

APPROACHES TO EARLY MODERN ENGLISH POETRY AND DRAMA – 5 Creds.

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This course explores the relation between poetic form and the interpretations that arise from its verbal and metrical configuration. We will focus on the early modern English canon, and on the relation between the history of political ideas, theology and poetics, with some sporadic incursions into the visual arts. The first sessions in the seminar will address the Classical and Augustinian background of Petrarchism, and its historical importance as a milestone in the history of Western poetry. Certain aspects of Augustine's work exemplify the interweaving of rhetoric, poetics and theology into a heterogeneous combination that would contribute to mould many of the ideas that sustained the poetry of Petrarch and the poetics of humanism. Augustine's poetic theology, in turn, resulted from his combination of the Jewish tradition with Classical Roman and Greek philosophy, notably Stoicism and Neoplatonism, all of it against the background of the rhetorical tradition that the West inherited from the Classical World.

We will then move on to a consideration of European humanism as the general context for our subsequent approach to the first English Petrarchists, i.e. Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt. We will analyse their poetry, and some of their translations / adaptations from Latin and Italian poetry from the perspective provided by our former approach to Petrarchism and its background. But we will also read their poems under the light shed by the specific historical moment in which they lived, and we will examine how the poetry and poetics of Surrey and Wyatt respond to the ideological debates and the actual political situation during the reign of Henry VIII—a moment that featured intense political and religious controversies stemming from the Protestant Reformation.

Next, our reading of Sir Philip Sidney's poetry and also of his treatise *Defense of Poetry* will give us the opportunity to explore the presence in Sidney's eclectic work of the tradition that we have studied in previous sessions. We shall see how this eclecticism also shows up in certain sonnets from his *Astrophil and Stella*. We will end our section on English Petrarchism by reading and analysing some of Shakespeare's sonnets. This part of our seminar will conclude with a lecture on the parallelisms between the tropes of the body politic, the body of the text, and the significance of the body in theology and poetics ("Corporeal Tropes in English Poetry and the Visual Arts.").

The second part of the seminar will be conducted by our three visiting scholars. Professor Andrew Hadfield will conduct a seminar on the topic of Shakespeare and political theory. In one of his seminars, Professor Neil Rhodes will explore the concept of "common" in Early Modern England, which relates with the issues on language and the political thought of humanism. Professor Rhodes' second seminar will approach the poetry of John Donne. Our seminars will conclude with Professor Greg Walker's analysis of Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which will focus on how this play articulates the figure of an ideal monarch, and how its text evinces the presence of discursive and ideological traces from all the previous traditions addressed in

the seminar.

There will be no written final essay in this seminar. Students will be evaluated through their class presentations, and their active participation in the seminars. Students will also be required to write a short essay after each session on the topics discussed in it.

Grading policy:

- Class presentations and participation: 50%
- Written essays: 50%

CALENDAR AND SYLLABUS

<p>Session # 1</p> <p>Introduction to the seminar, methodology and the reading assignments</p>
<p>Session # 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Language-theology-politics-poetics</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-- Eugene Vance. "Saint Augustine. Language as Temporality." In Lyons & Nichols, eds. 1982. <i>Mimesis: From Mirror to Method</i>, pp. 20-35.- Richard Waswo. "Magic Words and Reference Theories" <i>Journal of Literary Semantics</i>. Vol. 6, 1977, pp. 76-90.- José María Pérez Fernández. <i>Between Chaos and Consensus: Language, Literature and Politics in Early Modernity</i>.
<p>Session # 3</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>The poetics of Petrarchism and the earliest English Petrarchists: Surrey and Wyatt</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- John Freccero. "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics." <i>Diacritics</i>, vol. 5, no. 1. Spring 1975, pp. 34-40.- José María Pérez Fernández. "'Wyatt resteth here'. Surrey's republican

elegy". *Renaissance Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2004, pp. 208-238.

- o Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey
 - "Wyatt restheth here"
 - "So cruel a prison how could betide, alas"
 - "Th'Assyrians' king"
- o Sir Thomas Wyatt
 - "Whoso list to hunt"
 - "Farewell, Love"
 - "Who list his wealth and ease retain"
 - "Mine own John Poins"

Session # 4

Sidney and Shakespeare

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- An anthology from Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*.
 - o "Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show" (*A&S* 1)
 - o "*Vertue* alas, now let me take some rest" (*A&S* 4)
 - o "It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serve" (*A&S* 5)
 - o "Having this day my horse, my hand, my launce" (*A&S* 41)
 - o "Desire, though thou my old companion art" (*A&S* 72)
- A selection of Shakespeare's sonnets:

- o “From fairest creatures we desire increase” (no. 1)
- o “Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest” (no. 3)
- o “When I do count the clock that tells the time” (no. 12)
- o “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” (no. 18)
- o “Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore” (no. 60)
- o “My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” (no. 130)
- o “Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will” (no. 135)
- o “Two loves I have of comfort and despair” (no. 144, pp. 1041-42)

Session # 5

Translation – politics – poetics – metrical form

- José María Pérez Fernández. “Translation and Metrical Experimentation in Sixteenth-Century English Poetry: The Case of Surrey’s Biblical Paraphrases”. *Cahiers Élizabéthains*, no. 71, Spring 2007, pp. 1-13.
- José María Pérez Fernández. “From Virtue to Compulsion: Epic, Translation, and the Significance of Early Modern Blank Verse”. *Cahiers Élizabéthains*, no. 75, Spring 2009, pp. 1-16.

Session # 6

The Eclecticism of Sidney’s Poetics

- Sidney’s *Defence of Poesie*.

Session # 7

Poetics, Politics and the Body. Corporeal Tropes in English Poetry, Political Discourse, Theology and the Visual Arts. Part 1.

<p>Session # 8</p> <p>Poetics, Politics and the Body. Corporeal Tropes in English Poetry, Political Discourse, Theology and the Visual Arts. Part 2.</p>
<p>Session # 9</p> <p>Neil Rhodes</p> <p>The Poetry of John Donne</p>
<p>Session # 10</p> <p>Neil Rhodes</p> <p>'Common' in Early Modern England</p>
<p>Session # 11</p> <p>Andrew Hadfield – Part I</p> <p>Shakespeare and Political Theory: Britain, the colonies and politics in <i>The Tempest</i> and <i>King Lear</i>. We will discuss the following topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The status of the ruler in each play. 2. Geography and maps. 3. Proper government and tyranny. 5. Men and women. 6. Advice/counsel. 7. Kingdoms and colonies. <p>In class we will act out sections of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>King Lear</i>, scene 20 (in the Oxford edition); Act IV, scene vi in the Arden edition. - <i>The Tempest</i>, Act I, scene ii; and Act II, scene I. <p>Please read these scenes especially carefully.</p>
<p>Session #12</p>

Andrew Hadfield – Part II – Shakespeare and Political Theory: Britain, the colonies and politics in *The Tempest* and *King Lear*.

Session # 13

Greg Walker – Part 1

'Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the representation of kingship

Reading assignments: William Shakespeare, *Henry V*

Session # 14

Greg Walker – Part 2

'Shakespeare's *Henry V* and the representation of kingship

