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ENG 3010G-002: Literary Masterworks

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3010G-002 Literary Masterworks
Fall 2006

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Office hours TTH 12:15-2:00pm, W 6:30-7:00pm,
and by appointment

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Texts
Shakespeare, *Henry V*, *Much Ado*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Midsummer Night’s Dream*
Tasso, *Aminta*

E-Reserves
-- Queen Elizabeth’s works from *Norton Anthology of English Literature*
-- Sonnet Sequence Handout
-- Sonnets and Popular Lyrics Handout
-- Isabella Andreini’s Satyr Scene from *La Mirtilla*
-- Sidney, excerpt from *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* (*New Arcadia*)

Course Focus

Do sentiments or imagery from Petrarch appear in lyrics blasting from your iPod? Do television sitcoms unconsciously channel comic formulae popularized by Boccaccio? Without Shakespeare, would Kenneth Branagh have a career? We will address these questions and many others in this course that is designed to provide an in-depth look at a selection of literary masterpieces. In general, we will also explore such questions as what makes a text a literary masterwork? What gives such a piece its enduring qualities? Does our concept of what constitutes a masterwork change over time as facets of our culture shift and change? To explore the ideas inherent in these questions, we will read texts from a period especially known for its masterworks, both in the visual and the literary arts, the Renaissance. Not coincidentally, embedded in the literature of this period, we will find traces of aesthetics, patterns of debate, philosophies of love, and codes of honor that inform many of our contemporary notions in ways that you have probably never considered.

Policies
-- The English Department statement on plagiarism stipulates that any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one’s original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.
--Hand assignments in on time. If you're having problems, let me know. Papers more than a week late without a university-approved excuse will not be accepted. If you miss an exam, and you have a university-approved excuse, you may make up that exam. You will have no more than one week to do so, and the make-up exam will be different from the one given during class. In-class assignments and group work cannot be made up.

--If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

--Be prepared for class. You'll get a lot more out of class discussions if you are participating in them, and I'll notice if you do not seem prepared to participate.

Requirements
--Three exams (15% each) 45%
--Response exercises; group work 5%
--One 7-10 page research paper 20%
--One research report with annotated bibliography 15%
--One presentation 15%

Total: 100%

The exams will cover the units of the semester; however, there will be interplay between these units of study in our discussions and in the test questions.

The response writings and group work will be concerned with specific reading assignments and are meant to generate class discussion. I will give you a series of questions to answer or a short topic to address.

The paper topic will be chosen from the assigned texts and issues related to them. I will give you a list of possible topics and/or areas of study to consider early in the semester because you will be expected to select a topic and begin research early on. The paper will be 7-10 pages long. You will use at least 3-5 outside sources to support your arguments, and they should consist of scholarly books, journal articles, and Internet sources of well-known scholarly repute. You will use MLA Parenthetical Style, with a Works Cited page, for documentation. Around midterm, you will have a preliminary research report with an annotated bibliography due to show the progress that you have made regarding your research project. Do not worry that we haven't covered the topic that interests you in class—this portion of our study is meant to be independent exploration of a topic that may be completely new to you. It is my hope that your independent study will augment for you what is eventually covered in class and will broaden the scope of the course as a whole for you. You, in turn, will share with the class what you have learned during your research near the end of the semester.

The research report and annotated bibliography will cover the research that you do for your research paper and presentation. The report will address the topic, why you chose the topic, and the avenues of research that you chose to explore. The annotated bibliography will consist of bibliographic citations of at least five sources with your notes
on each work that describe the document, summarize why it may be useful to your project, and include possible quotations that you might use in the paper.

The presentation will be a 7-10 minute oral report over your research project, due near the end of the semester. After conducting your research, discussing your findings with me, and writing your paper, you will be able to present to the class what you have learned. The goal is to provide, via your and your fellow students’ reports, both a “big picture” look at the subjects we have covered over the course of the semester, as well as introduce specialized information that you have focused on during your own independent reading.

