

## **E20A POETRY I: Chaucer to Pope**

**Lecturer:** R. Clarke

**Prerequisite:** A pass in E10A

**Contact hours:** Two 1-hour lectures per week and one 1-hour seminar per week

This course seeks to introduce students to a wide range of canonical English poetry written during the early modern period from c.1350 to c.1750. The poets to be studied will range from Chaucer and anonymous lyricists in the late Middle Ages, to Elizabethan and Jacobean poets such as Wyatt, Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Donne, Herbert, and Marvell, to the poets of the English Restoration Milton and Dryden, and, finally, to Augustan poets such as Gray, Samuel Johnson, and Pope.

It is something of a commonplace to say that these writers wrote the earliest important poetry in English and are worthy of study on that basis alone. In order to appreciate this fact, students will be asked to perform close textual analyses of selected poems by each poet and to familiarise themselves with the most important characteristics of the major genres and sub-genres in use at this time.

However, just as importantly, the poetry of this period also bears testimony to the (not always successful) efforts of early modern English peoples to articulate a sense of their own unique and autonomous identity, both individually and collectively, in the face of two important factors. Firstly, the innumerable social and ideological constraints inherited from the Middle Ages: in particular, the static, hierarchical social order which historians deem Feudalism and the heavy-handed authority of the Roman Catholic Church over every aspect of Medieval life and, thus, over the psyche of Europeans. Secondly, the rapidly changing socio-historical circumstances and the ideological transformations which mark the early modern period: the transition from a Feudal to a Capitalist economic mode of production and the social changes attendant thereupon; the advent of European imperialism and the earliest encounters with the non-European; the rediscovery of the Ancients as an alternative source of ideological authority to the Church; the emergence of Protestantism as a challenge to Catholicism; the replacement of the Church by the Nation-State as the locus of power in European society; the rise to discursive dominance of the empirical or Natural Sciences and the subsequent interrogation of hitherto unquestioned Platonic/Christian assumptions; and the renewed reverence of the Neo-classicals for Antiquity. In order to view the poetry in this light, students will be encouraged to situate the works of the poets in question in relation to their socio-historical contexts in an effort to understand not so much how the poetry of the period reflected or captured the times in print but, rather, how it collaborated with other non-literary discourses (scientific, social, philosophical, economic, etc.) in order to construct and disseminate certain interpretations of the world and of humanity's place

therein as natural .

Students will be encouraged, too, to draw parallels and to note differences between the autobiographical endeavours and the cultural obsessions of the early modern English, on the one hand, and the contemporary ideological and aesthetic concerns of diasporic, Post-colonial cultures.

**Required texts:**     The Norton Anthology of Poetry (NAP)

Additional selections to be studied (marked F) will be placed in the E20A folder in the library to be photocopied by students and/or will be found in the anthologies on reserve listed below.

**Texts on Reserve:**   Allison, et al., eds. The Norton Anthology of Poetry (NAP)

Witherspoon and Warnke, eds. Seventeenth Century Poetry and Prose (WW)

Gerald Bullett, ed. Silver Poets of the Sixteenth Century (B)

Kenneth Muir, ed. The Collected Poems of Sir Thomas Wyatt (KM)

Gerald Hammond, ed. Sir Walter Raleigh: Selected Writings (H)

Edmund Spenser The Faerie Queene

Edmund Spenser Collected Poems

Martin Seymour Smith, ed. Shakespeare s Sonnets

John Milton Paradise Lost

Tillotson, Russell & Waingrow, eds. Eighteenth Century English Literature (TRW)

Gary Waller English Poetry of the Sixteenth Century

George Parfitt English Poetry of the Seventeenth Century

Bach, et al.    The Liberating Form (LF)

Charles Kaplan, ed. Criticism: the Major Statements (K)

Alistair Fowler      Kinds of Literature

<b>Assessment:</b>	One seminar presentation	-	10%
	One essay	-	30%
	Final exam	-	60%

NB: Students are forewarned that a) *essays must be written according to the guidelines set out in the MLA Handbook*: SLOPPY WORK WILL BE PENALISED; b) departmental regulations decree that even if students go into the exam with a passing coursework grade, *students must pass at least one question in the exam in order to pass the course.*

### **Week 1 Introduction and Critical Tools**

**Lecture # 1 Topics:** Theoretical approaches to literature

**Lecture # 2 Topics:**\_\_The socio-historical context of the early modern period

**Lecture # 3 Topics:** Literature and the self

*NB. For this week alone, there will be three lectures and no tutorials*

### **Weeks 2 - 3: The Courtier Poets**

Selected poetry by Sir Thomas Wyatt, Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh

### **Weeks 4- 5: Edmund Spenser**

Edmund Edmund Spenser's Amoretti, The Shepheardes Calender , and the Bower of, The Shepheardes Calender from Book II of The Faerie Queene

### **Weeks 6 - 7: William Shakespeare--The Sonnets**

William Shakespeare Selected sonnets

### **Weeks 8 - 9: The Metaphysicals**

Selected poems by John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell

### **Weeks 10 - 11: The Restoration: John Milton**

John Milton Paradise Lost: Book I

## **Weeks 12 - 13: The Augustans: Alexander Pope**

Alexander Pope      The Rape of the Lock  
                                 An Essay on Man

*Precise details concerning the required, recommended and secondary well as Lecture topics and Tutorial assignments will be provided ahead of each module of the course.*