From the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries, the development of English literature is closely involved with historical events and social conditions. The course considers several examples of how we observe this relation and how our observations have changed over time. We will explore historicism—the approach that treats each historical moment as the product of distinctive forces—as it evolved over the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. What are the different ways that a literary work of the past can be seen as historical? Moreover, we will give some attention to how literature works as a force in culture, not only a reflection of other forces.

Schedule of Lectures

September 27
Introduction

September 29
Introduction to Medieval Literary Culture
Geoffrey Chaucer, General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales

October 4
A Great Chain of Love
Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale"

October 6
The Voice of the Past
Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Tale"

October 11
Romance, Game, and History
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

October 13
Early Modernity: Humanism, Diplomacy, and Intellectual Networks
Thomas More, Utopia

October 18
What's Historical About Henrician Poetry?
Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, poems

October 20
The Rise of a Puritan Aesthetic
Anne Lock, from Meditation of a Penitent Sinner

October 25
Knowledge, Power, and the Past
Christopher Marlowe, Doctor Faustus
October 27
**What's Historical About Elizabethan Poetry?**
Philip Sidney, from *Astrophil and Stella*; Walter Raleigh, "The Lie," "The Passionate Man's Pilgrimage"

November 1
**The Structure of Allegory**
Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 2

November 3
**Temperance and Other Virtues in History**
Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book 2

November 8
**The Politics of Shakespearean Tragedy**
William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

November 10
**Nature, Nothing, and Speaking True in 1606**
Shakespeare, *King Lear*

November 15
**Love, Wit, and New Knowledge**
John Donne, from *Songs and Sonets*

November 17
**The Meditative Mode**
Donne, from *Holy Sonnets*

November 29
**The Politics and Poetics of Retirement**
George Herbert, *The Temple*

December 1
**The Restoration Mode**

December 6
**Experiment in Science and Society**
Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World*

December 8
**Retrospect**

**Books and Materials**

The following titles are available at the Stanford Bookstore:

Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (Penguin, 1994)

Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. Thomas Crofts (Dover, 1994)


The following title is recommended as an e-textbook:


Other than the titles above, required readings will be available on our Canvas site (canvas.stanford.edu).

**Written Assignments**

- Weekly writing. Every Monday throughout the quarter, we will offer a prompt on the course’s Canvas site. Your one- to two-page response is due in your section that week.

- Two analytical papers (four to five pages), due Tuesday, October 18 and Tuesday, November 15. Topics will be distributed in advance, or you may develop your own in consultation with your section leader.

- Take-Home Final Examination, due Thursday, December 15, consisting of short answer identification of key words from the lectures, and three essay questions.

**Grading**

- Class attendance and participation 10%
- Section attendance and preparation 20%
- Paper 1 20%
- Paper 2 25%
- Final Examination 25%
Policies

• Lectures will generally take forty-five minutes, followed by a five-minute written reflection, and afterwards, twenty to twenty-five minutes of questions and open discussion. The written reflection will ask you to respond to questions about the preceding lecture. Collected at the end of every class meeting, your responses will shape subsequent lectures and discussions.

• Regular attendance at lecture and participation in section is required. If you must miss a lecture, please tell your section leader, who will record daily lecture attendance.

• Written outlines, with key words and reading questions, will be distributed at each lecture.

• Sections may include assignments. These are also required.

• Papers are due at 9:00 p.m. by email to your section leader. You will receive a confirmation email; your paper has not been submitted until you have received this email.

• If you need accommodation or assistance in taking this course, please speak to the professor as early as possible. If you have a letter from the Office of Accessible Education, please provide it.

Honor Code

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work.

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

1. that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading.

2. that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

3. The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the Honor Code.

4. While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.
Learning Goals

Through this course, you should gain:

- knowledge and understanding of how works are gathered into literary history and how that literary history relates to concurrent political, social, and religious events

- awareness of the major literary movements, terms, and forms of the period, along with an appreciation for their relevance and connection to later literary developments

- reading skills: in this course you will continue to refine your ability to read and interpret poetry, drama, and prose narrative in the context of literary history and the cultural conditions in which they were produced or received. Reading well means not only that you can understand a text but that you can read it aloud clearly and with appropriate expression, conveying its sense to a listener.

- writing skills: writing assignments are designed to develop your abilities as readers and as practitioners in the discipline of literary studies, which requires you to be able to develop a cogent argument about literary works, to support that argument with evidence, and to demonstrate the argument’s importance within a broader framework of disciplinary knowledge.

Instructors

PROFESSOR

Roland Greene
Office: 460-302
Office Hours: Thursday 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. and by appointment
Email: rgreene@stanford.edu

TEACHING ASSISTANTS