Case Western Reserve University  
ENGL 371/471: Writing Early Modern Women: Sex, Texts, and Contexts  
Spring 2004

Professor Heather Meakin  
Class Meetings: MWF 10:30-11:20 am in Clark 110  
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

To mark the 400th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth I’s death in 1603, we will be devoting an initial unit to her writings, and the questions of how her gender and her refusal to marry influenced English literature as well as broader cultural trends. We will also look at 20th-century representations of her in film (Elizabeth I; Orlando; Elizabeth R; The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex) and music (e.g. Britten’s Gloriana).

Having gotten to know something about the most powerful and therefore, perhaps, the most anomalous woman of her time, we will then, after a consideration of Virginia Woolf’s chapters on women and early modern literature in A Room of One’s Own, survey the work of early modern women writers of various social classes, with the aim of assessing the ways in which early modern cultural definitions of femininity and gender shape the production and reception of their texts, and the ways in which the writings of these women shape the culture of early modern England. With the recuperation of women’s texts well established (both in print and hypertext), the work of assessing the ways in which these authors and their works interacted with the male-dominated literary culture and the broader patriarchal culture is burgeoning.

Crucial questions we will raise during the course concern the extent to which women writers internalize and then replicate the prescribed ideals of femininity, or question these ideals directly or indirectly. Do women writers see themselves as a part of a community of other writers, other women and/or of other women writers? Is there a connection between gender and genre? How do they deal with the tension between the prescriptions that women be “chaste, silent, and obedient” and their entry in to the public sphere, especially in print? How does class consciousness complicate this negotiation? Are they interested in the same ideals as many male authors or are they consciously attempting something “new”? How do they respond to their literary forebears? How are women involved in the “peripheral” production of literature, as patronesses, dedicatees, printers, and so on?

As we read the imaginative works, we will also be reading non-fictional contemporary discourse, as well as “thinking through” our own contemporary critics of early modern literature. Because the study of early modern women’s writing requires a fairly supple interdisciplinarity, we will need to be conscious of both the terminology we employ and generic boundaries.

Required Texts:


**LR** Woolf, Virginia. _A Room of One’s Own_. Harvest Books. 1990.
• _Brown Women Writers Project_; database available FREE through KSL online. (I think you have to go to KSL’s database page first., then click on “Access” at the “Women Writers Online” entry at the bottom of the list. It will take you to http://www.wwp.brown.edu/index.html.)
• _Oxford English Dictionary_. Also available through KSL database.

****Texts marked “LR” (Library Reserve) have been put on 2-hour reserve at KSL. If you choose not to buy the text, you can consult it in KSL or order it from Ohiolink.
****Articles which are required reading (see below in Schedule of Reading) will be placed on reserve at KSL for students to sign out and read or photocopy.

**Recommended Texts:**


**All students are more than welcome to drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments.** This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368-5230) and who may need individual arrangements. **Make use of your professors!!** We’re here to help you learn and we don’t expect you to be perfect (who is?). I regard intelligent questions in and out of class and an eagerness to improve one’s abilities as evidence of an A student. There is no such thing as a stupid question, although there is such a thing as a lazy question. Check this syllabus and all handouts before asking. Thanks!

**Assignments and Evaluation:**

**Undergraduates**

- Class Participation 20
- Response Papers (4x5%) 20
- 8 page Essay 25
- Final Exam 35

Possible Bonus Marks 5

**Graduates**

- Class Participation 20
- Response Papers (9x5%) 45
- Research Paper (in lieu of final exam) 20
- Teaching 15

Possible Bonus Marks 5

**N.B. ALL components of the evaluation must be completed to pass the course.**

**N.B. Use the following as a rough estimate: to earn a B in this course, plan to devote 2 hours to thoughtful reading and writing outside of class for each hour of class time.**
Class Participation
Please note that this portion of your grade concerns “participation” not “attendance.” Attendance is mandatory
but not graded. Participation in class involves reading the Blackboard postings each Sunday evening and
coming to class (on the day the reading discussed in the response paper is assigned) with questions and
comments on your classmates’ response papers and/or on the readings. Questions are strongly encouraged as a
means of obtaining a good participation grade. You aren’t expected to be an expert in the early modern period
and so I’m more interested in encouraging curiosity and critical thinking skills than in measuring how many
facts you’ve memorized. This is a small class so students should expect to speak or be called upon about once
per class. I may also assign short exercises involving brief oral reports and these will receive credit as class
participation.

