

## **HIU34507: Lying and Deception in Early Modern England**

Module Coordinator: Dr. Máté Vince

Weighting: 10 ECTS

Assessment: 40% Essay, 60% Exam

Duration: Michaelmas Term

Contact Hours: 2 hours per week

What does it mean to lie? And what did it mean to lie in early modern England? What did it mean from a political, a theological, and a literary perspective? Was it ever justifiable to lie – e.g. for one's king? for the Pope? to defend oneself or your beloved ones? Is literature, especially drama, a lie by definition? And is there a way to avoid lying, but at the same time not to tell the truth? Throughout the 16th–17th centuries these were hotly debated issues that drew the attention of not only rulers, statesmen, theologians, philosophers, but writers. This was a period of remarkable artistic achievements, but it was also an era fraught with painful tensions and combustible conflicts. The changes brought about by the reformation required people to shift their allegiances rapidly – and it was not always wise to tell the entire truth about it. Carefully crafted gallows-speeches, manuscript handbooks of casuistry, treatises of theology, novels, poems, plays and prose satires attest to a keen interest in lying and detecting lies. In this module we will be looking at the theory and practice of various verbal and physical forms of deceit, such as disguises, pseudonyms, cross-dressing, ambiguity, metaphors and plain lies. We will read a variety of texts – all composed with the aim of understanding, proposing, controlling and representing ways of lying. We will look at a selection of works by politicians, scholars, theologians and writers, such as Thomas More, Archbishop George Abbot, King James I, Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare and John Donne. This module will look at the early modern period from an interdisciplinary perspective. If you study history, English or any other European literature, philosophy, theology, or are simply interested in the intellectual history of this fascinating period, you'll find this course rewarding.