

## English 472.001: Spenser

Fall 2002  
TR 3:00 - 4:15  
AQ 102

Required texts:

Edmund Spenser's Poetry, ed. Maclean and Prescott, 3rd ed. (abbreviated ESP)

Ben Jonson, The Alchemist, ed. Elizabeth Cook

Course packet available from Johnson Center Bookstore (abbreviated "packet")

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This Renaissance emblem is allegorical. One thing stands for another: owls stay up all night just as students must. But the allegorical meaning does not stay fixed. The verse below the emblem picks up on the unnaturalness (from a human perspective) of the owl's habits, and ends up warning students against staying up to follow "unlawfull appetites."

In this class we'll study the poetry of one of the great English Renaissance practioners of allegorical writing, Edmund Spenser. We'll consider what lessons the poet tries to fix, whether he succeeds, or how he addresses the unexpected turns of allegory. We'll find in his poetry many of the qualities of the historical and literary period from which it derives: beauty, learning, ambition, struggle, violence. Since Spenser's poetry was intended to exemplify and celebrate the queen and nation in which he lived, the course will also provide

an introduction to Elizabethan history and literature. Staying up late is up to you.

**Course requirements:** A presentation, reading responses, three papers, an exercise in allegory-making and a take-home final.

**Note:** Schedule subject to change (I will give warning, however).

<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Due Dates</b>
Aug. 27	Course Introduction	
	<b>PRINCELY RULE AND POETIC FORM</b>	
Aug. 29	Historical introduction; Davies, "The Beginning of the Reformation" (packet); Frances Yates, "Queen Elizabeth as Astrea" (packet); Spenser, <u>Shepherd's Calendar</u> , "April"	
Sept. 3	Richard Helgerson, "The New Poet Presents Himself" (in <u>ESP</u> , 675-681) Louis Montrose, "The Elizabethan Subject and the Spenserian Text" (in <u>ESP</u> , 686-89): Spenser, <u>Shepherd's Calendar</u> , "February"	
Sept. 5	Giamatti, "The Green Fields of the Mind" (on-line); Philip Sidney, from the <u>Defense of Poetry</u> (on-line); Spenser, <u>Shepherd's Calendar</u> , and "January" and "October"	
Sept. 10	Thomas Roche, "The Elizabethan Idea of Allegory" (in <u>ESP</u> , 705-707); Angus Fletcher, selection from <u>Allegory: Theory of a Symbolic Mode</u> (packet); Jorge Luis Borges, "The Aleph" (packet);	Essay 1 assigned (3 pp.)
Sept. 12	Spenser, "A Letter of the Authors," 1-4; and proem to book 1 of the <u>Faerie Queene</u> (pp. 5-6 in <u>ESP</u> )	
	<b>PROTESTANT POETICS</b>	
Sept. 17	<u>FQ</u> , 1.1-2	
Sept. 19	<u>FQ</u> , 1.3; Keith Thomas, "The Impact of the Reformation" (packet)	Essay 1 exchanged
Sept. 24	<u>FQ</u> , 1.4-5	
Sept. 26	<u>FQ</u> , 1.6	<b>Essay 1 due</b>
Oct. 1	<u>FQ</u> , 1.7-8; Becon, "The Displaying of the Popish Mass"	
Oct. 3	<u>FQ</u> , 1.9	
Oct. 8	<u>FQ</u> , 1.10-11	
Oct. 10	<u>FQ</u> , 1.12; Hamilton, "The Cosmic Image" (in <u>ESP</u> , 716-726)	Essay 2 assigned (5 pp.)
Oct. 15	Columbus Day Recess	