Response Papers
For FOUR (NINE for graduate students) of the weekly reading assignments, you must post a 2-page (double-
spaced) informal response paper on Blackboard that we will use in the classroom to initiate discussion. Your
response should be clear and coherent and should focus on a single reading in the context of the assigned
reading for the week. Use previous class discussions and your own experience as sources of other perspectives.
You will find these response papers useful in working out problems or formulating questions you’d like to
pursue in greater depth in the longer essay. Response papers are due on Blackboard each Sunday evening no
later than 8 pm. Please keep in mind that your classmates will need time to read these responses. Please bring
your own copy of the papers to class for ease of reference in the discussion. Each paper is worth 5% of your
grade. Those of you who wish to write more than four papers and take the four with the highest grade may do
so. Late papers will not be graded. No exceptions.

Here are some general guidelines for structuring your response papers: Use the introduction to each text to
help you understand what kind of text that author is writing: fiction or non-fiction; a letter, a diary entry, a poem
or a play; etc. Why is she writing it? How does the issue of gender get raised in the work itself (it may not!)? If
you didn’t know who the author was, would you guess it was a woman? What is the author arguing about (if
non-fiction) or representing in the text? If it’s an argument, do you agree or disagree? Is the writing any good?
Is she convincing? What does the text tell you about early modern culture? about women in early modern
culture?

Here are the guidelines on how I will assign a grade to your response papers:
4-5: Shows extraordinarily thoughtful and thorough engagement with the reading and the issue under
discussion. This means that you move beyond vague generalities and address something specific in the text.
Clear, technically clean writing.
3: Shows engagement with the reading and some ability to formulate questions about it. Relatively clear, almost
no technical errors.
0-2: Too short to develop ideas, full of vague generalizations, or way off the point, or technically so sloppy as to
interfere with my ability to determine what you’re saying, or all of the above.

Essay
We’ll discuss the expectations for the essay in class. I will be working with each of you individually as we
move through the various stages of composition, including topic selection, outline, draft, and polished paper.
You may choose your own due date for the essay and then I will schedule two individual meetings with each
of you before the due date. I strongly encourage you not to leave the essay to the end of semester when you’ll
be studying for the exam.

Final Exam We’ll talk about and prepare for (via practice questions) the exam later in the semester. Please note
it will be held on Thursday, April 29, 2004; 8:30 am – 11:30 am.
**General Policies:**

- Class attendance is mandatory. I expect students to come to class on time fully prepared to participate in class discussions and group work. Any unexcused absences will affect your participation grade. Extended holidays, doctor/dentist appointments, sports events, etc. are not valid excuses for missing class. Note the term “EXTRA-curricular”? If you are ill, please call me before class to let me know you’ll be absent and bring a doctor’s note to the next class.
- Your papers must be word-processed, double-spaced with margins of 1 inch on every side, and your papers must use a 12-point font. Please number your pages and staple them together. Students should keep copies of all work submitted.
- I do not accept late assignments except on compassionate grounds (serious medical illness supported by a doctor’s note or a death in the family). Failure to submit assignments on the due date will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. If you are having problems writing I *strongly urge* you to come and see me to discuss the problem before you’ve missed a deadline. Computer problems are rarely a valid excuse for missing a deadline. Leave yourself enough time for such contingencies!

- **Plagiarism is a SERIOUS academic offense.** I consider its practice to be an indication of a lack of respect for yourself, the instructor, other students, and the purpose(s) of a university education. Please familiarize yourself with CWRU’s policy on plagiarism. Please come and ask me if you are still unsure.

**Schedule of Readings**

N.B. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, as it is scheduled below, during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class.

+ Please arrive in class having already completed the readings listed for that date.
+ Please bring your texts to class in order to participate meaningfully in the discussion.

