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ENG 3803-001: Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century British Literature

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"At last it seems to me I have come to understand why man is the most fortunate of creatures and consequently worthy of all admiration and what precisely is that rank which is his lot in the universal chain of Being -- a rank to be envied not only by brutes but even by the stars and by minds beyond this world. It is a matter past faith and a wondrous one. Why should it not be? For it is on this very account that man is rightly called and judged a great miracle and a wonderful creature indeed . . . .

[In the Garden of Eden, God made] man as a creature of indeterminate nature and, assigning him a place in the middle of the world, addressed him thus: "Neither a fixed abode nor a form that is thine alone nor any function peculiar to thyself have we given thee, Adam, to the end that according to thy longing and according to thy judgment thou mayest have and possess what abode, what form, and what functions thou thyself shalt desire. The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained within the bounds of laws prescribed by Us. Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature. We have set thee at the world's center that thou mayest from thence more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made thee neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine."

~ Pico Della Mirandula, Oration on the Dignity of Man (1486)

Course Texts
John Donne, Works
George Herbert et al, Religious Poets of the Seventeenth Century
Ben Jonson et al, Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets
Thomas Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy in Four Revenge Tragedies
Thomas More, Utopia
Philip Sidney, Works
Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene, Book 3
Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler

Handouts and e-reserves as indicated below

Course Purpose and Expectations
This course is designed to introduce you to several major early modern British writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (also called the Renaissance or the Early Modern period). The works we will encounter in this class are rarely easy for the twenty-first century reader. I advise you to give yourself plenty of time to do the reading carefully and not to flinch when confronted by difficulty. Much class time will be devoted to discussing the political, religious, and intellectual context of these works and to addressing both their complexities and our confusion. In order to succeed in this class, it is absolutely essential for you do the reading, attend class with your text in hand, be actively engaged in class, and take notes. Much of the material on the exams will come from class lectures and class discussion. Please use my office hours whenever you would like to discuss your papers or the works we are reading in the course.
Attendance and Class Participation
I will take role every day, and I reserve the right to raise or lower final grades on the basis of purposeful attendance and active, consistent class participation or poor attendance and poor 1/3 a letter grade per additional absence (e.g., 6 absences would bring an A down to a B+, etc.). If I see you texting in class or using any technology inappropriately, I will ask you to leave and you will be counted absent for the day.

Plagiarists will be reported to the Office of Student Standards and will fail the course.

These policies are non-negotiable: your enrollment in my class constitutes your agreement to this state of affairs.

Assignments and Grade Distribution
Paper 1: 10%
Biographical exercise: 5%
MLA exercise: 5%
Historical exercise: 5%
Research paper (draft 1): 10%
Research paper final draft: 30%
Midterm: 10%
Final: 25%
Participation and attendance: very significant and consequential (see policy above)

Course Calendar
M Jan 7           Introduction: Renaissance “realism” and “idealism”
W Jan 9           Thomas More, Utopia, book 1
F Jan 11           Utopia, book 2
M Jan 13           Philip Sidney, The Defense of Poesy
W Jan 15           Sidney, Astrophil and Stella
F Jan 17           Sidney, Astrophil and Stella
M Jan 21           MLK Holiday—no class
F Jan 25           FQ, canto 1
M Jan 28           FQ, canto 2-3
W Jan 30           FQ, canto 4-5
Feb 1              FQ, canto 6
M Feb 4            FQ, canto 7-8
W Feb 6            FQ, canto 9-10
F Feb 8            FQ, canto 11-12
W Feb 13           ST, Acts 3-4, Paper I due
F Feb 15           Lincoln’s Birthday—no class
M Feb 18           Donne, Love poetry
W Feb 20           Donne, Love poetry
F Feb 22           Donne, satire 3, Biographical exercise due
M Feb 25    Donne, *holy sonnets*
W Feb 27    Donne, *Meditations*
F Mar 1     Donne *Anatomy of the World*

M Mar 4     Jonson, 3-14, 401-20; also Epistle, to Shakespeare, To myself, 73-5, 85-9
W Mar 6     Jonson, "Cary-Morison Ode" (76-79)
F Mar 8     Jonson, "To Penshurst," "To Sir Robert Wroth" (20-26), **historical exercise due**

**MWF Mar 11-15**  **Spring Break**

M Mar 18     Bacon, Advancement of Learning, book I (e-reserve)
W Mar 20     Bacon, *A of L*, book II (e-reserve)
F Mar 22     **Midterm exam**

M Mar 25     Bacon, *Great Instauration*, Proemium, ff., *Novum Organum* (e-reserve),
              **MLA exercise due**
W Mar 27     Herbert 3-25
F Mar 29     Herbert 29-45

M Apr 1      Herbert 55-64, 69
W Apr 3      **Research and Writing Day**
F Apr 5      **Research and Writing Day**

M Apr 8      Vaughan, 139-163, **First draft due**
W Apr 10     Vaughan, 165-179
F Apr 12     Herrick, 103-25, Lovelace, 305-324, Suckling, 252-271

M Apr 15     Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* (e-reserve)
W Apr 17     Walton, *Comp/eat Angeler*, selections
F Apr 19     Marvell, 93-112

M Apr 22     Marvell, 114-117
W Apr 24     Marvell, "Upon Appleton House," stanzas 1-46
F Apr 26     Marvell, "Upon Appleton House," stanzas 47-end, **Final draft due**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, April 30, 12:30-2:30 p.m.**