ENG 5002-001: Studies in English Renaissance Literature: Shaping the English Renaissance

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English 5002-001: Studies in English Renaissance Literature:  
Shaping the English Renaissance  
Spring 2003

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Office hours TTH 12:15-1:45; W 2-3; and by appointment

t 7:00-9:30 pm
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Textbooks
Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier
Cerasano and Wynne-Davies, Renaissance Drama by Women
Shakespeare, Much Ado About Nothing

Texts Online
Aminta by Torquato Tasso, trans. by Malcolm Howard:  
www.english.iup.edu/mhayward/aminta.htm
A Midsummer Night’s Dream: www.bartleby.com/70/index18.html
As You Like It: www.bartleby.com/70/index20.html
The Life of King Henry the Fifth: www.bartleby.com/70/index29.html

Course Description
This seminar, called Shaping the English Renaissance, will focus on a selection of texts from the English Renaissance, as well as the Continental Renaissance, without which there would be no English Renaissance. The historical backdrop to the literature of this period involves brutal wars of religion, which are often only thinly disguised political power struggles, as well as advancements in art, literature, philosophy, and education that give rise to the contemporary term “early modern” when describing this period. Catholic and Protestant forces contend, Kings and queens are excommunicated, explorers navigate the world, and poets and playwrights combine classical, medieval, and contemporary notions in their forms and imagery. Moreover, the art of imitation becomes a critical driving force in the development of Renaissance literature, just as it is a constant in the development of the Renaissance visual arts. During the semester, we will explore the patterns of influence that may be traced between Continental and English texts, and we will also discuss the religious and political machinations that are inextricably woven into much of the literature.

We will begin, for example, with poems by Petrarch, then look at a selection of poems by Sidney, Shakespeare, and others to explore English use of Petrarchism. We will discuss Machiavelli’s Prince alongside Shakespeare Henry V and Castiglione’s Courtier alongside numerous texts. Such pairings and groupings invite consideration of
Renaissance trends in a variety of genres. One goal is to give you a broader understanding of what is and isn’t English about English Renaissance literature. Another, more important goal is to provide you the opportunity to delve into this rich store of literature that in many ways has informed our contemporary tastes.

Since this is a graduate seminar, you will be responsible for oral reports and research projects that help us build upon our collective knowledge as we explore the texts this semester. One good strategy for graduate students who are interested in professional development is to target a professional conference at which they might present a paper. With that thought in mind, I hope that you will consider submitting a conference paper version of your main project—or any of the oral reports that strike your fancy—to the Illinois Philological Association Conference to be held at Millikin University, Springfield, March 28-19, 2003.

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 papers in and have reports prepared on time. If you're having problems, let me know. We'll do our best to work the reports into our schedule, but I cannot guarantee that there will be time for them at any time other than that for which they are scheduled. Papers more than a week late without a University-approved excuse will not be accepted at all.

--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 and Grades

2 exams: 20% each of final grade 40%
2 presentations with reports: 15% each of final grade 30%
1 seminar paper: 30% of final grade 30%

The paper topic will be chosen from subjects that arise in class, regarding the assigned texts. You will use MLA Parenthetical Style with Works Cited. The presentations will be the products of two short research assignments related to contextualizations of the material we are reading. They are also meant to be opportunities to begin exploring topics that may interest you for the seminar paper.
Tentative Schedule

Note: Some readings may be shifted around or dropped during the semester to accommodate the class discussion.

T. Jan. 14—Introduction to the course. Discuss reports. (See handout.) Review general background on the Renaissance. For next week: read Petrarch in *World Masterpieces*. Read also Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder; Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*; Sir Philip Sydney's *Astrophil and Stella*; Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*; and Shakespeare's *Sonnets in English Literature*. Be sure to read the “Introduction to the Sixteenth Century” in *English Literature*.

Poetry in Motion: Petrarch Takes Europe and England

T. Jan. 21—Report 1: Background on Francesco Petrarca and the *Canzoniere*
   Report 2: Background on Shakespeare and the English sonnet
   Report 3: Women Writers and the Sonnet
Class: Explore the development of Renaissance poetics, noting the emphasis on the need to imitate a master vs. the desire for originality. Questions to consider: What is Neoplatonic love? How is it evident in Petrarch’s verse? What happens to it in Shakespeare’s verse? What is courtly love? How is it evident in the poetry? Do you agree with the idea that a sonnet functions, as Michael Delahoyde puts it, as “an act of intuition complete in itself, seeking to crystalize a tender state of being”? What is the relationship of self to other in a sonnet? Could the other be characterized as an Other? What is the typical relationship like between the poet and the subject in a love sonnet?

