

**Early Modern Literature:  
Themes, Texts, and Contexts: 1500-1660**

Module convenors: Dr Mark Sweetnam, Dr Ema Vyroubalová

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Lecturers: Prof Andy Murphy, Dr Mark Sweetnam, Dr Ema Vyroubalová

ECTS weighting: 5

Year: JF

Term taught: Hilary Term

Assessment: Essay

**Module Description:**

This module provides an introduction to early modern English literature and the social, cultural, and intellectual contexts that shaped it. It begins with an introductory lecture, outlining the chronology of the period and the major themes that will be addressed in the following weeks – the concept of renaissance, the Protestant reformation, the discovery of the so-called New World, and the English revolution. The course covers a range of genres, from across the whole period of 1500-1660, and features a number of lectures on major canonical authors combined with broader thematic concerns, which trace the development of early modern literature.

**Learning Outcomes:**

On successful completion of this module, students will:

- develop an understanding of the range of literary genres written, read, and performed in early modern England, with a focus on the different modes of production and dissemination of various types of texts
- be conscious of the shaping impact of major historical events and socio-political developments on the texts covered as well as of the influence of the covered literary texts as important cultural artefacts
- be alert to the variety of inter-textual connections between the different writers and writings covered on the module

- have an appreciation of the changes undergone by the English language across the c.160-year period covered by the module
- be able to apply the knowledge gained from the texts and lectures to the interpretation of other early modern texts as well as texts from other historical periods
- be able to write fluent and informed essays on the texts covered

### **Module Outline:**

1 Introduction (EV, MS)

#### **Prose**

2 William Tyndale, *Obedience of the Christian Man* (MS)

3 New World: Thomas More, *Utopia* and Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis* (MS)

#### **Poetry**

4 Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*; selected early modern poems as illustrations of the theoretical principles discussed by Sidney (EV)

5 Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queen* Book 1 (EV)

6 The Sonnet: Thomas Wyatt, Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Mary Wroth (MS)

7 Reading Week

#### **Drama**

8 William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (AM)

9 Christopher Marlowe, *Dr Faustus* (EV)

10 Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (EV)

#### **Voices from the Margins**

11 Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* / John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress* (MS/ EV)

#### **Milton**

12 John Milton, *Paradise Lost* Book 1 (MS)