**Week One: Gloriana, the Virgin Queen**

- **Jan 12:** Introductions and video of QEI
- **Jan 14:** QEI video continued and discussion
- **Jan 16:** Modern film representations of QEI (*Orlando; Elizabeth; Shakespeare in Love*)

**Reading to be completed by Friday of this first week of classes:**

- Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*: pp.6-13; 45-8; 56-60; 70-2; 79-80; 87-91; 132-4.
- Aughterson, Introduction, pp.1-5
- Wilcox, Introduction, pp.1-5 & chronology

Bring to Friday’s class any questions you have about the content, any terms you would like explained (check the dictionary first!). I’ll be asking you questions as well, to help you identify some of the themes for the course.

N.B. No response papers due this first week

**Week Two: Gloriana, the Virgin Queen**

**+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD**

- **Jan 19:** Martin Luther King, Jr, Holiday. NO CLASS.
- **Jan 21:** Levin *Heart and Stomach* pp.1-90
- **Jan 23:** Levin *Heart and Stomach* pp.121-72
Week Three: Reading Strategies

+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD

Jan 26: Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own, pp.25-66 (Chs 2-4, up to end of section on Aphra Behn).


Jan 30: Margaret Cavendish’s prefaces in Convent, pp.253-67; in Paper Bodies, pp.64-5, 136-42

Weeks Four and Five: The “Problem” of Eve

+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD

Feb 2: Aughterson 11-15 (excerpts from the King James Bible).
In addition, please look up in the Index in Aughterson the heading “Eve.” Look up the pages indicated there, then trace and compare the ways in which the example of Eve is used by the various writers, male and female

Feb 4: Aemilia Lanyer, from Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum in Clarke, pp.205-229 (dedicatory poems)

Feb 6: Lanyer, from Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum in Fitzmaurice, pp.23-38.

Feb 9: excerpts from John Milton’s Paradise Lost (IV.288-324; 411-504; 610-90) (on reserve in KSL; please photocopy and bring to class)

Feb 11: Lanyer and Milton cont’d


Week Six: The Querelle des Femmes and The Swetnam Controversy

+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD

Feb 16: excerpts from Joseph Swetnam, “The Araignment of Lewde, idle, froward, and unconstant women” (handout)

Jane Anger, “Jane Anger Her Protection for Women” in Aughterson pp.266-8


Week Seven: Maid/Wife/Widow….Mother?

+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD

Feb 23: Isabella Whitney’s poetry in Clarke, pp.3-43.

Feb 25: Aughterson, pp.20-35; 103-32;

Feb 27: Valerie Wayne, “Advice for women from mothers and patriarchs” in Wilcox 56-79.

Week Eight: TBA

+RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD

Mar 1:

Mar 3:
Week Nine: SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week Ten: Lady Mary Wroth
RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD
Mar 19: Wroth continued

Weeks Eleven & Twelve: William Shakespeare and Elizabeth Cary, the Lady Falkland
RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD
Mar 22: Othello in Carroll
Mar 24: Othello in Carroll
Mar 26: Othello in Carroll
Mar 29: Tragedy of Mariam in Carroll
Mar 31: Tragedy of Mariam in Carroll
Apr 2: Tragedy of Mariam in Carroll

Weeks Thirteen & Fourteen: Lady Margaret Cavendish
RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD
Apr 5: A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life in Paper Bodies pp.41-63
Apr 9: Sociable Letters and Female Orations in Paper Bodies, pp.64-85; 143-8.

RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD
Apr 12: The Convent of Pleasure in Convent pp.217-48
Apr 14: The First Part of Bell in Campo in Convent pp.107-140.

Week Fifteen: Aphra Behn
RESPONSE PAPER FOR THIS WEEK’S READINGS DUE BY 8 PM THE NIGHT PRIOR TO CLASS ON BLACKBOARD
Apr 21: Behn, The Rover in Fitzmaurice
Apr 23: Behn, The Rover cont’d
Apr 26: EXAM REVIEW
FINAL EXAM: Thursday, April 29, 2004; 8:30 am – 11:30 am.