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ENG 3803-002: Renaissance and Seventeenth Century Literature

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Course description and objectives: Any work of literature is the product not only of an individual writer's creative process but of the entire complex of forces that shape that writer's culture. Individual works usually do not exist in isolation but as part of a network of interactions.

The period we study is an age of enormous turmoil in politics, religion, science, law—virtually every area of existence—which produced, fortunately for us, some of the most widely recognized names in English literature: More, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, Milton. Also at work during this period were a host of writers whose names, perhaps, are not as well known, but whose work was also significant, particularly such writers as Lady Mary Wroth, Katharine Phillips, and Aphra Behn.

Through the work of these artists and others, we will examine the central issues of Renaissance humanism, arguments in literary criticism, major debates in religion and philosophy including gender issues, which commanded as much attention then as they do now. We will also consider why some of these names are so much more familiar to us than others as we examine the politics of writing and publishing then and now.

Caution (or gleeful preview as you choose to take it): writing from this period contains debates about authority and religion, and a fair amount of sexually explicit material.

Requirements: completion of ALL assigned reading and research by the due dates assigned.
Completion of both papers and both examinations on time.
Attendance at and substantive participation in class meetings.
Quizzes and group work as given.

Grading: 60 points, two papers, 6-8 pages each, 30 points each
30 points, mid-term exam.
30 points, final exam.
30 points quizzes, group discussion, participation, shorter writings. As the primary purpose of quizzes and shorter writings is to assure preparation for discussion, there will be no make-ups on these.
150 points total: 135-150 points = A, 120-134 = B.
105 - 119 = C, 90 - 104 = D, below 90 = F.
Participation: Must be substantive, that is, focused on the subject of our study. The last five minutes of class will be reserved for procedural questions when necessary. If you have a question about graded work, take your paper home, read it again, read my comments carefully, and then make an appointment with me. (It's not fair to make the rest of the class sit through a conference with your instructor.)

Standards for Written Work: Papers will be graded according to the English Department Standards for Grading Essays as well as specific criteria appropriate to each assignment. and will be graded on both content and form. Late papers will be penalized. Writing problems, whether a serious deficiency in one area or an accumulation of minor weaknesses, will affect a paper's final evaluation. I usually place copies of paper assignments in the Writing Center and alert tutors to expect that my students will come in for assistance. In addition, about two weeks before each paper is due, I will schedule optional conferences to read rough drafts and offer suggestions, but I will NOT estimate grades, since they are a reflection of the final product.

You may, of course, make an appointment at our mutual convenience whenever you like, either to run ideas by me or to have me read a draft. If you want me to read a draft, it should be in a week before the paper is due. in order to allow time for revisions.

Academic Honesty, Research, and Collaborative Work: You all know this by now, but for form's sake--

The English Department's Policy on Plagiarism is 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 a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office."

I regard any violation of academic honesty, including misappropriation or mishandling of sources, unauthorized help, cheating on exams etc. with the utmost seriousness and will apply the penalties severely. A student who transgresses will certainly receive an F in the assignment and most likely an F in the course. Such a student will also probably have to face a Judicial Board hearing. In doubtful cases, students may be tested over the contents of their papers.

I expect that students will be honest, and follow this policy to protect the overwhelming majority who do their own work and who deserve to have the integrity of that work respected. Again, in order to forestall problems, I encourage students to bring in drafts of their papers along with copies of their sources, especially if they are hesitant about their documentation skills.

Paper requirements:

Papers must be 6-8 pages and must be on assigned topics. If you wish to vary a topic, you must first obtain my consent. You may
exceed the limit if you wish and if the topic demands it. Papers must be typed and in MLA format. The Writing Center has handbooks explaining this method, and tutors who will be delighted to help you use them.

Course assignments:

You will receive a syllabus of assignments, readings, and due dates. Please keep up with it unless otherwise instructed, even if we are discussing something different in class.

Students with disabilities:

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please contact the coordinator of disability services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Ground rules for class discussion:

We agree to participate in discussion without monopolizing. When someone else is speaking, we agree to listen.

When we disagree, we will do so with respect for others' experiences, interpretations and points of view.