- Oct. 17 Intermission: Hughes, "Remarks on the Faerie Queene (in ESP, 665); Woolf, "The Faery Queen" (in ESP, 672-675) Essay 2 exchanged
- THE POETICS OF SEXUAL PURITY
- Oct. 22 FQ, 2.12
- Oct. 24 FQ, 3.1. **Essay 2 due**  
Exercise 1 assigned
- Oct. 29 FQ, 3.2-3
- Oct. 31 FQ, 3.4, reading TBA
- Nov. 5 FQ, 3.5-6
- Nov. 7 FQ, 3.7
- Nov. 12 FQ, 3.8-9; selected sonnets from Amoretti
- Nov. 14 FQ, 3.10-11 **Exercise 1 due**
- Nov. 19 FQ, 3.12, Roche, "Love, Lust, and Sexuality" Essay 3 assigned (5 pp.)  
(in ESP, 741-743) and Wofford, "The Bold Reader in the House of Busyrane" (in ESP, 746-752)
- BEN JONSON'S COMIC CRITIQUE OF "THE FAERIE QUEENE"
- Nov. 21 Jonson, The Alchemist, "Argument and Prologue" and act 1
- Nov. 26 Jonson, The Alchemist, act 2 Essay 3 exchanged
- Nov. 28 Thanksgiving Recess
- Dec. 3 Jonson, The Alchemist, acts 3 and 4
- Dec. 5 Jonson, The Alchemist, act 5 **Essay 3 due**

Other important dates:

- Sept. 4: Last day to drop a course with no tuition liability
- Sept. 10: Last day to add a course
- Sept. 27: Last day to drop a course without dean's permission.

Course policies:

Readings:

The readings for each class are due on the date listed above. Approach each assignment actively by always reading with a pen or pencil in hand. Note words, phrases or sentences that interest you, that seem significant in the context of the work, or that you have questions about. Jot down in the margins any questions or ideas you have about a particular point or the work as a whole. This practice will help you come prepared to discuss the readings in class and get the most out of class discussion; it will also help you become a more skillful reader of literary texts in general.

Participation and Attendance:

The class will generally be conducted as a seminar. As much as possible we will open up

the class to discussion, to questions or observations about the ideas presented in a text, about a text's form or style, its uses of language, its puzzling qualities--whatever grabs our attention. I am interested in your ideas. Contribution to class discussion will not be formally calculated into grades, but I will take participation into account for grades that are borderline. If you aren't in class, you can't participate in discussion, nor will active class participation wholly excuse excessive absences.

### Reading Responses:

The reading responses are meant to help you read carefully, to prepare for class discussion and to aid you in finding starting points for your essays. A reading response should either ask a question about or observe some aspect of the day's reading that is not answerable by a fact. For example, a response about what happens in the Faerie Queene's narrative would not be appropriate while an observation about the use of a certain image or the reasons behind a puzzling sequence of events in the narrative would be. You may also wish to speculate about how your question or observation would matter for other moments in the text, or why it seems an important matter to consider. A reading response of a half page to a page will be required for each day's reading, and collected at the end of class (the responses need not be typed). I will frequently begin class by asking some of you to read out your responses. I will read all your responses and grade them on a credit/no credit basis. They will get credit if they are turned in at the end of class and meet the criteria above. Grading will be based on the number of no credits: 0-3=A; 4-5=B; 6-7=C; 8-9=D; 10 or more=F. I will also use reading responses to keep track of who was in class for a particular day, so if you were in class but did not do a question (say it's not so!) let me know you were there.

### Presentations:

One of the interests of the Faerie Queene is that it refers to many other texts. To help us understand these references and why Spenser makes them, your presentation should pick one such reference in the reading for the day of your presentation. You might especially pick one that you didn't recognize and you think the class might not too, or one that seemed particularly interesting to you. Then 1) give us some background on it (e.g. where does the reference come from? what stories have been told about the figure you chose?); and 2) pose some questions or interpretations about the relationship between the reference you picked and its use in the Faerie Queene (how does Spenser change or adapt the story? why? what is the significance of where the reference comes from?). The reference could be to a mythical or religious figure (e.g. St. George in 1.1). It shouldn't be to a major figure (for example, Arthur or Circe) since there would be too much to cover. The presentations will be scheduled in the first couple of weeks of class.

