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ENG 3803-001: Renaissance & 17th Century Literature

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Dr. William J. Searle

English 3803—sec.001—14:00 to 14:50—MWF—CH 3150

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The following texts are used for English 3803:


Attendance: Plan to attend every class. You might glance at page 55 of the 2005-2006 catalog concerning this matter. Obviously, a student seldom does well in a course and never performs to his or her full potential when he or she cuts class frequently. For that reason, I have established the following attendance policy. For every five unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered one letter grade. If you have ten unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered two letter grades, etc. Late papers will be accepted only in cases of extreme emergency—severe illness, official university activity, or other urgent reasons.

Departmental statement on plagiarism: “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.”

Course Load and Grading: Despite the number of texts, the reading assignments are not excessive, as the course outline will indicate. Two separate hourly exams will count 20 percent apiece, reading check quizzes, group work, and class participation 10 percent, a medium-length essay (6 to 8 typewritten pages of text) 30 percent, and a final exam 20 percent. Of course, you are responsible for keeping up with reading and writing assignments, even if you are unable to attend class. In other words, a missed class is not an excuse for not being prepared on your return. Learn the assignment from a classmate or from your instructor. 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.
Course Description:

The literature of the 16th and 17th Century English Renaissance is both rich and diverse. Our study will include brief selections from the best poets (Wyatt, Sidney, Donne), prose writers (More, Bacon, Browne), and dramatists (Marlow, Jonson, Webster) of that period. In a breath of fresh air, Elizabeth Cary, Amelia Lanyer, and Mary Wroth may provide a qualifying/clarifying perspective to the issues of the time, whether they concern the rights of authorship, the nature of Petrarchan desire, or other male prerogatives of that era. Though we will delight in plays like Dr. Faustus, Volpone, and The Duchess of Malfi, the emphasis of the course will be on enjoying the non-dramatic literature of the Renaissance.

Terms that will pop up and that will be defined and illustrated in the course include: Renaissance Humanism, Petrarchism, courtly maker, sonnet sequence, Platonism, Euphuism, revenge tragedy, metaphysical poetry. Students already familiar with these terms and the authors listed above have a head start in English 3803; those who don’t really need the course. No lie.

Given the large number of authors studied and the anthologized nature of the selections, reading assignments will be brief. Honest. Basic class procedure will be informal lecture and discussion periods, and, when appropriate, video. Students may expect two one-hour exams, a final, and one medium-length paper (approximately 6 to 8 typewritten pages of text) due during the second last week of class. Each student will be encouraged to discuss his or her proposed topic with me several weeks before the essay is due.

A Very Tentative Outline for English 3803

Wk #1—Mon. Jan. 9—Discussion of course and assignment of texts
   Fri. " 13—Selected poems of Wyatt, pages 525-537 in Norton

Wk #2—Mon. " 16—KING'S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE—NO CLASS
   Wed. " 18—Selected poems of Wyatt; if time permits, discussion of Selected poems of Surrey, pages 569-576 in Norton

Wk #3—Mon. " 23—Selections from Book II of Utopia, pages 511-523 in Norton
   Wed. " 25—Selections from Roger Ascham’s The Schoolmaster, pages 563-569 in Norton, quiz?
   Fri. " 27—The other side of the coin: Humanism’ suggested role for women Handouts; read pages 5-12 of Martin’s Women Writer’s in Renaissance England and “The Examinations” of Anne Askew Pages 57-70 in Women Writers.
Wk #4—Mon. Jan 30—Early Elizabethan Comedy: Peele’s *Old Wives’ Tale*, on Handout, quiz?
   Wed. Feb. 1—Peele’s *Old Wives’ Tale*
   Fri. “ 3—Ovidian Mythological Poetry: Marlowe’s “Hero and Leander,” Pages 971-989 in *Norton*

Wk #5—Mon. “ 6—Early Elizabethan Tragedy: Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* on Handout
   Wed. “ 8—Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy*
   Fri. “ 10—Loose ends, *The Spanish Tragedy*

WK #6—Mon “ 13—Other early Elizabethan Tragedy: Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus*, pages 990-1023 in *Norton*, graded group work or quiz, possibly both
   Fri. “ 17—LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY OBSERVANCE—NO CLASS

Wk #7—Mon. “ 20—Elizabethan Prose: from Hoby’s translation of Castigione’s *Courtier*, pages 577-593 in *Norton*
   Wed. “ 22—Exam #1 (through Marlowe)
   Fri. “ 24—Begin Sidney’s “Defense of Poesy”, pages 933-954 in *Norton*

Wk #8—Mon. “ 27—Conclude Sidney’s “Defense,” begin sonnet sequences:
   Selected sonnets from Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*, pages 916-931 in *Norton*
   Wed.Mar.1—Selected sonnets from Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella*

   Wed. “ 8—If time permits, selected poems from Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia*, pages 404-415 in *Women Writers*, graded Group work.
   Fri. “ 10—Selected sonnets from Shakespeare, pages 1028-1042 In *Norton*

SPRING RECESS—MARCH 11 THRU MAR 19—NO CLASSES
Wk #10—Mon. Mar. 20—Shakespeare, selected sonnets.
   Wed. “ 22—Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, cantos from Book I in *Norton*

   Student conferences on final essay for the next several Weeks: MTWThF

Fri. “ 24—selected cantos from Book I of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*

Wk #11—Mon. “ 27—Selected cantos from Book I of Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*
   Fri. “ 31—Begin Classical school of poetry: selected poems from Ben Jonson, pages 1393-1399 in *Norton*

Wk #12—Mon. Apr. 3—Selected poems of Ben Jonson, especially “To Penshurst,”
   Pages 1399-1401; also Aemilia Lanyer’s “The Description Of Cooke-Ham,” pages 1287-1292 in *Norton*
   Wed. “ 5—Begin Metaphysical Poetry: selected poems of John Donne,
   Pages 1233-1254 in *Norton*
   Fri “ 7—Selected poems of John Donne.

