

ENU 44036: Early Modern Women Writers

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10 ECTS

Term: HT

Learning Outcomes and Aims:

- Become familiar with the major English women writers of the early modern period and a selection of their texts.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the literary genres covered in the course.
- Be able to differentiate between major theoretical and critical approaches to early modern women's writing.
- Understand the basics of and appreciate the historical and political factors which shaped early modern women's writing in England.
- Be able to justify the importance of including early modern women writers in the study of English literature.
- Know how to identify and access the most essential sources of information (reference books, databases) relevant to early modern women's writing.
- Be able to craft an extensive, informed, research-based argument on one a topic relevant to the material covered in the module.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Final essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5,000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Module Content:

This module brings together the most prominent women writers in English from the 16th and 17th centuries. The authors come from a fascinating variety of backgrounds: Mary Sidney and Mary Wroth belonged to one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Elizabethan England; Elizabeth Cary was reduced to poverty following her conversion to Catholicism; Katherine Phillips sided with the Royalists during the Civil War while her husband was a Parliamentarian; Mary Cotton and Priscilla Cole wrote their radical religious tracts from jail. At the same time, each of the writers we will be reading in some form had to deal with prejudice against female authorship and socio-economic conditions which were generally adverse to women composing and publishing their works. We will discuss how the texts document these challenges and how their authors managed to participate in the country's male-dominated literary culture while at the same time imagining and even creating alternative female-centered communities.

W1	Introductions from: <i>Women Writers in Renaissance England</i> (ed. R. Martin, Longman 2010); <i>Early Modern Women Writers</i> (ed. P. Salzman, OUP, 2008); Virginia Woolf : 'A Room of One's Own' (excerpt)
W2	Isabella Whitney : poetry from EMWW; ODNB biography
W3	Elizabeth I : selected poems, speeches, and letters from <i>Elizabeth I, Collected Works</i> ; selected letters to her from James I and Mary Queen of Scots; Mary Queen of Scots : selected sonnets; ODNB biography
W4	Aemilia Lanyer : poetry from EMWW; ODNB biography; Ben Jonson : 'To Penshurst'
W5	Mary and Philip Sidney : selected Psalm translations and their equivalents from the Oxford Study Bible; Mary Sidney: 'To the Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney'; Mary Sidney's biography from Aubrey's <i>Brief Lives</i> ; ODNB biography
W6	Mary Wroth : poetry from EMWW; additional sonnet: 'In this strange labyrinth how shall I turn', including the image of manuscript version; ODNB biography; selected sonnets by Philip Sidney and William Shakespeare
W7	Reading Week : Start thinking about essay topic or start reading ahead for the upcoming week
W8	Elizabeth Carey : <i>Tragedy of Mariam</i> ; <i>The Lady Falkland: Her Life</i> (Cary's biography by her daughters); ODNB biography
W9	Eleanor Davies, Priscilla Cotton & Mary Cole , and Hester Biddle : all selections from EMWW; materials on overview of the English Civil War and surrounding historical events
W10	Katherine Philips : poetry from EMWW; ODNB biography
W11	Margaret Cavendish : <i>Bell in Campo</i> EMWW; <i>Convent of Pleasure</i> ; poetry EMWW; ODNB biography
W12	Aphra Behn : poetry EMWW; <i>The Wandering Beauty</i> EMWW; ODNB biography