How to Act: Winning Friends and Just Winning

Jan. 28—Report 1—Origins of *Il Cortegiano* or *The Courtier* and Its Publishing/Translation History
   Report 2—Machiavelli’s Life and Motivations
   Report 3—Critical Considerations: Was Henry VIII a Machiavel? Was Elizabeth I? Were There English Ideal Courtiers?
Note on Dates: (1533—Henry VIII is excommunicated by Clement VII; 1534—Henry VIII declares himself head of English church; 1547—death of Henry VIII; 1553—death of Edward VI; 1558—death of Mary; 1567—Mary Q. of Scots is imprisoned in England; 1570—Elizabeth I is excommunicated by Pope Pius V).
Class: Discuss the concept of conduct books: were these texts early examples? Explore the idea of “self-fashioning” during the Renaissance. How does personal “self-fashioning” recall the art of imitation in literature and visual arts, or does it? What were the critical issues that Renaissance rulers faced? List three or four to discuss in class. How are these issues reflected in literature? This is a theme that we will return to as the
semester progresses.

**Secondary sources for further reading:** "The Court" in *The Elizabethan Renaissance* by A.L. Rowse. *The First Elizabeth* and *Great Harry* by Carolly Erickson.

**For next week:** read Queen Elizabeth's *Hercules Oetaeus* in *Renaissance Drama by Women*, as well as her writings in *English Literature*. Read (and print out) *The Life of King Henry the Fifth* (1599).

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**Portraits of Rulers: Sweet Talk and Threats**

**T. Feb. 4**—Report 1—Holinshed’s *Chronicles* and Henry V

Report 2—The Last Years of Elizabeth’s Reign

**Note on Dates:** (1576—James Burbage builds The Theater; 1599 Globe Theater opens; 1603—Elizabeth dies; James VI, I ascends the throne—begins the Stuart dynasty).

**Class:** Discuss the variety of possible readings for the play, *Henry V*, then focus on the influence of Machiavelli. List three or four instances in the play that clearly echo a Machiavellian sensibility. Also consider where, in his rhetoric and speeches in general, HV seems to scorn the niceties of the education of the ideal prince (or courtier), listing one or two examples. Also to consider, where in the play do you see patriotism treated as an aspect of religion? Regarding the readings by Elizabeth, what similarities do you see between her rhetoric and that employed in the play? What do you know about her reign that reflects the idea of divine providence for England interwoven with patriotism?

**For next week:** read Notes on Film as Visual Text.

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**T. Feb. 11**—Film, *Henry V*, and discussion. See Notes on Film as Visual Text.

**For next week:** read Erasmus’s *In Praise of Folly* in *World Masterpieces*; Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia*; and John Calvin in *English Literature*.

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**Wit, Religion, and the Perils of Taking Sides**

**T. Feb. 18**—Report 1: The Relationship between Erasmus and Thomas More

Report 2: Luther, Erasmus, and the Protestant Reformation


**Note on Dates:** (1517—Luther nails the Ninety-Five Theses to the Castle Church Door in Wittenberg. 1529-32—More is Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII. 1535—More is executed. 1537—John Calvin’s *The Institution of Christian Religion*)

**Class:** Discuss these texts in relation to political/religious upheaval of the times. Consider Luther’s emphasis on “sola scriptura” and “sola fide.” Why did Henry VIII have More executed? Discuss: 1) neoclassical influence on the *Utopia*, 2) contemporary influences on the *Utopia*, and 3) reception of the work. Regarding *Folly*, 1) what popular rhetorical strategies does Erasmus satirize? Give two or three examples. 2) What are some of the reformist goals that Erasmus addresses in *Folly*? Give an example. What is the significance of using the figure of a fool for such satire?

