English 350A, Seventeenth-Century English Literature
Fall term, 2002: 10:00-11:30, CPH 3388
Professor Kathy Acheson
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Office hours: 11:30-1:00, T and Th; otherwise by appointment
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Welcome to English 350A. In this course we will study a selection of writings from the English
seventeenth-century, including works by Donne, Marvell, Milton and Behn. The English
seventeenth-century is the end of the Renaissance and the beginning of the modern era: some of
the writing from it is startlingly familiar, and some is strangely distant. It was a period of great
social change: at the beginning of the century, the monarchy of Elizabeth I was absolute, by the
end of the century the monarchy was constitutionally limited, and in between was the Civil War,
fought between Parliamentary and Royalist forces, and the period of Cromwell's Republican
government. In literature, the beginning of the century saw the publication of Shakespeare's
Hamlet, and the end the plays of Aphra Behn, first professional woman dramatist — and first
woman in England to earn her living from her pen. In the middle of the century, John Milton
wrote the century's — and the modern era's — greatest religious poetry, in addition to writing
powerful political prose.

Texts: The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth-Century Verse and Prose is the course text.
Please bring it to class. The English Department uses The Little, Brown Compact Handbook,
Third Canadian Edition as its standard for all stylistic, grammatical and documentation choices.
You are required to have, or to have access to, a copy for reference.

Policies: The Faculty of Arts requires that I inform you that "all students registered in the courses
of the Faculty of Arts are expected to know what constitutes an academic offence, to avoid
committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for their academic actions.

When the commission of an offence is established, disciplinary penalties will be imposed
in accord with Policy #71 (Student Academic Discipline). For information on categories of
offences and types of penalties, students are directed to consult the summary of Policy #71 which
is supplied in the Undergraduate Calendar (p. 1:11). If you need help in learning how to avoid
offences such as plagiarism, cheating, and double submission, or if you need clarification of
aspects of the discipline policy, ask your course instructor for guidance. Other resources
regarding the discipline policy are your academic advisor and the Undergraduate Associate
Dean."

I advise you strongly to read the section in your Handbook (pp. 555-562) on avoiding
plagiarism. You should know that I have access to services which will detect if an essay, or parts
of the essay, are available through the web. You should also know that if I detect plagiarism, I
am obliged to report it to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Affairs.

Assignments:

Short Paper (20%): This paper will be approximately 1000 words, or four standard pages of 250
words each. It will present an argument about one of the topics (love, religion and nature) we
have studied prior to the due date, in relation to selected writings on the topic we have studied. It
may also address the additional readings in the anthology listed for each topic, but research
beyond this is not necessary or recommended. Ideas for the paper can be found in the sections
entitled “Research Questions.” If you have a different topic in mind, come and see me and talk about it a little.

The essay will be graded as follows:

Quality of argument: /20
Structure of argument: /20
Use of evidence, including documentation: /40
Sentence structure and vocabulary choice: /10
Grammar and spelling (minus one point for each error, up to ten): /10

Long Essay (50%): This essay will be approximately 2000-2500 words long, or 8 to 10 standard pages. For it, you must take up the relationship of two of the topics that we have studied, and address selected writings from each topic. Additional reading from the anthology will help you establish your argument and the evidence upon which it is based. Some secondary research is recommended, according to the list of ideas in the sections entitled “Research Tacks.” You may develop material you presented in your short paper.

The essay will have the following qualities. It will be argumentative; it must set out to prove something, and it must do so in well-connected stages. Every point should be supported with evidence from the plays. It should be well-structured, with each paragraph having a significant point to make, and evidence to support it. Secondary sources must be worked in to the argument so that they do not dominate or determine it, but rather help you to stage your argument. The opening paragraph will be a thesis statement, in which you state the topic, outline the stages of the argument, and suggest the evidence with which you will prove it. All material drawn from secondary sources will be properly and scrupulously documented according to the conventions listed in your Handbook.

The essay will be graded as follows:

Thesis statement: /10
Quality and structure of argument: /30
Use of evidence, including documentation: /40
Sentence and paragraph structure: /10
Spelling, grammar, punctuation and vocabulary choice: /10 (minus one for each error)

Exam (30%): The exam will be in the examination period. It will cover all the material we have dealt with in the course, and you will be required to address all six topics.

SCHEDULE

September 10: Introduction
September 12: LOVE: Donne, “The Sun Rising” (106); Herrick, “Corinna” (311-312); Marvell, “Coy Mistress” (834)
September 17: LOVE: Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnets, 230-238
September 19: no class
September 24: LOVE: Behn, “The Disappointment” (1104-1106), Elizabeth Singer Rowe, “Reply to Mr. ___” (1212).
Additional material on LOVE from the anthology: other poems by same authors; “The Dumb Virgin,” by Aphra Behn; letters of Dorothy Osborne; John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester’s poems; Katherine Philips’ poems on friendship; readings in gender section.

Research tasks: works on love, sex and marriage in the period (social history); works on classical authors who were important to these authors (especially Ovid) (literary history); works on individual authors or groups of authors.

Possible research questions:
- What are the conventions of love poetry in this period? How do the writers handle them?
- To what extent is love ideal? To what extent real? How is either manifest in structure or language choices in the poems?
- What do patterns of imagery suggest about how authors conceive of love?
- What are the most common tropes expressing desire or romantic attachment?
- How do the poems reflect changes in the status or conception of woman in the period?
- How is love related to the material or commercial world in these poems? Or, how is love kept separate from the material or commercial worlds?
- Is love exclusively heterosexual in this period? If not, how is same sex love expressed? (see, for example, Behn’s “To the Fair Clarinda,” 1110.)
- Is sex different from love in these poems? If so, how?