Wk #13—Mon. “ 10—Selected poems of John Donne, especially his Holy Sonnets,
   Pages 1268-1271 in *Norton*
   Wed. “ 12—The other side of the coin: selected poetry from Mary Sidney Herbert’s psalms, page 316-32 in *Women Writers*
   Fri. “ 14—If time permits, Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*
   Page 366-390 in *Women Writers*

Wk #14—Mon.” 17—Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam, the Fair Queene of Jewry*, pages 43-75 of *Renaissance Drama by Women*, graded Group work
   Wed. “ 19—Elizabeth Cary’s *The Tragedy of Mariam*
   Fri. “ 21—Paper Due, two extra points for all turned in early or on time.
   If time permits, poems of George Herbert, pages 1595 to 1615 In *Norton*

Wk #15-Mon. “ 24—If time permits, Jacobean tragedy: Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*
   Pages 1433-1507
   Wed. “ 26—Webster’s *Duchess of Malfi*
   Fri. “ 28—Loose ends, Study Guide for Final Exam distributed; review

FINAL EXAMS—MAY 1 THRU MAY 4 (from Ben Jonson to end of the semester)
Areas of Interest for Paper Topics

Below you will find a list of areas of interest relevant to material studied in English 3803. Obviously, the list does not pretend to an exhaustive one. As the semester progresses, I will suggest other topics to write about. Since the areas of interest are rather general, they will have to be restricted and focused according to your own interests and findings. In other words, restriction of topic and construction of a thesis sentence are your responsibilities. Of course, you are encouraged to create your own topics. All I ask is that you let me approve your topic several weeks before you actually start working on your essay. A brief talk with me may save you from later bitterness and gnashing of teeth.

The essay should be of medium length—6 to 8 typewritten pages of text double spaced—essentially critical in nature. Needless to say, your paper must not be a mere rehash of information discussed in class. Because of the limited nature of our library’s resources, I am not requiring that you use secondary sources (articles in journals, chapters from books, etc.). However, in many cases, research and citation of secondary sources would inspire your own ideas and lend support to your work. If you decide to research your topic, remember to review the introductions to the various authors and selections in our textbooks. All of our texts also provide suggested further reading for each work discussed. The best place to look would be the MLA Bibliography found electronically and on the shelf in Booth Library.

Of course, whenever you receive this “extra help,” whether the ideas are paraphrased or copied word for word, you are required to document your sources appropriately. To “forget” to do so, as you know from English 1001G and English 1002G, is grounds for failure on the paper and perhaps the course. Original sources, as the selections in our texts, should also be documented. The MLA Style Sheet, 6th Edition, is found in most college handbooks and also is available in our Writing Center, room 3110 (301) Coleman Hall. The paper is due April 21. Essays will not be accepted after April 28.

--the ideals of Castiglione’s Courtier as they are reflected in another work (or other words) of that period.
--An interpretation of 2 or 3 significant cantos of any book of Spenser’s The Faerie Queene
--humanistic theories of education in Ascham’s Schoolmaster (complete) or Elyot’s The Governor (complete)
--relation of structure to meaning in More’s Utopia (complete) or Utopia as an expression of humanism
--Lily’s Euphues (all of part one) as a psychological novel
--Renaissance ideals as reflected in Hoby’s translation of Castiglione’s Courtier (complete)
--a comparative study of Chapman’s completion of “Hero and Leander” (focusing on Chapman here)
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Searle

You construct topics from these general areas:
--Petrarchanism as it is illustrated in the poetry of Spenser, Sidney, or Donne
--Donne's elegies (all 20 of them) or the complete Divine Poems
--George Herbert's The Temple
--one or two of Jonson's plays (not discussed in class) as an illustration of the techniques and concerns of the author
--a comparative study of More's History of King Richard III and Shakespeare's version
--a manifestation of humanist ideals in a work by a major Renaissance author—Sidney, Shakespeare, Spenser, Marlowe, etc.

--a Jonsonian comedy versus a Shakespearean comedy
--Senecan plot devices in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy versus those in Shakespeare's Hamlet
--The movie version of Marlowe's Doctor Faustus versus the text of the play
--a detailed unit plan on teaching one of the works discussed in class, like Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, More's Utopia, Shakespeare's sonnets, or metaphysical poetry, etc.
--a discussion of the differences between Mary Sidney Herbert's "Thenot and Piers" versus any one of the poems in Spenser's Shepheardes Calendar, like "April" or "October"
--a discussion of major issues and concerns of one of the films or videos depicting Renaissance England—Fire Over England, Lady Jane, Elizabeth R., A Man for all Seasons, etc.
--the difference in voice between Anne Askew's "Examinations" vs. John Foxes Acts and Monuments
--the concerns of Wroth's sonnet sequence versus Sidney's
--your own creative writing—plays, poetry that deal with Renaissance genre, verse form, issues, themes: obviously, this is one of those “see your instructor well ahead of time” topics.