Tentative Schedule

Note: Readings may be shifted around during the semester to accommodate class discussion.

T. Aug. 22—Introduction to the course and Renaissance literature.
For next class: read “Masterpieces of the Renaissance,” p. 1653, in Norton, as well as Petrarch Intro., p. 1664 and Sonnets, pp.1673-1678, in Norton. Read also Sonnet Sequence Handout and Sonnets and Popular Lyrics Handout on E-Reserves, and bring to class.

Unit One

Petrarch: Master of Lyric Poetry

Th. Aug. 24—Petrarch and popular lyrics. Discuss a) the spread of Petrarchism across the Continent to England, b) evidence of Petrarchism still popular in lyrics today. Consider: Is the mark of a literary master-writer the ability to tap into profoundly universal feelings and experiences? How might that be true in Pettrach’s case? What about the strains of anti-Petrarchism that flourished among some writers? Can you think of contemporary writers or lyricists who become so popular that there is a backlash against their work?
For next class: Response exercise: bring to class a list of 5 examples of Petrarchism that you find in contemporary music with the relevant lines quoted and relevant characteristic(s) of Petrarchism identified for each.

T. Aug. 29—Continue reading and discussing Renaissance poetry and contemporary lyrics.

Boccaccio: Master of Comedy in Renaissance Popular Culture

Th. Aug. 31—Discuss the three assigned tales from the Decameron. Consider what the
humor in these stories has in common with that of contemporary situation comedies. What are ways in which Boccaccio’s stories can be said to be characteristic of Renaissance interests and concerns? Are these concerns still relevant today?

For next class: Response exercise: bring to class a list of 3 examples of what we could consider Boccaccio-style humor from sit-coms or films. For each, give a brief synopsis of the scene and explain what is Boccaccian about it.

Read Marguerite de Navarre Intro., p. 1854; Heptameron, p. 1587-1861; “Day One, Story Three,” p. 1861; “Day One, Story Four,” p. 1865; “Day One, Story Eight,” p. 1876 and also read the narrators’ comments following the stories—in Norton.

T. Sept. 5—Continue discussion of Boccaccio’s tales. Begin discussion of Heptameron. Consider what aspects of Boccaccio’s work Marguerite de Navarre imitates and why. How do Navarre’s stories seem to differ from Boccaccio’s, in terms of theme, style, and simply what she tells us?

For next class: Continue thinking about the genre of Framework Stories. Can you think of any genre in popular culture that reminds you of this Medieval and early Renaissance genre?

Th. Sept. 7—Catch-up day.


For next class: read The Courtier by Castiglione and The Prince by Machiavelli in Norton.

Unit Two

Castiglione and Machiavelli: How to Win Friends or Just Win

T. Sept. 19—Discuss these two works as key “conduct books” of the Renaissance; consider why they were written and whom they influenced. Do we still have conduct books today? Is popularity power? Is fear power? How do we see these ancient strategies at work in today’s political arenas? In today’s business arenas?

For next class: Response exercise: Bring to class a list of three contemporary conduct books that seem related to issues of acquiring power, prestige, self-esteem, etc. Comment on which early modern forerunner the text more recalls—that of Castiglione or Machiavelli.

Th. Sept. 21—Continue discussion of Castiglione and Machiavelli.

For next class: read Queen Elizabeth’s works from E-Reserves. Also read Henry V. In Norton, read the intro. to Shakespeare.

T. Sept. 26—Consider Queen Elizabeth’s works in light of Castiglione and Machiavelli’s advice. Begin discussion of Shakespeare’s Henry V.
Shakespeare: The Great Synthesizer

**Th. Sept. 28**—Continue discussion of *Henry V*; begin Film. See your handout, Notes on Film as Text.
**For next class:** Response exercise: Bring to class a list of three ways in which Shakespeare’s *Henry* could be considered a machiavel.

**T. Oct. 3**—Finish film, *Henry V*.
**For next class:** read Torquato Tasso’s *Aminta*. From E-Reserves, read Andreini’s Satyr Scene from *La Mirtilla*.

