English 630: The Early Modern English Stage

CRN 26540
Thursday 2-4:50
253 PLC

Professor Rowe
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Course Description:

This course attempts to provide a general overview of the drama of the English Renaissance. It has several goals: 1) to explore the nature and cultural context of what is arguably the most successful commercial theater that has existed in Europe; 2) to examine the dramatic accomplishments of some of Shakespeare’s contemporaries and rivals; and 3) to reclaim thereby a Shakespeare who neither arose out of, nor wrote within, a historical and literary vacuum. (It thus assumes some familiarity with a representative selection of Shakespeare’s plays.)

We will also look briefly at some classical and Medieval antecedents (a tragedy by Seneca; Mankynd), and consider the ways in which Early Modern drama might be viewed as an unacknowledged forerunner of the mixture of sexual obsession, violence, and grotesque humor characteristic of certain areas of popular culture today.

Required Texts:

Beaumont, The Knight of the Burning Pestle (Mermaid)
Dekker et al., The Roaring Girl and Other City Comedies (Oxford)
Ford, ‘Tis a Pity She’s a Whore and Other plays (Oxford)
Jonson, Five Plays (Oxford)
Kyd, The Spanish Tragedy (Mermaid)
Marlowe, Complete Plays (Penguin)
Middleton, Five Plays (Penguin)
Webster, The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays (Oxford)

Note: Other modern scholarly editions may be used in place of the above. If you have questions about the suitability of a particular edition of a play or plays that we will be reading, please come and see me. In the list of assignments that follows, texts followed by an asterisk (*) are available in .pdf format on Blackboard. Two texts (Hic Mulier and Haec Vir) are available online.
Schedule of Readings and Discussion Topics

January 12

**Introduction: Native and Classical Traditions**

Primary Texts: Anonymous, *Mankynd*
Seneca, *Medea*

Secondary Texts: Braden, From *Anger’s Privilege*

Shakespearean Analogues: *Titus Andronicus, Othello*

January 19

**Plays Early and Late(r): The Theater, the Market, and the Self**

Primary Texts: Marlowe, *The Jew of Malta*
Jonson, *Volpone*

Secondary Texts: Mullaney, From *The Place of the Stage*
Agnew, From *Worlds Apart*
Greenblatt, “Marlowe, Marx, and Anti-Semitism”

Shakespearean Analogue: *The Merchant of Venice*

January 26

**Plays Early and Late(r): The Aesthetics of Revenge**

Primary Texts: Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*
Middleton, *The Revenger’s Tragedy*

Secondary Texts: Altmann, From *The Tudor Play of Mind* (Chapters 2-3)
Mazzio, “Staging the Vernacular”

Shakespearean Analogue: *Hamlet*

February 2

**Plays Early and Late(r): Power as Spectacle, Power as Absence**

Primary Texts: Marlowe, *Tamburlaine, Part I*
Jonson, *Sejanus*

Secondary Texts: Barbour, From *Before Orientalism*
Cartelli, From *The Economy of Theatrical Experience*
Patterson, From *Censorship and Interpretation*
Goldberg, From *James I and the Politics of Literature*

Shakespearean Analogue: *Julius Caesar*
February 9

**Plays Early and Late(r): Sexual Orientation, Sexuality, Gender**

Primary Texts: Marlowe, *Edward II*
Middleton and Dekker, *The Roaring Girl*
Anonymous, *Hic Mulier; or, The Man-Woman* and *Haec-Vir: Or the Womanish Man* (online; see below)

Secondary Texts: Bray, From *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* *
Orgel, “Nobody’s Perfect”*
Traub, “Desire and the Difference it Makes”*

Shakespearean Analogues: *Twelfth Night, Troilus and Cressida*

February 16

**London According to Beaumont and Dekker**

Primary Texts: Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*
Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday* (a play), *London Triumphing* (a city pageant) and *The Gull’s Hornbook* (a prose satire)

Secondary Texts: Archer, “Material Londoners” *
Walsh, “Performing Historicity” *

Shakespearean Analogue: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

February 23

**London According to Middleton**

Primary Texts: *A Trick to Catch the Old One*
*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*

Paster, “Leaky Vessels”*

March 1

**London According to Jonson**

Primary Texts: *The Alchemist*
*Bartholomew Fair*

Secondary Texts: Barish, From *Ben Jonson and the Language of Prose Comedy* *
Parker, “Literary Fat Ladies”*

Shakespearean Analogues: *The Winter’s Tale, The Tempest*
March 8  
**Jacobean Obsessions 1**

**Primary Texts:** Webster, *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*

**Secondary Texts:** Moretti, From *Signs Taken for Wonders*  
Whigham, From *Seizures of the Will*

Shakespearean Analogues: *Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra*

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March 15  
**Jacobean Obsessions 2**

**Primary Texts:** Middleton, *The Changeling*  
Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*

**Secondary Texts:** Artaud, From *The Theater of Cruelty*

Shakespearean Analogue: *Romeo and Juliet*

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Note: *Hic Mulier and Haec Vir* are available online at

http://www.english.ucsb.edu/teaching/resources/reading_lists/renaissance/hic_mulier.asp

and

http://www.english.ucsb.edu/teaching/resources/reading_lists/renaissance/haec_vir.asp
ADDITIONAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Guiding Discussion

Beginning on January 19th one or two members of the class will select key issues/passages from the readings assigned for that day and prepare a plan/series of questions that will enable us to explore those issues/passages in depth. (I will distribute a sign-up sheet during the first class.) The issues that you choose may involve the secondary materials as well as the plays that are our primary focus, but—in all cases—they should stem from your own careful and thoughtful engagement with the materials we will be covering in that class. They should also be complex/interesting enough to require a substantial amount of class discussion.

Papers

1. Two short essays (approximately 4-6 pages in length using 12 pt. proportional font; 1” margins, and double spacing). They may—or may not—make use of secondary sources, but, in any case, the number of sources should be quite limited. Each essay must be handed in on the day that the play or plays or secondary materials with which it deals will be discussed. Please do not hand in these essays on consecutive class meetings so that I can return the first before you begin work on the second. I will comment upon, but not grade, the short essays.

2. A term paper approximately 15-20 pages in length (12 pt. proportional font; 1” margins, double spaced). You must discuss with me the topic for the term paper no later than March 8th. Although the essay may be related to (and include some material from) the short papers, at least 75% it should be new. This long essay must also make selective use of (relevant) secondary materials. Note: secondary materials = critical essays/books, not the OED, Biblical Concordances, Mythological Handbooks, etc. This essay will provide most of the basis for the course grade (see below).

The three essays must be handed in according to the following schedule:

Paper #1: No later than February 2nd.

Paper #2: No later than March 1st.

Paper #3: No later than March 19th.

COURSE GRADE

25% class performance; 75% long paper.