ENGLISH 350A: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY NON-DRAMATIC LITERATURE I

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Office Hours: Tues/Thurs. 1:30-3:30 (or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A study of the prose and poetry of the seventeenth century (1603 to 1660) against the backdrop of historical and cultural turmoil. We will examine the relationship between society and literature in a turbulent age of authority and dissent, witchcraft and science, regicide and civil war, kings and commonwealth, and, finally, the restoration of the monarchy. Despite the political and social turbulence, the century justly lays claim to some of England's most brilliant writers and thinkers: Francis Bacon, John Donne, Ben Jonson, George Herbert, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Robert Herrick, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton. Importantly, the century was also a nurturing ground for a growing number of women writers who were raising their own voices: Lady Mary Wroth, Amelia Lanyer, and Lady Anne Clifford.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Nb. All royalties derived from the sale of this text will be donated to the University of Waterloo, English department scholarship fund.

COURSE STRUCTURE AND REQUIREMENTS

The course will consist of lectures and seminar presentations dealing with some aspect of the relationship between society and literature during the seventeenth century (topic of your own choice) for a brief (10 minute) presentation during the Thursday class of each week. Given class size, you may need to collaborate in small groups; for the sake of fairness and honesty, however, there must be a clear distinction between each group member's contribution. All members of the class are expected to have read the material in advance, to have thought about it, and be prepared to participate in discussion. While no marks are specifically allotted for attendance and participation, those who do attend and participate may earn extra marks toward their final grade.

SEMINAR PRESENTATION

By the second class, students will have decided on a topic or point of interest for their presentation. The research undertaken for this project will form the basis for the major term paper and should consist of a tentative thesis or the kernel of an argument and a preliminary annotated bibliography. The bibliography and written notes will be handed in following the presentation—no later than one week later. The oral portion, notes and bibliography will be graded and returned with comments and suggestions for further research or directions. The presentation need not be conclusive or exhaustive. It is not intended to be a finished product but a "work in progress" that will be worked on for a whole term and expanded into the final paper. Seminars given close to the beginning of the term will be graded with an understanding of the brevity of time for research and preparation. But I expect the final paper to demonstrate the work of a whole term. Conversely, those whose seminars and papers fall towards the end of the term would be expected to demonstrate the longer period of time available for research and preparation.
PERSONAL CONSULTATION:

I need to be consulted and informed on an on-going basis (at the very least once or twice) about your seminar project and term paper. My regular office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. I am available at other times—providing you let me know in advance. If you need to get in touch with me and I am not in my office, leave a detailed message on my voice-mail which I check frequently or contact me by email: bcaniar@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

TERM PAPER AND EXAMINATION

There will be a final examination during the regular examination period covering the whole course and one major research paper of approx. 2500 words (10 word-processed pages) arising from the preliminary research undertaken for the class presentation. Students are welcome to consider a second topic of their choice for a paper but I must be consulted or informed. The paper must be correctly documented in MLA style, a format that is included in The Little, Brown Compact Handbook (required text) as well as in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers available either in the bookstore or in the library. Since both the oral presentation and term paper require secondary sources, students are advised to read the summary of the Student Academic Discipline Policy in the Undergraduate Calendar which states in part:

A University is a community of people—faculty, students and staff who are committed to scholarship, i.e. the generation of sharing knowledge through research and teaching. All members of this community are expected to conduct themselves with honesty, integrity, fairness, and a concern for others. Any such action which violates these principles is viewed as a serious offence because it undermines the trust on which such a community is built. Together with cheating, theft and falsification, academic offences include plagiarism, the act of taking ideas of writings from another person and presenting them as one's own. While it is completely acceptable to use ideas, and even quote passages from other scholars, their work must be completely and unambiguously acknowledged and referenced. If you are unsure about what is considered acceptable practice in this regard, you should seek guidance from the professor teaching the course.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

1. Seminar Presentation
2. Research essay due Dec. 2nd.
3. Final examination

20%
40%
40%
TENTATIVE READING SCHEDULE (possible seminar topics)

NA = Norton Anthology; WWRE = Women Writers in Renaissance England.
Since there are too many titles to be listed here, I will inform you of the specific poems and essays well in advance of the dates for which they need to be prepared.

Tues. Sept 9 Preliminaries, expectations, general introduction and background
Thurs. Sept 11 The politics of literature: "a poet’s place in the Stuart world": Donne’s Songs and Sonnets (NA)

Tues. Sept 16 Donne’s Songs and Sonnets cont. (NA)
Thurs. Sept 18 A female poet’s place in the Stuart world: Lady Mary Wroth, sonnets from Pamphilia to Amphionanthus (WWRE)

Tues. Sept 23 Sonnets from Wroth’s The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania (WWRE)
Thurs. Sept 25 God’s place in the Stuart world: Donne’s Holy sonnets and Meditations (NA)

Tues. Sept 30 Amelia Lanyer, from Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum (WWRE)
Thurs. Oct 2 The City and the Country: Ben Jonson, poems (NA)

Tues. Oct 7 Ben Jonson cont. ("To Penshurst") (NA)
Thurs. Oct 9 Lanyer’s "The Description of Cookeham" (WWRE)

Tues. Oct 14 from The Diary of Lady Anne Clifford (WWRE)
Thurs. Oct 16 The advancement of learning: Bacon’s essays (NA)

Tues. Oct 21 New directions and discoveries: John Locke and Isaac Newton (NA)
Thurs. Oct 23 Distant drums, voices of the war: Cavaliers and poets: Robert Herrick (NA)

Tues. Oct 28 Richard Lovelace
Thurs. Oct 30 Art’s complexity and emotion’s simplicity: George Herbert (NA)

Tues. Nov 4 Herbert cont. (NA)
Thurs. Nov 6 Other voices of the war*: Lady Anne Halkett and Dorothy Osborne (NA)

Tues. Nov 11 Voices of the Commonwealth: Andrew Marvell (NA)
Thurs. Nov 13 Marvell cont (NA)

Tues. Nov 18 How his light was spent: the poetry of John Milton (NA)
Thurs. Nov 20 Milton’s sonnets (NA)

Tues. Nov 25 Liberty and licence: from Milton’s Areopagitica (NA)
Thurs. Nov 27 Class cancelled (will discuss)

Tues. Dec. 2 Conclusions, Review ESSAYS DUE