

1.Course Description

Course Title

English Renaissance Poetry

Course Description

This course aims to cover some of the key poetic texts of the English Renaissance over 18 1.5hr lectures. It will specifically consider the ways these texts explore the relationship between the human – love, death, politics – and that which lies beyond the human – the ideal, the metaphysical, and God. Poems by Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne, Herbert, and Milton will be covered. These are some of the most important figures in English literature, but whose language and chronological distance make them daunting to many students. This course will not only make them more accessible, but it will teach students methods of close reading which will give them the skills to read other similarly difficult texts in the future.

By the end of this course a student will have:

- i) A greater understanding of notoriously daunting poetic texts that are nevertheless central to the English literary canon.
- ii) Thought deeply about why, in Renaissance poetry, the most human of experiences are used to intimate that which lies beyond the human.
- iii) Considered these highly influential poems in a thematic way so as to allow for and encourage comparisons with literature of later time periods.
- iv) Gained a broader knowledge of one of the most important periods in English literature.
- v) Acquired techniques of close reading by which to methodically analyse complex and difficult texts.

Course Language

English

Level of students

Junior & Above

2. Course Syllabus

Name of the instructor

Prof Julian Lamb

Type of Class Arrangement (Time of the course)

16 July to 3 August, Monday, Wednesday and Friday 14:30-16:00

Course description including objectives

Summary

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Learning outcomes

By the end of this course a student will have:

- i) A greater understanding of notoriously daunting poetic texts which are nevertheless central to the English literary canon.
- ii) Thought deeply upon the themes of love and death, and explored why, in Renaissance poetry, these most human of experiences are used to intimate that which lies beyond the human.
- iii) Considered these highly influential poems in a thematic way so as to allow for and encourage comparisons with literature of later time periods.
- iv) Gained a broader knowledge of one of the most important periods in English literature.
- v) Acquired techniques of close reading by which to methodically analyse complex and difficult texts.

Topic or topics for each session

Week	Texts and Lecture Titles	Topics
1	Milton, "Lycidas": Death, Love, and the Poet's Career	Imitation; pastoral; the career of the poet.
2	Spenser, <i>Shepheardes Calender</i> (selections): To Have Loved and Lost	Pastoral; tradition; the edited text; Petrarchanism

3	Spenser, <i>Amoretti</i> (selections): To Have Loved and Gained	Sonnet sequences; metaphor; the rhetoric of love.
4	Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> (Book 1, Canto 1): Epic and Allegory	Redcrosse Knight, Errour; allegory; the epic poet
5	Sidney: <i>A Defense of Poetry</i> (selections): Poetry and the Divine	The idea(l) and form.
6	Sidney, <i>Astrophil and Stella</i> (selections): “What may words say”	Sonnets sequences; inwardness, courtly love; writing love.
7	Shakespeare, <i>Sonnets</i> (from 1-126): Poetry and Immortality (I)	Petrarchan tradition; imitation and subversion; patronage; inwardness; epideictic poetry.
8	Shakespeare, <i>Sonnets</i> (from 127-154): Poetry and Immortality (II)	Black/fair; lying; love and resentment.
9	Quiz 1 Poetry and Persuasion (I)	Poetry and rhetoric; the nature of persuasive language.
10	Shakespeare, <i>Venus and Adonis</i> : Poetry and Persuasion (II)	Rhetoric and poetry; the power/powerlessness of persuasion.
11	Donne, <i>Songs and Sonnets</i> (selections): Paradoxes of Nothing: Love and Death	Metaphor and love poetry; metaphysical poetry.
12	Donne: Holy Sonnets (selections), “Good Friday Riding Westward”, “Hymn to God the Father”: Faith in God, Fear of God	Faith and doubt; earthly and divine love.
13	Herbert: <i>The Temple</i> (selections): God of Judgement, God of Love.	Paradox; the conceit; poetry and religion.

14	Marvell: “To his Coy Mistress,” “On a Drop of Dew,” “An Horatian Ode,” “Bermudas”	Poetry and courtship; political poetry.
15	Milton: “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity,” “On Shakespeare,” “Sonnet 16,” “Lycidas”	The poet as prophet; the poetic career; the poetic self.
16	Milton: an introduction to <i>Paradise Lost</i>	Imitation and emulation; the epic poem, the epic poet.
17	Milton: <i>Paradise Lost</i> (selections)	Epic heroism; pastoral innocence; sin and death.
18	Quiz 2 The Renaissance Reborn: Synoptic Lecture	

Teaching methods

Lecture

Assessment

Task nature	Description	Weight
Research Essay	2000 words	60%
Quiz 1	Multiple Choice	15%
Quiz 2	Multiple Choice	15%
Attendance		10%

Required and/ or recommended readings

The required reading is indicated in the course outline above. Although most of the poems considered will be read out aloud in class, students should read and make every effort to understand the poems in preparation for the lecture. All reading will be available digitally and distributed by email prior to lecture 1.