Spenser

Description

Spenser claims the goal of his epic, *The Faerie Queene*, is “to fashion a gentleman”—that is, to make a person from a poem. How does reading shape life outside reading, and what would it mean to think of reading as an exercise in self-creation? *The Faerie Queene* explores these questions through its knightly protagonists, including an inexperienced young man destined to become St. George as well as Britomart who searches for a lover she has met only in a dream. Reading forms an integral component of these knights’ quests as they strive to interpret the illusions of a shape-shifting wizard, the enigmatic words of speaking trees, and the actions of living embodiments of virtues and passions. The knights practice reading alongside other arts of existence, including exercise, diet, meditation, and courtly love. These practices of self-creation have implications for issues of gender, sexuality, social agency, and the human relation to the non-human world that this course will explore.

Texts

Calendar

Week 1
1/9: Introduction
1/11: 3. Proem, 1-2 (book 3, proem and cantos 1 through 2);
Mary MacCleod, *Stories from the Faerie Queene*, ch. 1-4 of *The Legend of Britomart*;
http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/sfq/
Optional: Kathryn Schwarz, “Dressed to Kill: Looking for Love in *The Faerie Queene*” 138-144

Week 2
1/16: 3.4-5
1/18: 3.6-7; Anthony Esolen, “Spenserian Chaos: Lucretius in *The Faerie Queene*” pg. 31-32, 40-49

Week 3
1/23: 3.9-10
1/25: 3.11-12 (read both 1590 and 1596 endings); Jane Grogan, “Spenser’s ‘Gallery of Pictures’”

Week 4
1/30: 2. Proem, 1-2 **Paper 1 due**
2/1: 2.3-4; Louis Montrose, “Spenser and the Elizabethan Political Imaginary”

Week 5
2/6: 2.5-6
2/8: 2.7-8; Gail Kern Paster, introduction to *Humoring the Body*

Week 6
2/13: 2.9-10 **Paper 2 due**
2/15: 2.11-12; Stephen Greenblatt, “To Fashion a Gentleman”

Week 7
2/20: 1. Proem, 1-2
2/22: 1.3-4; Benedict Robinson, “Secret Faith”

Week 8
2/27: 1.5-6 **Paper 3 due**
3/1: 1.7-8; Joseph Campana, “Spenser’s Dark Materials: Representation in the Shadow of Christ”

Week 9
3/6: 1.9-10
3/8: Mutabilitie Cantos

Week 10
3/13: Rare Books Visit
3/15: Spenser’s Afterlives **Reflection due**
Assignments

Attendance: Coming to class with the day’s reading is mandatory. Missing more than two classes will result in your final grade being lowered by 2.5 points for each additional absence. More than seven absences will cause you to fail the course.

Participation (5%): Discussion will be an important component of class. If a student is shy or has other difficulties with speaking in class, I'm happy to hear their thoughts in office hours or by email.

Weekly Discussion Posts and Responses (10%): Every Sunday, students will turn in via Canvas a paragraph of at least 250 words reflecting on a topic, as well as at least one question they would like to discuss in class. Posts must also include at least one quotation from the week’s reading. By class time on Tuesday, students will also post to Canvas a response of at least 100 words to another student’s reflection. Your reflections can, but don’t have to, be on your topic of study for your papers. You’re allowed to miss one post and one response without penalty.

3 Short, Connected Papers (15, 20, 20%): Early in the term, each student will choose a topic of study to sustain throughout their papers. I will distribute a sign-up sheet, but students can, with my approval, create their own topic or overlap a classmate’s. They will write 3 short papers of 3-4 pages on the topic, generally focusing on a couple textual moments from that section of the course. If a student ever arrives at a place where their topic no longer feels workable or productive for them, they can contact me and make arrangements.

1 Reflection (10%): At the end of the term, students will write 2-3 pages reflecting on their topic. The reflection should address some of the following questions: How do your papers speak to one another? How have your ideas changed over the course of the term? What questions remain for you? How might you revise one of your papers in light of what you’ve learned over the term?

1 Exam (20%): There will be a final exam, consisting of short answer, passage analysis, and essay questions. The structure of the exam will be given early in the term so that students can prepare throughout.
Policies

Accessibility: Please let me know me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Formatting Papers: Your assignments must be in twelve-point font, double-spaced, and have one-inch margins. Submitting assignments electronically is encourage, but you need to use either .pdf or .doc(x) format. If you're not sure how to do that, ask in advance. You can follow MLA or Chicago guidelines for citations, but be consistent. Great guides to either format can be found at Purdue’s OWL website (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/). You are expected to proofread your work; too many errors will result in a penalty to your grade.

Late Assignments: I give out extensions readily, but you need to ask in advance. The farther in advance, the more likely I am to grant the extension. Late assignments are generally graded down half a letter grade per day late. Exceptions may be given for emergencies and other exceptional situations. Assignments are due at the beginning of class unless stated otherwise; assignments turned in after that will be considered a day late.

Plagiarism: All work must be your own and written solely for this class. Plagiarism can be unintentional, so be careful and make sure you understand the rules. If you’re not certain, ask me. If you quote, paraphrase, or borrow ideas from an article, website, editor's note, friend, or any other outside source, you need to provide documentation. I encourage you to look at the library's guides for citing sources and avoiding plagiarism (https://library.uoregon.edu/citing). The same link will also allow you to access the university's official policy toward academic misconduct; you should read over the policy if you’re unclear on what counts as cheating or plagiarism.

If you're struggling with a paper, I encourage you to contact me. It’s better to submit a paper late, unfinished, or in poor quality than to risk the penalties for plagiarizing.

English Language Learners: You can succeed in this class whether or not English is your primary language. Working in another language actually trains you to read in the slower, more analytic fashion that literature courses reward. You will likely have some additional challenges: readings and papers will take longer to complete, participating in class discussion may be more intimidating. If you’re having difficulty with participation, you can earn your points by sharing your ideas in email or office hours. If you’re struggling with readings or papers, come to office hours and we can go over strategies to improve. You should know that grammar, syntax, and spelling are a relatively minor part of paper grades. As with all students, I expect you to show care with your use of language, but your ideas and argument are most important.

Advisory: Be aware that the material we read for this course can be disturbing in its treatment of sexuality and violence, and our discussions will cover these topics. If you feel you can’t participate in discussion around a particular issue, let me know and we may be able to design alternative work.