Case Western Reserve University  
Department of English

**ENG 508: Making (Sacred and Profane) Love**  
Spring 2001  
Prof. H. L. Meakin

Class Meetings: R 4:30-7  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 12-2 pm; Thursdays 1-2 pm and by appointment  
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**Course Description and Course Objectives**

How did writers of the seventeenth century articulate the experience of loving and being loved? How are sacred and secular love implicated in or distinguished from each other? We will attempt to formulate some answers to these questions as we read chronologically through a large body of secular and sacred poetry written at the beginning of the seventeenth century during the last years of the Virgin Queen Elizabeth’s reign, all the way through to poetry written at the end of the century in a radically transformed world where, for example, gender relations, religious beliefs, and epistemologies had undergone earnest and anxious examination and reformulation.

How can we use the sane word, “love,” to describe the subject of John Donne’s c.1601 lesbian elegy, “Sapho to Philaenis,” and the subject of his passionate Holy Sonnets, one of which speaks of the soul’s battering and rape by God? How does Lady Mary Wroth’s female perspective reshape the Petrarchan sonnet tradition and its articulation of love in “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus”? What of Jonson’s pruderies? Herbert’s humility? Crashaw’s religious ecstasies? Carew’s “Rapture”? Andrew Marvell’s “vegetable love”? Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn’s evocations of female friendship? Thomas Traherne’s “bliss”? John Bunyan’s “Grace”? Raphael’s blush in Milton’s *Paradise Lost* when Adam asks about angel sex? The Earl of Rochester’s salacious epigrams?! In addition to these more “canonical” authors, we will read from ballad literature and popular song, as well as from unpublished commonplace books and manuscripts in an attempt to obtain a broader range of attitudes toward sexual love, especially. We will also read some of the early American literature written by those Puritans who left England seeking the freedom to practice their own versions of sacred and profane love. Throughout the semester, we will consider visual representations of love in painting and sculpture of the period.
Other questions we may consider: What effects did the Reformation and Counter-Reformation have on representations of the experience of sacred and secular love? How were anxieties about “the nature of woman” registered in love poetry? How did the gender and sexual preferences of the monarch influence poetic representations of love? What effect did anatomical and physiological discoveries about the body have on the ways in which love was articulated? How does the classical inheritance continue to inflect representations of love and lust? What of more or less prohibited forms of love—homosexuality? Mixed race? Mixed class?

A key aim of the course will be to hone our awareness of the difficulties and pleasures in attempting to read pre-Freud literature from a post-Freud perspective. Contemporary critical discourse will be used to theorize their writing and our reading practices.

**Required Texts:**
- Plato, *The Symposium* (Penguin)
- Shakespeare, *The Sonnets* (any reputable edition)

**Hand-outs (lots) from Instructor**

**Assignments:**
- Weekly reports (3-4 pages) on readings, primary or critical 20%
- Seminar Presentation in class 20%
- Short Paper (10 pages) 15%
- Group work: Annotated Bibliography 15%
- Research Paper (25 pages); subject to be chosen in consultation with instructor; will undergo 1-2 revisions; Final product should be of publishable quality 30%

**Due dates for these assignments will be announced next class.**

**Schedule:**

N.B. With the exception of the grade table, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class.

**Week One:** EROS

- Plato’s *Symposium*;

- Images of Greek eroticism (in class)

Week Two: The Italian Erotic: Ficino and/or Aretino?
- selections from Ficino’s On Love (a commentary on Plato’s Symposium) (hand-out)
- selections from Aretino’s Dialogues (Part One) and his sonnets on Romano’s Positions (hand-out)
- Images of Giulio Romano’s Positions (slides in class)
- David Frantz, “The Scourge of Princes as Pornographer: Pietro Aretino and the Popular Tradition” (hand-out)
- Frantz, “Leud Priapians’ and Renaissance Pornography” (hand-out)

Week Three: Petrarch and the English sonnet craze
- selections from the poetry of Wyatt, Surrey, Sidney, Spenser, with special attention to Shakespeare’s sonnets and the sonnet sequence from Urania, “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” by Lady Mary Wroth (Anthology: pp.135-44)

Week Four: Ovidian amore and the Elizabethan Epyllion
- selections from Heroides ( “Sapho to Phaon”; “Penelope to Ulysses”; “Phaedra to Hippolytus”; “Dido to Aeneas”; twin poems “Hero to Leander” and “Leander to Hero”); Amores (Book One); Ars Amatoria (tba); Metamorphoses (Apollo and Daphne; Narcissus and Echo; Pygmalion; The Rape of Proserpine; Procris and Philomela; Iphis and Ianthe; Orpheus and Eurydice; Venus and Adonis)
• “Introduction” to Elizabeth Story Donno, *Elizabethan Minor Epics* (hand-out)

• Lynda E. Boose, “The 1599 Bishops’ Ban, Elizabethan Pornography, and the Sexualization of the Jacobean Stage” (hand-out)

**Week Five:** John Donne in the 1590’s (and a little after):

• The Ovidian Influence: Donne’s Elegies, esp. “Sapho to Philaenis”; “Loves Progress”; “To His Mistress Going to Bed”; “The Comparison”; “His Parting from Her”; “The Anagram”; “Natures Lay Ideot”

• Plato — Ovid — Petrarch — Donne?: Reinventing Love in the *Songs and Sonnets*
  “Twicknam Garden”; “A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy’s Day”

• Ben Jonson: “Why I Write not of Love” (Anthology pp.84)

• Musical Settings of Donn’e poetry (in class)

  N.B. Any poems not in the anthology will be provided in a hand-out.

**Week Six:** Donne’s Songs and Sonnets cont’d

Devotional Donne:

• Biblical sources of eros: Bathsheba; The Levite’s Concubine; Song of Solomon; Paul’s Letters

• Donne’s Holy Sonnets: (all of them-19- as in the anthology; the 3 hymns (pp.75-7) with especial consideration of Catholic/Protestant tensions and of course, Donne’s use of erotic imagery

• Musical settings of the *Holy Sonnets* (in class)

• Denis de Rougemont, “Eros, or Boundless Desire” & “Agape, or Christian Love” from *Love in the Western World* (hand-out)

**Week Seven:** The Devotional Poets: Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan

• Selections in Anthology (177-206; 322-31; 442-57)
Week Eight: Wedded Love
- Donne’s 3 “Epithalamia” (hand-out)
- Comparison of Donne with a selection of other epithalamia written for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth and the Count Palatine, and for the marriage of Francis Howard and the Earl of Somerset (hand-out)
- Ann Bradstreet: selected poems (hand-out)
- Selected readings from contemporary marriage manuals (hand-out)
- critic Linda Woodbridge on marriage in Renaissance England

Week Nine: Out of Bounds Love and Lust: homosexuality, bawdy verse, ballads, epigrams (and Martial’s influence), the miscellanies
- Aristotle’s Masterpiece
- Burton on Love Melancholy
- Bruce R. Smith, *Homosexual Desires in Shakespeare’s England*


Week Eleven: Robert Herrick
- all of *Hesperides* (available in library)

Week Twelve: Andrew Marvell
- selections from the anthology (pp.399, 400, 401, 409, 410, 434, 436) and hand-outs

Week Thirteen: John Milton
- selections from the sonnets
- Adam and Eve: Before and After the Fall
- James Grantham Turner, *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton*

Week Fourteen: Aphra Behn and Lord Rochester
- The Rover OR Oroonoko
- Rochester’s poems and his play, Sodom

Week Fifteen: Review & Conclusions
Looking forward to the eighteenth century