**Torquato Tasso: Master of Pastoral Tragicomedy**

**Th. Oct. 5**—Discuss the characteristics of pastoral and tragicomedy. Consider the requisite satyr scene in pastorals—what are some key differences between Tasso’s and Andreini’s satyr scenes? What could be considered Petrarchan about Tasso’s *Silvia*? What are ways in which *Aminta* could be described as a Petrarchan lover? What do we make of this most famous of pastorals today? Does it still speak to us—is it still a masterpiece? Why or why not?

**For next class:** read *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. **Response exercise:** Bring to class a list of three ways in which you see characteristics of pastoral tragicomedy at work in *MND*.

**T. Oct. 10**—Discuss *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. Consider influences of Italian drama upon Shakespeare’s play. What is Petrarchan or anti-Petrarchan about *MND*? Where do you hear/see hints of Tasso’s influence?

**Th. Oct. 12**—Continue discussion of *MND*.

**T. Oct. 17**—Review for Exam 2. Also—hand out assignment sheets for Research Reports and Annotated Bibliographies.

**Th. Oct. 19**—Exam 2.
**For next class:** read Intro. to Ariosto and his *Orlando Furioso* in *Norton*.
**Response exercise:** Bring to class a list of the characteristics of a) the epic hero and b) the epic itself.

**Unit Three**

**Ariosto: Master of Crazy Love**

**T. Oct. 24**—Ariosto’s epic romance *Orlando Furioso* has something for everyone: it could be an academy award winner if made into a contemporary movie. It has heroes who are brave, bold, and crazy in love; it has women who are both bold and good and bold
and evil. It has excellent magic and the world's best horse ever—Bayard. It has overtones of religious strife that are uncannily reminiscent of that in our world today. In other words—yes, it has the right stuff to endure as a literary masterpiece. So—what do we think about it? And where in popular culture today do we see references to imagery, values, and storylines reminiscent of those in Orlando? What, by the way, is Ariosto recycling?

**For next class:** from E-Reserves, read excerpt from Sidney’s *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*.

**Th. Oct. 26**—Continue discussion of *Orlando Furioso* and consider Sidney’s English epic romance, *The Arcadia*. What influences do you see at work here? In addition to Ariosto, do you see traces of Petrarch? What about pastoral in general?

**For next class:** read *Merchant of Venice*.

**Two Master Tragicomedies: A Renaissance Summary**

T. Oct. 31—Begin discussion of *MV*. Consider issues of religious strife, philosophical inquiry, and anti-petrarchism that Shakespeare incorporates in this play. Where do you see traces of Italian influence? Where does Shakespeare seem to question much of what has come before? Why might this play also be considered a “problem play” in Shakespeare’s oeuvre?

**Note:** Research Reports and Annotated Bibliographies are due.

**Th. Nov. 2**—*MV*, film.

**T. Nov. 7**—*MV*, film.

**For next class:** read *Much Ado About Nothing*.

**Th. Nov. 9**—Consider *Much Ado* in light of all that has come before this semester. Where is Shakespeare making fun of Petrarchism? What are the Renaissance types of characters that his two pairs of innamorati represent? What are the concerns over legitimacy about that constantly arise in this play?

**For next class:** *Response exercise*: Bring to class a list of three ways in which this play references ideas, imagery, or values that still appeal today, as well as recall those in works we’ve read earlier this semester.

**T. Nov. 14**—*Much Ado*, film. Sign up for presentation dates and times.

**Th. Nov. 16**—*Much Ado*, film.

**Note:** Oral presentations begin after the break.

**T. Nov. 21**—Thanksgiving Break

**Th. Nov. 23**—Thanksgiving Break

**T. Nov. 28**— Oral presentations
Th. Nov. 30—Oral presentations.

T. Dec. 5—Oral presentations. Papers are due.

Th. Dec. 7—Review for Exam 3

Final Exam (Exam 3): Mon., Dec. 11, 2:45pm-4:45pm