**Sources for further reading:** John C. Olin’s *Christian Humanism and the Reformation*.

**For next week:** read (and print out) Tasso’s *Aminta* and Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer
T. Feb. 25—Report 1: Commedia Erudita and Tasso’s Aminta
Report 2: English Imitations of Aminta
Report 3: Use of the Pastoral During the Renaissance

Class: Discuss Italian troupes in England and the reaction to them by the English.
Consider the aspects of A Midsummer Night’s Dream that reflect Petrarchism, classical references, and the Aminta. List two or three examples for each one. Watch at least part of A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Sources for further reading: Lady Mary Wroth’s Love’s Victory and Samuel Daniel’s The Queene’s Arcadia.


For next week: review for midterm exam.

T. Mar. 4—Midterm exam.
For Mar. 18: read (and print out) As You Like It. Read also Much Ado About Nothing and Thomas Nashe, The Defense of Plays in English Literature.

T. Mar. 11—Spring Break

T. Mar. 18—Report 1: Philip Sidney’s Apology for Poetry
Report 2: Thomas Nashe on Playing
Report 3: The Renaissance Dialogue

Class: Compare elements of As You Like It and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, discussing the ways in which they borrow from Aminta. Consider the ways in which As You Like is also seems to be influenced by the popularity of Renaissance dialogues. List two or three issues of debate in the play. What are some of the arguments presented? Discuss potential influences of Italian commedia troupes present in the play. Where in both As You Like It and Much Ado do you see sprezzatura at work? Where, in Much Ado, does Shakespeare mock theRenaissance affinity for sonnet-writing? What stock Renaissance “types” of women do Beatrice and Hero represent?


For next week: read Ariosto’s Orlando Furioso in World Masterpieces; Spenser’s Fairie Queene in English Literature.
Fine Romances: Pastoral Pushed to Its Limits?

T. Mar. 25—Report 1: Spenser: His Romance and Elizabeth
   Report 2: Sidney’s The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia
   Report 3: Wroth’s The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania

Class: Define and discuss characteristics of the Renaissance Romance. Compare elements of Orlando Furioso and the Faire Queene: list two or three concepts that you think Spenser borrowed from Ariosto. List two or three thematic differences in the works. Especially be ready to discuss issues concerning religion in Spenser. Consider the depictions of women in these romances. What figures would you describe as archetypal? Consider the making of Elizabeth into a Neoplatonic Ideal Beloved, the Virgin (Queen) /Mary, the ideal ruler, and a virago or amazon. Think about Jean de Meun’s Roman de la rose and Christine de Pizan’s Epître au dieu d’amour: discuss the beginnings of the querelle des femmes and why, in its earliest stages, it was related to depictions of women in Romance.

Secondary sources for further reading: Dana Heller’s The Feminization of Quest­Romance; Louis B. Wright’s Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England.

For next week: read Lyly’s Euphues; Goldings’s From Ovid’s Metamorphoses; Marlowe’s Hero and Leander, as well as “The Passionate Shepherd to His Love”; and Thomas Campion’s “I Care Not for These Ladies,” in English Literature.

Renaissance Reprise in England: Longing for the Golden World

T. April 1—Report 1: The Popularity of Epyllia, or Mythological Erotic Poetry
   Report 2: Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis
   Report 3: Thomas Campion: Life and Poetry
   Report 4: Christopher Marlowe: Life and Work

Class: Discuss traditional Renaissance characteristics of these works, especially exploring the ways in which they celebrate classical antiquity. List two or three ways in which you think classical antiquity is romanticized in these works. Return to Shakespeare’s sonnets and, if there is time, look at some of Donne’s poems to consider what becomes of Petrarchism in some English poetry.

Secondary sources for further reading: William Kennedy’s Authorizing Petrarch.

For next week: Bring to class a brief description and tentative outline for your research project. If you are still uncertain and have more than one topic that interests you, bring a list of two or three

T. April 8— In class each person will briefly present a plan for the research project, discussing 1) the topic (or, at this point, topics), 2) what led him/her to the topic, and 3) potential avenues of research and development. We will use this class for a large conference session, so to speak, helping each other consider ways to narrow and focus topic ideas and offering advice for research.

T. April 15—Meet in Booth Library.
T. April 22—Catch-up day/ Discussion of papers.

T. April 29—Seminar papers are due. Review for final exam.

Final exam: Tues., May 6, 7:30 pm.