September 26: RELIGION: Donne, “Holy Sonnets” (122-125); Meditation XVII (130-131)
October 8: RELIGION: Katharine Evans and Sarah Chevers, “Short Relation” (915-922)

Additional material on RELIGION in anthology: additional works by authors we studied; works by Mary Sidney, Margaret Hoby, Jeremy Taylor, Lady Eleanor Davies, Margaret Fell, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, Thomas Traherne and John Bunyan.

Research tasks: works on history of the church (make sure you are in exactly the right period), of spiritualism and prophetic writing, of spiritual autobiography, of Biblical imagery in poetry; works on individual authors or groups of authors; works on related topics, such as the history of printing, of literacy, of preaching, of Quakerism or other radical protestant sects.

Possible research questions:
- how is knowledge about god obtained?
- what are the principal tropes of expressions of faith? why? (e.g., paradox)
- to what other issues is religious belief attached?
- how is pain or violence related to the representation of religious experience?
- how is religion related to other social phenomena, such as literacy, or gender difference?
- how is religious experience related to the experience of love?

October 15: NATURE: Lanyer, “The Description of Cooke-ham” (93-96); Jonson, “To Penshurst” (150-152)

October 17: SHORT PAPER DUE
Additional material on NATURE in anthology: other works by the same authors; Jonson, “The Praises of a Country Life,” Randolph, “The Second Epode;” Hutchinson, “All Sorts of Men,” Katherine Philips, “A Country Life” (these four poems go together and bear comparison); Winslow and Rowlandson; Sprat.

Research tasks: works of social history about gardens, architecture, exploration, the history of naturalism or botanical studies; critical works about these authors and works; literary critical works about nature poetry, including classical predecessors for Renaissance versions; theoretical or historical works about the conception of ‘nature,’ and its relation to the conceptions of death, society, or what it means to be ‘human.’

Research questions:
- What kind of language is used to describe nature?
- How is the conception of nature different in Radisson than in the earlier poetry?
- To what degree, and in what way, is man a part of nature?
- Is nature a system? If so, what kind of system? Does it have a cause? Does it have a purpose or objective?
- How is nature aesthetic? How is nature’s beauty related to its other properties?
- What place does violence have in nature?
- How does science shape the understanding of nature?

October 22:  GENDER: Breton, “A Wanton Woman” and “A Quiet Woman” (16); Bacon, “Of Marriage and Single Life” (28); Dryden, “The Learned Wife” and “The Gaudy Gossip” (1003)

October 24:  GENDER: Lanyer, “To All Virtuous Ladies in General” (76); Speght, “Of Woman’s Excellency” (398-400); Fell, “Woman’s Speaking Justified” (705-713)

October 29:  GENDER: Makin, “An Essay” (425-433); Cavendish, “The Philosophical and Physical Opinions” (890-891)

Additional material about GENDER in the anthology: other works by the same authors; autobiographical writings by Hob, Clifford and Osborne; works by women writers such as Sidney, Clinton, Davies, Hutchinson, Wroth, Behn, Killigrew and Barker.

Research tasks: critical articles and scholarly works about these and other women’s lives and writing of the period; theoretical works about the ideologies of gender and sexuality and their relations to other social categories.

Research questions:
- How is masculinity defined?
- What is gender? To what extent and how is it related to sexuality?
- In what ways are the codes of femininity vulnerable to attack by revisionists?
- How are attitudes toward gender, or definitions of female and male or feminity and masculinity, reflected in word choice, images and allusions?
- How are gender categories related to other forms of social distinction or division?


November 5:  POLITICS: Walwyn, “The Bloody Project” (434-442); Winstanley “A Declaration” (632-636)

November 7:  POLITICS: Milton, “Areopagitic” (561-588)

November 12:  POLITICS: same

Additional reading in the anthology about politics: Other works by these authors; works by Hobbes, Filmer, Bradford, Clifford (1603), Feltham, Overton, Brome, Marvell (“Horatian Ode” and “The First Anniversary”), Behn, “A Pindaric”

Research tasks: histories of the civil war or of any specific topic in relation to the civil war (e.g., rhetoric, gender, class, education, etc.); histories of rhetoric and poetry; biographies and critical works about the authors.

Research questions:
• what constitutes good governance?
• what is the structure of a just society? what is its purpose?
• compare the vocabularies and rhetorical structures of royalism with republicanism
• how is the individual imagined?
• what does freedom mean — e.g., is it freedom to, or freedom from?
• how is the discourse of politics related to any other form of writing or rhetoric?


November 19: POETRY: Cavendish, “I language want” (890); Philo-Philippa, “To the Excellent Orinda” (1017-20); Barker, “To My Friends” (1180).

November 21: POETRY: Jonson, “To the Memory of...Shakespeare” (161-62), “Inviting a Friend to Supper” (149-150); Oldham, “Upon a Bookseller” (1184-86).

ESSAYS DUE


Research tasks: critical articles on individual writers or groups of writers, especially those which concentrate on the idea of authorship, the function of poetry, or the profession of writing; histories of printing, authorship, and the literary marketplace; histories of public poetry, such as political, elegiac, or historical and national.

Research questions:
• what different functions did poetry have in this era?
• how did those functions change over time, according to the evidence you have?
• what prevented women from being poets?
• what kind of knowledge does the poet claim access to?
• what role does the reader or listener have in creating poetry?

November 26: Make-up class, if needed
November 28: Information about exam
December 3: ESSAYS RETURNED