. Beginning with simple questions—Did women write in the Middle Ages? What did they write, to whom, how, and why?—the course will guide students toward developing more complex questions that require original research: What counts as “authorship” and how does authority intersect with that definition? Why are certain texts prioritized over others, and what forces—primarily gendered forces, but also racialized, linguistic, and class-based forces—construct literary history and thus invite closer scrutiny and, perhaps, reassessment? How does representation foster inclusion, and how do scholarly efforts to promote inclusion take account of these forces and difficulties, particularly when engaging with texts from the distant past? Applied to a discrete time period—British literature from written beginnings to 1800—this thematic focus allows students to develop their own research focus within a clearly defined time period in response to one of the still-urgent questions that guides feminist literary studies: “What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are...both overtly and covertly patriarchal?” (Gilbert and Gubar 1979).¹

These questions address a gap in the field of literary studies that has not yet been satisfactorily addressed. Currently, there is no comprehensive anthology of British/Anglophone women's writing that covers the time period I propose with the breadth required for teaching an undergraduate survey course. None of the comparable texts in the field offer the temporal, geographical, and linguistic coverage that I propose. The most well-known example, the *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (3rd edition 2007), contains only three writers from the medieval period, and does not restrict its scope to Britain.² The comparable *Longman Anthology of Women's Literature*, though it shares the Norton's admirable global scope, likewise limits its inclusion of medieval and early modern authors in its chronological scope; it is also now, sadly, out of print.³ Other more narrowly focused texts, such as *The Oxford World's Classics Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology, 1560-1700* (2000), Routledge's *Women's Writing in*

¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

² *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, ed Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (New York: Norton, 2007).

³ *Longman Anthology of Women's Literature* ed. Mary K. DeShazer (New York: Pearson, 2001).

Middle English (1992), and even the recent *History of British Women's Writing, 700-1500* (2012) limit their coverage by time period, language, or known author to such an extent that they would not be sufficient for a full semester survey course.⁴ In contrast to these examples, my proposed anthology for Broadview Press would cover women writers in Britain, broadly defined, during the Medieval and Early Modern periods, including women writing in the many diasporic languages of early Britain such as Latin, Welsh, Anglo-Norman French, and Middle English, as well as texts from colonial locations in the Americas under British control and texts written by more than one author or in genres not previously given serious attention in literary studies. Recent calls for more work dedicated to medieval women's authorship, for example, argues that "the notion of literary collaboration...opens up and helps us reassess the important role, whether overt or covert, played by women within literary history."⁵ Responding to such calls for more expansive and inclusive ideas about authorship, text, and canon, this project aims to reconsider how previous anthologies have presented and framed British women's writing as a coherent narrative tradition. The wide variety of the texts to be included in the proposed anthology require a great deal of research groundwork, and it is in this groundwork that the undergraduate students in ENGL 3360 will participate.

5. Students in each version of the course will be required to collaborate with a writing group that will present their ongoing work to the class over the course of the semester. This individual and group writing work will provide *opportunities for students to communicate the design, methods, and results of the inquiry*. Early in the semester, individual students will present their guiding research questions to the class, after which they will be grouped according to shared author and thematic interest; groups will then work together throughout the course to complete a series of research assignments intended to familiarize them with the research databases and tools necessary for working with early British texts. Students will be required to write two essays: one individually-written analysis of textual form and one group-written report on historical context and reception history. The final project in the course will include a group presentation of research findings as well as individual writing assignments addressing historical context and textual form and function. While the majority of this work will take place within the course, interested students will be encouraged to submit this work for consideration at appropriate academic conferences that provide a venue for presenting undergraduate work: on campus, the UTEP Women's and Gender Studies History Month Conference; off campus, the International Congress on Medieval Studies held annually in Kalamazoo, MI (and already scheduled to be virtual in 2022).
6. The written work produced by students in ENGL 3360 will be a tangible outcome—"recognizable products of Research and Scholarly Inquiry (RSI) in the discipline"—in that they will produce initial drafts of editorial apparatus for the anthology. This writing will include author biographies, introductory textual notes, historical context essays,

⁴ *Early Modern Women's Writing: An Anthology, 1560-1700* ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); *Women's Writing in Middle English*, ed. Alexandra Barrett (New York: Taylor & Francis/ Routledge, 1992, 2010); *The History of British Women's Writing, 700-1500*, ed. Liz Herbert Mcavoy and Diane Watt (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

⁵ Macavoy and Watt, *History*, 8.

linguistic notes (in some cases) and researched auxiliary material such as images of various types. This work will be acknowledged in the anthology's credits. In some cases, students may also produce scholarly presentations at academic conferences.

7. By participating in ENGL 3360 undergraduate students will gain a knowledge of women's writing in early British literature, develop critical thinking and primary and secondary research skills, and sharpen their analytical writing and professional presentation abilities. Below, I list evaluation techniques for the five student learning outcomes (SLO)s central to the U-CURED mission:
 - a. Ability to formulate a research question: Each student will develop a set of research questions relevant to their chosen author/text, both individually and within a group, which will guide their work throughout the semester. These questions might range from straightforward historical context questions such as "How did the black death provide an important context for religious writing in the fourteenth century" to more specific biographical questions such as "what historical evidence exists for Margery Kempe's marriage?" or disciplinary/framing questions such as "Why have Welsh authors such as Gwerful Mechain not been included in previous anthologies of British Women's Writing?"
 - b. Ability to develop a plan of action (methodology): Each student will complete a series of research planning assignments in service of their longer research projects, which will have both individual and group components. They will be given an orientation to the relevant textual and archival databases necessary to carry out research in early British literature specifically (the *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*; the online *Middle English Dictionary*; *Early English Books Online*) and literary studies more broadly (the MLA International Bibliography), and will perform independent research using these methods to meet the requirements of these assignments.
 - c. Apply critical thinking skills: Each student must analyze primary texts and locate and synthesize secondary sources obtained during research in order to produce their formal written work throughout the semester. Developing the ability to evaluate scholarly sources and integrate evidence into an original argument requires critical thinking, as does planning and executing the completed writing assignment.
 - d. Articulate elements of research ethics: In literary studies, research ethics requires a clear knowledge of plagiarism and its impact. All students will complete a workshop on avoiding plagiarism and the correct procedures if plagiarism is encountered.
 - e. Communicate research project/scholarly inquiry knowledge: each student will produce an individually-authored research project as well as group/collaborative writing: both individual and group projects will be presented to the class, with the option of developing a proposal to present the work at an academic conference.

8. At least 60% of the course grade will be tied to the RSI assignments and/or products:
 - 30% Essays
 - 10% Formal Homework Assignments
 - 20% Group Project

9. This course will require a graduate assistant for course development in summer 2021, summer 2022, and summer 2023 in order to prepare for each different iteration of the class. The attached budget spreadsheet indicates the summer salary for the graduate student, which is designated to be funded out of the proposed U-CURED grant funds. I anticipate working with a different M.A. student each summer, thus expanding the impact of this research opportunity to multiple graduate students in the department. Alongside their work assisting with course preparation, the graduate student assistants will have the opportunity to collaborate with me on a scholarly article to be submitted to *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Teaching*, a scholarly journal dedicated to medieval and early modern literature studies pedagogy.