

ENU 11004
Early Modern Literature – Themes, Texts and Contexts: 1540–1660

5 ECTS

Hillary Term 2026

Coordinator: Dr. Ema Vyroubalová (vyroubae@tcd)

Lecturers: Prof. Andy Murphy and Yael Bassan

Assessment: 1 Essay

Live lectures: Weeks 1-12 (no lecture in W 7)

Tutorials: Week: W3-10 (no tutorials in W7)

NB: tutorials are mandatory for all students enrolled in the module!

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
- Become conscious of the shaping impact of major historical events and socio-political developments on the texts covered
- Be able to identify a variety of intertextual connections between the different writers and writings covered on the module
- Be alert to 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

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 approximately 1540-1660, and features lectures on major canonical authors combined with broader thematic concerns, which trace the development of early modern literature.

Assessment:

1 Essay of 1,500-2,000 words for due date consult Fresher (or Visiting Student) handbook; topics will be available on Blackboard by the end of Week 6.

Preliminary Module Outline (note that the order of lectures and secondary reading recommendations may change):

Wk 1	Introduction: EV <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alister E. McGrath, <i>The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation</i> (Blackwell, 2004)• Susan Brigden, <i>New Worlds, Lost Worlds: The Rule of the Tudors, 1485-1603</i> (Penguin, 2001)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mark Kischlansky, <i>A Monarchy Transformed: Britain 1603-1714</i> (Penguin, 1997)
Poetry	
Wk 2	<p>Sidney's <i>Apology for Poetry</i>; selected early modern poems as illustrations of the theoretical principles discussed by Sidney: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary text: Alexander Gavin (ed.), <i>Sidney's The defence of Poesy and selected Renaissance literary criticism</i> (Penguin, 2004); includes exhaustive bibliography A handout with early modern poems to read along with the primary text will be available on Blackboard Andrew Shifflett, 'The Poet as Feigned Example in Sidney's <i>Apology for Poetry</i>', <i>Modern Philology</i> Vol. 114, Issue 1 (August 2016), pp. 18-38 (on BB) Colleen Ruth Rosenfeld, 'The Artificial Life of Poetry', <i>ELH</i> Vol. 83, Issue 1 (Spring 2016), 71-99 (on BB)
Wk 3	<p>Spenser, <i>Faerie Queen</i> Book 1: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary text: Thomas P. Roache, Jr. (ed.), Penguin Classics (Penguin, 2003) Patricia Parker, <i>Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode</i>, Chapter 2: Spenser, pp 54-113 (Princeton U.P, 1979) also available via Princeton Legacy Library reprint. Judith Anderson, <i>Spenser's Narrative Figuration of Women in the Faerie Queene</i> (Medieval Institute Publications, 2018) William Oram, 'Spenser's Audiences, 1598-91', <i>Studies in Philology</i> Vol. 100, No. 4 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 514-533 (on BB) Andrew Weiner, '"Fierce Warres and Faithfull Loues": Pattern as Structure in Book I of <i>The Faerie Queene</i>', <i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i> Vol 37, No 1 (Nov. 1973), 33-57 (on BB)
Wk 4	<p>The Sonnet – Wyatt, Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Wroth: YB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A handout with a range of primary texts will be available on Blackboard. Arthur F. Marotti, '"Love is Not Love": Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences and the Social Order', <i>ELH</i> Vol. 49, No. 2 (Summer, 1982), pp. 396-428. John Fuller, <i>The Sonnet</i>, (Routledge, 2017)
Drama	
Wk 5	<p>Marlowe, <i>Dr. Faustus</i>: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary text: recommended edition Paul Menzer (ed.), <i>The Alchemist</i> (New Mermaids, 2018); other available critical editions (Norton, Oxford) are fine too Rebecca Lemon, 'Scholarly Addiction: Doctor Faustus and the Drama of Devotion', <i>Renaissance Quarterly</i> Vol. 69, Issue 3 (Autumn 2016), 865-898 (on BB) Jane Hwang Degenhardt, 'The Reformation, Inter-imperial World History, and Marlowe's <i>Doctor Faustus</i>', <i>PMLA</i> Vol. 130, Issue 2 (March 2015), pp. 402-411 (on BB)
Wk 6	<p>Shakespeare, <i>Titus Andronicus</i>: AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Text: Single Honours students can use the Norton Shakespeare edition already recommended for the JF Shakespeare module; recommended single play editions: TBA Secondary Reading: TBA

Wk 8	<p>Shakespeare, <i>Hamlet</i>: AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Text: Single Honours students can use the Norton Shakespeare edition already recommended for the JF Shakespeare module; recommended single play editions: G.R. Hibbard (ed.), <i>Hamlet</i>, Oxford Shakespeare (OUP, 2008) or Robert Miola (ed.), <i>Hamlet</i>, Norton Critical Editions (Norton, 2019) Zackariah C. Long, 'The Spanish Tragedy and <i>Hamlet</i>: Infernal Memory in English Renaissance Revenge Tragedy', <i>English Literary Renaissance</i> 44:2 (May 2014): 153-92. Curtis Perry, 'Seneca and the Modernity of <i>Hamlet</i>', <i>Illinois Classical Studies</i> 40:2 (Fall 2015): 407-29.
Wk 9	<p>Shakespeare, <i>Tempest</i>: AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Text: Single Honours students can use the Norton Shakespeare edition already recommended for the JF Shakespeare module; recommended single play editions: TBA Secondary Reading: TBA
Wk 10	<p>Jonson, <i>The Alchemist</i>: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Text: recommended edition Elizabeth Cook (ed.), <i>The Alchemist</i> (New Mermaids, 2010); other available critical editions (Norton, Oxford) are fine too Ian Donaldson, <i>Jonson's Magic Houses</i> (Clarendon, 1997) Christopher Foley, "'Breathe Less, and Farther Off": The Hazardous Proximity of Other Bodies in Jonson's <i>The Alchemist</i>', <i>Studies in Philology</i> Vol. 115, Issue 3, (2018), 505-523 (on BB) Anthony Ellis, 'Senescence in Jonson's <i>Alchemist</i>: Magic, Mortality, and the Debasement of (the Golden) Age', <i>Ben Jonson Journal</i> Vol. 12 (2005), pp. 23-44
Milton	
Wk 11	<p>Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>, Book 1: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary text: any good edition is fine. The Dartmouth edition by Thomas Luxton is a reliable and well-annotated online version. (https://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/text.shtml) C.S. Lewis, <i>An Preface to Paradise Lost</i>. The 1942 OUP edition is available online at https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.187688.
Voices from the Margins	
Wk 12	<p>Cavendish, <i>The Blazing World</i> and selected poetry: EV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Text 1: ed. Kate Lilley, <i>The Blazing World and Other Writings</i> (Penguin, 2004) Primary Text 2: Poems: 'Of the Ant', 'The Hunting of the Hare', 'A World Made by Atoms' (to be posted to BB) Sujata Iyengar, 'Royalist, Romancer, Racialist: Rank, Race and Gender in the Science and Fiction of Margaret Cavendish', <i>English Literary History</i> Vol. 69, No. 3 (2002), pp. 649-72 Rosemary Kegl, "'The World I Have Made": Margaret Cavendish, Feminism and <i>The Blazing World</i>', in <i>Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture</i>, eds. Valerie Traub, Lindsay Kaplan and Dymphna Callaghan (Cambridge UP, 1996) Bronwen Price, 'Feminine Modes of Knowing and Scientific Enquiry: Margaret Cavendish's Poetry as a Case Study', in <i>Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1700</i>, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge UP, 1996)