Tradition and Individuality, Medieval to Early Modern

Instructor: Ivan Lupič
Office hours: MW 10-11:30, 460-305

Teaching Fellows: Luke Barnhart and Nicholas Fenech

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a comprehensive introduction to English literature from its beginnings in the medieval period to the early seventeenth century. We will study individual literary voices and styles in the context of a growing national tradition. We will discuss major authors (such as Chaucer, More, Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, Jonson, Donne) and analyze representative literary works in a variety of genres, from the Old English elegy and Middle English lyrics to the Elizabethan sonnet, Renaissance comedy, and the allegorical epic. While the course equips students with specific analytical and interpretative tools necessary for a historical understanding of literature, it is equally committed to revealing the aesthetic interest that medieval and early modern literature still holds for the modern reader.

FORMAT

This is a lecture course. While lectures are designed to contextualize the literary material, to discuss major themes, and to offer models for different interpretive approaches, students will have additional opportunities to develop and practice their own analytical skills in sections, led by graduate teaching assistants.

LEARNING GOALS

Upon a successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- demonstrate familiarity with the English literary tradition from its beginnings to the early seventeenth century;
- independently analyze literary texts belonging to different genres and different time periods;
- make connections among literary texts based on their handling of theme, character, and structure;
- recognize elements of literary diction, style, and form peculiar to specific historical periods and to individual authors.
CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to revision)

WEEK 1  
**Tradition and the Individual Talent**
M  Introduction  
W  Old English Elegies

WEEK 2  
**Heroic Poetry of the Middle Ages**
M  NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)  
W  *Beowulf*

WEEK 3  
**Medieval Self-Writing**
M  Middle English Lyrics  
W  *The Book of Margery Kempe* (selections)

WEEK 4  
**Medieval Storytelling**
M  Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales* (General Prologue)  
W  *The Canterbury Tales* continued (Wife of Bath; The Nun’s Priest)

WEEK 5  
**Medieval Drama**
M  Mystery Cycles  
  •  *The York Cycle* (selected pageants)  
W  Morality Plays  
  •  *Mankind*

WEEK 6  
**Humanism and Petrarchism**
M  Thomas More, *Utopia* (Book 2)  
W  Wyatt and Surrey (selected poems)
WEEK 7  The Elizabethan Sonnet
M  NO CLASS (Presidents’ Day)
W  Philip Sidney, *Astrophel and Stella* (selected sonnets)
   William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (selections)

WEEK 8  Renaissance Allegory
M  Spenser, *Faerie Queene* (Book I)
W  Spenser continued

WEEK 9  Renaissance Drama
M  Renaissance Drama
   •  Ben Jonson, *Volpone*
W  Jonson continued

WEEK 10  Metaphysical Poetry
M  John Donne (selected poems)
W  George Herbert (selected poems)
REQUIRED TEXTS