We recognize that we may make errors, and accept the responsibility for correcting them.

We agree to familiarize ourselves with research tools in our field and to use them wherever appropriate.

We agree to read carefully, think critically, and to discuss thoughtfully.

We accept responsibility for teaching each other.

IMPORTANT NOTE ON POLICIES AND SYLLABUS: While I have made every effort to spell out expectations and requirements as precisely as possible, it would take the ability to foresee the future to anticipate all circumstances. We may add to or alter policies or assignments, and an announcement in class will be considered sufficient notice. Keeping informed is your responsibility. I assume that if you remain in this class after you have read and understood the guidelines, you accept and agree to abide by them.
Readings are due on the dates assigned, even if we are discussing something else in class. Quizzes, if given, will be based on the assumption that you are up to date on the reading. "I read the wrong assignment" will NOT be an acceptable excuse.

Jan. 14 Introduction to course, texts, policies, and each other. For next time, read in Norton Anthology [N] introduction "The Sixteenth Century" 395-414

Jan. 16 Introductory discussion of period and backgrounds. For next time, in N, poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt, 438-450

Jan. 18 Discuss Wyatt’s poetry; For next time, in N, poetry of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (usually referred to simply as "Surrey") 450-457

Jan. 21 Discuss Surrey’s poetry. For next time, in N, Sir Thomas More, introductory material and selections from Utopia, 414-431. Question to think about: when is he serious, and when is he joking?

Jan. 23 Discuss More’s Utopia in the context of Renaissance Humanism and politics, as well as in the context of More’s own life. For next class, N, Sir Philip Sidney, introductory material beginning on 458, plus the following sonnets from Astrophil and Stella: 1 (460), 7 (461), 31 (464), 74 (469), and the three poems at the end of the selection, "The Nightingale" (500), "Thou Blind Man’s Mark" (500), and "Leave Me, O Love" (501)

Jan. 30 Discuss Sidney’s poetry. For next time, his literary theory and criticism as expressed in "The Defense of Poesy" N 479 (beginning at the bottom of the page) through 500. For next time, begin Spenser’s poetry with The Shepheardes Calendar, N 501-514.

Feb. 4 Discuss Shepheardes Calendar: For next time, begin Book 1 of The Fairie Queene. N 519 until we all poop out: we’re going to get through as much of this as we possibly can in a week, then spend a day relaxing with "Epithalamion" (738-748). Stay with things here, because your paper will be due in a couple of weeks (you’re getting a separate assignment sheet for that) and you’ll need to keep up with the reading, too.
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Jan. 30 Discuss Sidney's poetry.

Feb. 4 Continue discussion of Sidney's poetry. Brief introduction to ideas in Defense of Poesy, which we'll read AFTER we've taken a look at Spenser. For next time, Spenser, Shepheardes Calendar "To His Booke" and "Aprill" (N 503 and 504-509).

Feb. 6 Discuss Shepheardes Calendar, emblem books, and classical pastoral eclogues.

Feb. 11 Continue discussion of Shepheardes Calendar. For next time, begin Book 1 of The Fairie Queene. N 519 until we all poop out: we're going to get through as much of this as we possibly can in a week. then spend a day or two relaxing with "Epithalamion" (738-748). Stay with things here, because your paper will be due in a couple of weeks (you're getting a separate assignment sheet for that) and you'll need to keep up with the reading, too.
Feb. 13 Fairie Queene
Feb. 18 Fairie Queene
Feb. 20 Fairie Queene
Feb. 25 Fairie Queene
Feb. 27 "Epithalamion" (see above); for next time, get started on
Defense of English Poesy. N 479-500

Mar. 1 finish "Epithalamion" and begin Defense of English Poesy
as time permits

Mar. 4 Continue Defense of English Poesy. For next time, Hoby,
"Castiglione's The Courtier," N 973-998

Mar. 11 discuss Hoby and timetable for second paper. After
break, we'll begin with Ascham, selections from The Schoolmaster
N 991-996 and John Foxe, from Acts and Monuments, 996-997.

