Forging the Early Modern
CMII0012

Core module for the MA in Early Modern Studies, 2018-19

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Overview

**Code**: CMII0012  
**Value**: 15 credits  
**Course Convenors**: Dr Matthew Symonds ([m.symonds@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:m.symonds@ucl.ac.uk))  
**Time**: Tuesdays, 2-4pm, term 2

This module starts by examining the epistemological challenges that transformed the early modern world from the creation of a global trading system to the cartographic innovations that helped to map it and the travel writing that explored the vastly expanded horizons of early modern European thought. The course focuses on a number of issues in the cultural and intellectual history of the period, as researchers lead sessions demonstrating how the relationship between theory and archival research can result in new insights into the early modern as a critical concept. Field trips which facilitate engagement with material forms and physical practice in the period include the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Royal Society Library.

**Course assessment**

CMII0012 is assessed by an essay (4,000 words long) which can be used to help define and begin to research the topic of the dissertation. Students should discuss their essays with the course convenor or appropriate session tutor. Essays should be submitted via Turnitin on Moodle and are due according to the deadlines set out in the Moodle handbook for the module.

**Schedule for 2018-19**

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Session Details and Reading Lists

Session 1: Global Exchanges
Tutor: Dr Alexander Samson (a.samson@ucl.ac.uk)

The world became a global trading system on 8th October 1565 with the arrival of the Manila galleon in Acapulco. In our own world globalisation is a highly controversial and polemic issue, but what of its premodern history? In this session I propose to look at how global perspectives, the notion of the transnational, and so on enrich and enliven our understanding of the early modern period, as well as how these premodern histories illuminate our own concerns. Mapping and cartography were one important way in which people living in the early modern period began to see themselves in perspective on a smaller and smaller scale, as they came to understand the globe and the global. The move toward visualising the earth as an orb or globe put peoples in their place. While imperial ideologies fomented territorial expansion, identifying certain peoples as natural masters of newly discovered worlds, others warned of the dangers of travel and exposure to other races and cultures. More radically still, some sought to abolish private property altogether and build radically egalitarian communities on the most microcosmic scale. Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities can be nuanced and thought through in terms of how communities were imagined, from the utopian Christian Humanist ideals of pantisocracy to those who saw segregation and segmentation as an inevitable concomitant of evangelization. This was an era when debates about the laws of nations and natural law went hand in hand with emergent anthropology and international law.

Required Reading

Ann Blair, Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age (London: Yale University Press, 2010), Intro, chapters 1 and 5.


Suggested Further Reading

Geoffrey Parker, Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century (London: Yale University Press, 2013), chapters 1–4, 9, 11–12, 16, 21, Conclusion.

When thinking of the Renaissance, it is difficult not to think of maps showing the hidden corners of the continents unveiled by European navigators or the splendour of vistas representing cities that dominated global trade. This session will provide glimpses into the complex and at times disconcerting world of early modern cartography. We will ask what distinguished Renaissance maps from earlier ones and look into the notion of “grid” as an organising principle for space-related knowledge after 1400. We will then explore the notion of “moralized geography” and look into the way cities represented themselves cartographically. The block will lead to a discussion of the “scopic regimes” of the period, encouraging us to think about the connections between cartography, society and politics, and identify the cartographic heritage of the Renaissance today.

Required Reading

Howard, Deborah, "Venice as a Dolphin: Further Investigations into Jacopo de’ Barbari’s View", in *Artibus et Historiae*, 18, 35 (1997), pp. 101-111 (available online through UCL Explore).


Suggested Further Reading


Session 4: Knowledge Exchanges
Tutor: Dr Nadine Akkermann
Session 5: Early Modern Scientific Thought at the Royal Society (trip)

Tutor: Dr Noah Moxham (njm24@st-andrews.ac.uk)

This session will be taken by Dr Noah Moxham, and will involve a trip to the Royal Society.

Among the most important intellectual developments of early modernity in Europe was the emergence of new, albeit competing, attitudes towards the systematic investigation of nature. These were shaped and sustained by new organisations and associations such as the Royal Society of London. This session examines the ways in which new institutions promoting natural knowledge justified and sought to sustain themselves, how they contributed to the public identity of the natural philosopher, the social and intellectual worlds of early modern science, and the interactions between the Royal Society and other institutions including domestic and continental analogues, the crown, the universities, and the London print trades.

Required Reading (Excerpts will be made available on Moodle)

Thomas Sprat, A History of the Royal Society of London 1667
Robert Hooke, Micrographia

Suggested Further Reading

Mordechai Feingold, The Mathematician’s Apprenticeship: Science, Universities and Society 1560-1640
Session 6: Religious printing networks
Tutor: Professor Gerard Kilroy (g.kilroy@ucl.ac.uk)
Session 7: Literature as object
Tutor: Dr Olivia Smith (olivia.smith@wolfson.ox.ac.uk)

This session is about the materiality of early modern literature. We will consider the early modern world as a place populated with literary objects and processes such as books, letters, diaries, paper, ink, printing presses, destruction, common-placing and annotation. As well as talking about the historical context we will discuss the ways in which writers of this period used literary materiality, including considerations of lost books, publishing, manuscripts and paper, as a theme in their work.

I will start the session by showing examples of material texts from the period. The required reading comprises three short primary texts that are preoccupied with literature as a physical object. Please also choose one item of secondary reading (an article or book chapter) from the list below and be prepared to comment on it.

Required Reading (Excerpts will be made available on Moodle)
Margaret Cavendish, *Sociable Letters* (1664), letters 131 and 143
John Taylor, *The Praise of Hemp-Seed* (1620), especially from p.19 onwards
Thomas Browne, *Musæum Clausum, or Bibliotheca Abscondita* (1684)

Suggested Further Reading

James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (eds.) *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016)


Kevin Killeen and Liz Oakley-Brown (eds.), *Scrutinizing Surfaces = Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, 8 (2017)


Session 8: Field Trip: Sir John Soane Museum
Tutor: Colin Thom
Session 9: Early Modern Science  
Tutor: Dr Simon Werrett (s.werrett@ucl.ac.uk)

This session will use the history of material culture to examine the emergence of a new “experimental philosophy” in the era of the “Scientific Revolution” in the early modern period. Historians have long known that early modern experimental inquiry occurred in people’s homes rather than purpose-built laboratories. This session considers how domestic values and approaches to material possessions shaped experiment as it was performed in the home, and critically examines historians’ views of experiment, apparatus, and the class and gender identity of the experimenter in early modern England.

Required Reading (Excerpts will be made available on Moodle)


Suggested Further Reading


Session 10: To be confirmed