English 350A, Seventeenth-Century English Literature  
Fall term, 2003: 10:00-11:30  
Professor Kathy Acheson  
HH 225; 888-4567 extension 2122  
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 required course text. It is available in the bookstore and should also be available second hand. 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.

Late: I do not give extensions unless there is a medical problem which is attested to by a doctor’s note. Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 2% a day, including weekends. The day ends at 4:30 in the afternoon. All assignments can be delivered to the English department drop box in Hagey Hall. The final essay will not be accepted after December 10.

Assignments:
Short Papers I and II (30% each): These papers will be approximately 1000 words, or four standard pages of 250 words each. The first will present an argument about love or religion in relation to selected writings on the topic we have studied; the second about gender, politics or poetry. 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.” They are due October 10 and November 11.

The essays 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

Longer Essay (40%): This essay will be approximately 2000 words long, or 8 standard pages. It will discuss the relationship between the reporting of an event, phenomena or condition of our time in relation to selected writings on our syllabus. For instance, you may want to compare the terms used to describe arguments in favour of or against same-sex marriage in today’s papers to the ways in which love, marriage and the family are represented in the readings we have done. Or you may want to compare the representation of poverty and political powerlessness in the selection of seventeenth-century readings we have done with writing about the same topic in our time. Other topics might include warfare, free speech, religious freedom or belief, the importance of the dead for the living, the role of poetry in culture at large, and so on.

For your argument, you should select a topic and collect a number of newspaper articles about it. The articles can be from the national press, or they can be from local or specialized papers. The argument will be structured somewhere along the continuum between similarity and difference. For instance, you might say that there are similarities and differences; or there are a surprising number of similarities; or there are stark and informative differences between then and now. You will want quotations from the articles, and an understanding of their audience and context. You will also want quotations from the prose and poetry we have studied, and notes on the contexts we have discussed.

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 works. It should be well-structured, with each paragraph having a significant point to make, and evidence to support it. 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.

I recommend that you start this essay early in the term, so as to familiarize yourself well enough with the issue with which you are dealing, and grasp the terms through which the issue is presented in the seventeenth century. You may want to do some background research on the topic in the seventeenth century, so as to be confident in what you are saying. The best way to do this is through the printed book collection in the library, and the works (such as encyclopedias) in the reference section. You can do a preliminary search and bring me a list to look over; I will help identify valuable sources. For historical research, I do not recommend the internet. Of course, for your research on the contemporary topic, the internet may have much to offer.
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)

**SCHEDULE**

**September 9:** Introduction

**September 11:** LOVE: Anne Clifford, 1616-1619 diary

**September 16:** LOVE: Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnets, 230-238

**September 18:** LOVE: Donne, “The Sun Rising” (106); Herrick, “Corinna” (311-312); Marvell, “Coy Mistress” (834)

**September 23:** 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.

Discussion 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 Clorinda,” 1110.)
- Is sex different from love in these poems? If so, how?

**September 25:** RELIGION: Donne, “Holy Sonnets” (122-125); Meditation XVII (130-131)


**October 2:** RELIGION: Milton, “Reason of Church Government” (555-561), “Of True Religion” (589-595)

**October 7:** 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.

Discussion 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 10: SHORT PAPER DUE


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


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.

Discussion 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 21: 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 23: GENDER: Lanyer, “To All Virtuous Ladies in General” (76); Speght, “Of Woman’s Excellency” (398-400); Fell, “Woman’s Speaking Justified” (705-713)


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

Discussion 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 femininity and masculinity, reflected in word choice, images and allusions?
• How are gender categories related to other forms of social distinction or division?


November 4: POLITICS: Walwyn, “The Bloody Project” (434-442); Winstanley “A Declaration” (632-636)

November 11: POLITICS: same
November 11: Second Short Essay due

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"

Discussion 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 18: POETRY: Cavendish, "I language want" (890); Philo-Philippa, "To the Excellent Orinda" (1017-20); Barker, "To My Friends" (1180).
November 20: POETRY: Jonson, "To the Memory of...Shakespeare" (161-62), "Inviting a Friend to Supper" (149-150); Oldham, "Upon a Bookseller" (1184-86).


Discussion 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 25: DEATH: elegies TBA
November 27: DEATH: "Lycidas"

Additional material on death: TBA

December 2: FINAL ESSAYS DUE: include self-addressed stamped envelope