Mar. 13 Your break starts early, as this is the class day off
we've agreed upon to replace the evening you came in to see "A
Man For All Seasons"

Mar. 18-20 Spring Break

Mar. 25 Ascham and Foxe. For next time, Queen Elizabeth (okay,
Queen Elizabeth the First if you want to get picky about it)
"Speech to the Troops at Tilbury" and then, for comic relief,
John Lyly, the selection from Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit (N,
beginning on 1000 and 1003 respectively.)

Mar. 27 Discuss Elizabeth and Lyly. (Or Elizabeth and John, or
E. Tudor and J. Lyly if you want to be 20th, rather than 16th
Century "pc" about it. Also, go over questions for first exam.
For next time, anonymous lyrics N 1036-1041, Mary (Sidney)
Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. "A Dialogue between two shepherds,
Thenot and Piers" N 1046-1048.

Apr. 1 Go over poems for the weekend's reading assignment.
For next time, be sure to have notes (1 page) for exam prepared.

April 3 Exam, full period. For next time, read the selections
from Aemilia Lanyer, N 1059-1067.

April 8 Go over Lanyer. For next time, read "The Early
Seventeenth Century" and selections from John Donne, N
1069-1081 and poems "The Good Morrow" (1082-3). "Song" (1083-4),
"The Sun Rising" (1085). "The Indifferent" (1085-6), "The Flea"
(1090-91). "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning" (1093-4), and
"Elegy 19: To His Mistress Going to Bed". We’ll divide into teams, and each team will be responsible for a 5 to ten minute presentation on the poem in the next class meeting. Part of what I’ll expect you to do is show the connection between the times and the poem where possible, but mostly I’d like you to see the humorous uses of logic and the interplay of language and form.

April 10 Presentations and a brief introduction to the earlier seventeenth century. For next time, Donne’s religious poetry: Holy Sonnets 5, 7, 10, 14, 18 (You might think about comparing this to certain passages in "Satire 3"), "Good Friday 1613: Riding Westward" 1118-9, and "A Hymn to God the Father." Also read, from "Devotions upon Emergent Occasions," Meditation 17. You may very well recognize part of this, but may have thought it was from a poem. We’ll look briefly at some other poets whose style has been compared to Donne’s.

April 15 Conclude discussion of Donne’s work and engage in a brief comparative study of Donne, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Marlowe (you’ll find by this time that you don’t really need that much advance preparation for this one, but I’ll bet if you really wanted to, you could figure out which poems we’ll be doing.) For next time. poetry of Ben Jonson. "To My Book" (1217), "On Something that Walks Somewhere" (1217). "On My First Daughter" (1218). "On My First Son 1220" (1220). "To Penshurst" (1223-1225). "Ode to Himself (1243-1244).

April 17 Discuss Ben Jonson’s poetry, with some background information about his plays and masques. Again, we’ll look at other poets whose work has been associated with Jonson’s. (Jonson and Donne are often seen as the chief proponents of different "schools" or styles of poetry. That’s an oversimplification. There’s some truth to it, but a lot more critical hype.) For next week. John Webster’s play The Duchess of Malfi. I’ll ask you to break into teams again, and prepare 5 minute scenes from the play to present in class on April 24.

April 22 Duchess of Malfi; for next time, scenes from Duchess and the Introduction to Kissing the Rod 1-31.

April 24 As indicated above. For next time, teams will be assigned a poet from Kissing the Rod as indicated in class and will do a brief presentation on that poet’s life and work in the context of her times. That paper you’ve been working on since before mid-term is due today, but you have an automatic extension til Tuesday if you need it.

April 29 Penalties for late papers start at the beginning of the class meeting. Presentations, and an introduction to developments in seventeenth-century prose style emphasizing "the three B’s" (that’s Bacon, Browne, and Burton, not Bach, Beethoven and Brahms), with brief selections from each for comparison’s sake.
This is the time-honored method of concluding a course covering this period, and it's actually a pretty useful way of wrapping it up and looking at the directions the literature of England takes in the years following the period we examine.

May 1 Discussion as indicated above and preparation for the final exam. Last class, but I HOPE not the end of your involvement with the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Final Exam Tuesday, May 6, 2:45-4:45 in our regular classroom.