### Essay Deadlines:

Each essay will be due twice: the first time in class at the essay workshop scheduled one week after each essay is assigned, and the second time one week following that. During the workshop you'll have a chance to trade essays with fellow students and raise questions or give each other suggestions for revision. You'll have the second week to revise your essay, based on this input and on your own rethinking and rewriting. The second week after the essay is assigned both the revised and original version of the essay will be handed in to me. I hope that this system will build revision, so necessary to good writing, into the structure of the course. (The exercise will not have an in-class exchange.)

Late essays: You need to have your first essay done on time so that you can work on it in

the essay workshop. I also expect that the final versions will be handed in on time. Late final versions will be graded down a half grade for each day late. On late first versions, see below under "essay standards."

#### Essay Standards (final and first versions):

Each essay should be typed with standard margins, spacing and type size. It should be carefully proofread and neatly presented. The essay topics will relate to issues we have discussed in class, and you are encouraged to bring to bear class discussion in your writing. You are also encouraged to expand on these discussions and credit will be given for new ideas.

I'll grade the essay on basis of the revised version only, but I will expect the original version to be your best initial attempt at the topic. Original versions not done, not typed or obviously incomplete will result in a half letter grade reduction in the evaluation of the final essay. It would not be fair for other students to have to read work that is not your best; additionally, it is in your interest to write as good an original version as possible, so that your second version is even better. Remember that because everyone has two tries at the essay, I will accordingly have higher expectations for the final version.

#### Essay Help:

During the scheduled workshops, you'll have a chance to give and get advice on your essays. Additionally, I encourage you to come see me at my office hours or to make an appointment to see me. When we meet, try to have a draft of the essay you are working on. This will give us something more concrete to talk about. There is also available a Writing Center at Robinson A116 that can provide you with further individual attention to your writing. I encourage you to take advantage of this excellent facility.

I would also suggest giving yourself plenty of time to work. Writing a paper at one sitting is, for most people, unpleasant, and the results are not likely to be satisfactory. Start early!

#### Plagiarism:

Since this class emphasizes the development of your own close reading and interpretive skills, you are not encouraged to consult secondary sources. If you do choose to look at such work, however, you must cite, using a standard citation format, all the articles, books or other sources that your own writing draws on, either directly or indirectly. Such sources include (but are not limited to) introductions to editions of the texts we're reading and any kind study aid.

Also note that uncited sources will constitute plagiarism even if they ended up in your work without your conscious knowledge (e.g. you forgot you read the material; you confused your own notes with notes on a source), since part of the scholarly responsibility that comes with using secondary sources is keeping track of which words or ideas were yours and which came from a source. If you do not wish to take on this responsibility then you should not consult secondary sources.

I will take all suspected cases of plagiarism to the Honor Committee.

#### Final:

The final will be a take-home essay that will cover material from the entire course. While comprehensive, it will also somewhat emphasize material that you have not yet had a chance to write about.

Grading:

The final grade will be derived as follows:

Presentation	6 %
Reading Responses	12 %
First paper	14 %
Second paper	19 %
Third paper	19 %
Exercise	12%
Final	18 %

Please come see me if you have any questions about grading, the syllabus or the class. I look forward to having the chance to meet you. Best wishes for a good semester!

#### GRADE CRITERIA FOR ESSAYS

A Specific, complex and/or striking thesis, thesis developed without digression through the course of the paper, consistently precise, sensitive and/or striking interpretations of the text, crafted prose, no major mechanical problems

B Specific thesis, thesis generally developed through the course of the paper, consistently good interpretation of text, competent prose, minor mechanical problems

C Has a thesis, but one that needs greater specificity or complexity, thesis developed with some digression or repetition, some good interpretation, some mechanical problems

D Very general thesis, thesis development digressive or repetitive, plot summary or thoughts/speculations not based on textual evidence, major mechanical problems

F No thesis or thesis development