ENGLISH 330 B—SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE II

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Required Texts:

Course outline and objectives:
Sixteenth-Century Literature II focuses closely on Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, arguably the greatest cultural achievements of the Elizabethan period (1558-1603). Since their appearance on the literary scene in the 1590s, both the works and their authors have exerted considerable influence on later British audiences and writers—from Milton to Keats. We will consider these two works in the context of the history and culture of the waning decade of Elizabeth's reign (paradoxically, the flowering of Elizabethan culture) and attempt to formulate questions on the use of print culture in the shaping of England's national consciousness, the effect of the patronage system on literary production, the differing cultural uses of the genres of epic and romance, and the effect of gender, both the writers' and the readers'. Students who have not taken English 330A, or who have little or no background in sixteenth-century literature, are advised to read Book IV of Castiglione's *The Courtier*, transl. Hoby, and Sidney's *The Defence of Poetry* for a general overview of the literary and philosophical concepts that inform the two works. The course is designed as a seminar. This means that active class participation and attendance are essential for an interchange of ideas and for working through the texts.

Grading and assignments: Issue cards, due bi-monthly, to generate questions about the readings; one major essay, 1500-2000 words, and a final examination. The essay can be either on the *Arcadia* or *The Faerie Queene*. While I am happy to provide topics, you may want to derive your own from your issue cards, in which case, you must clear the topic with me beforehand.

Issue cards: due bi-monthly 20%
Essay: due March 19 40%
Final Exam: TBA 40%

Late penalty policy: The essay must be submitted on time. If unable to meet the due date, you must see me for an extension, or provide a medical certificate to avoid penalty. Otherwise an automatic 5% will be deducted for late essays, and a further 1% for each weekday they are late. No essay will be accepted more than two weeks after the due date.
TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE

We will devote six weeks each to the *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene*. You're probably familiar with either Books I or III from Engl. 200A. The *Arcadia*, however, is long and dense, and will take a good deal of your reading time. The weekly topics are devised to guide your reading, and provide a focus for issue cards, and class discussions. The attached bibliography is meant as a primary guide that may help you to think about and to shape your own arguments for the essay.

*The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*

Week 1) Course organization; general historical background, cultural shifts, Elizabethan romance from its Greek antecedents to the supermarket racks.

Week 2) The plot of romance and Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Week 3) The characters of romance in the *Arcadia*.

Week 4) From romance distractions to epic quest or from eros to heros: Sidney's revisions.

Week 5) The gender of the reader: what evidence is there that Sidney inscribes a gendered readership?

Week 6) Domination and defiance: parents and children in the *Arcadia*.

*The Faerie Queene*

Week 7) "A Letter of the Authors," *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, "a continued Allegory, or a darke conceit"?

Week 8) *FQ*, Book II, the Knight, the Lady, and questing the Bower of Bliss.

Week 9) Book III, Britomart, Gloriana, Belphoebe and Queen Elizabeth. Images of the feminine/images of the ruler.

Week 10) Books IV and V: love, friendship; "The Temple of Venus": Britomart's vision.

Week 11) From Book VI, the courtier and the poet.

Week 12) The "endlesse worke" of romance: *FQ*, closure, and failure,

Week 13) The "endlesse worke" of 330 B: revision and open discussion
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Davis, Walter. *Idea and Act in Elizabethan Fiction*

Frye, Northrop. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*

Goldberg, Jonathan. *Endlesse Worke: Spenser and the Structures of Discourse.* (difficult, deconstructive approach but worth it)


—ed. *The Spenser Encyclopedia* (great summaries of everything you need to know about Spenser; copy in my office as well as in the library)


—Forms of Nationhood


Louis Adrian Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text," in *Literary Theory/Renaissance Texts*, eds. Patricia Parker and David Quint. (seminal article)

James Nohrenberg, *The Analogy of "The Faerie Queene."*

Parker, Patricia. *Inescapable Romance.*


Gordon Teskey, "Allegory" in *The Spenser Encyclopedia*

Kenneth Thorpe, *Romantic Love and Parental Authority in Sidney's "Arcadia"*
There are many, many other books on both Spenser and Sidney, including two entitled *Essential Articles for the Study of* . . . to say nothing of many, many recent journal articles in *The Sidney Newsletter and Journal, The Spenser Journal, English Literary Renaissance, The Sixteenth-Century Journal, The Renaissance Quarterly*, to name just a few resources in the periodicals section of the library.