

## ENGLISH 420/520: LITERATURE OF THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES

### Cr. 3

*Burow-Flak:*



## English 420: Literature of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The

sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries in England were a time of amazing discovery, re-discovery of classical texts, and increasing modernity. This survey of English literature from the reigns of the Tudor through the Stuart monarchs thus spans a range of significant historical and cultural events: the use of print to reproduce and distribute written material; the Lutheran, and then English Reformations; several shifts in the state church between Catholicism and Protestantism; England's strengthening into a formidable military power; the flowering of English as a poetic language, and of the theatre that would become synonymous with Shakespeare; England's dominance over Ireland and establishment of colonies in the New World; a civil war and the beheading of a king; vast increases in literacy, publication rates, and publications by women; and the restoration of a monarchy that would signal victory to the witty playwrights of the Restoration while indicating defeat for authors such as Milton and his Puritan contemporaries. In the context of such a rich time period, this course examines a collection of literary works through five intertwining strands of inquiry that weave throughout four basic eras. The areas of inquiry include 1. travel, exploration, and imagining new worlds; 2. religious reformations, 3. English as a literary tongue, 4. gender, and 5. monarchy and forms of rule. The eras through which the texts of the course are arranged consist of the reigns of 1. the early Tudor monarchs (Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary) 2. Elizabeth I, 3. James I of the House of Stuart, and 4. Charles I and Charles II of the house of Stuart, interrupted by the English Civil War and Protestant dissidents. These principles by which the course is organized include a range of literary genres, including prose romance and utopias, travel narratives, lyrics, drama, epics, and argumentative fiction and prose. Assignments include a short (5-6-page) and a long (10-page) paper, a final exam, and periodic responses to the letter on the class discussion board or wiki. *Juneja:*

This course aims at a comprehensive understanding of the literature of the English Renaissance, up to the middle of the 17th century. To achieve diversity, we will study different genres (drama, poetry, prose), and a variety of writers (More, Marlowe, Sidney, Spencer, Jonson, Milton, Donne, Webster). To achieve depth,

we will focus on representative selections. In general, I prefer to use complete (or nearly complete) texts rather than selections, and I group texts in such a way that they respond to some common preoccupations central to these writers and their times. Our reading of these texts will rest firmly on the religious, intellectual, social, economic, and political forces which shaped this literature. Above all, through this study of texts and contexts, we will attempt to uncover the nature of the change which transformed the medieval world into one so close to our own in spirit and temper.

Class format will involve more discussion than lecture. Students may expect one short paper (five to six pages), a final paper (ten pages) and a midterm. They may also be called upon to make informal oral presentations and lead class discussions.

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