Reframing the Renaissance
CMII0011

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

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Overview

**Code:** CMII0011  
**Value:** 15 credits  
**Module Convenor:** Dr Robyn Adams ([robyn.adams@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:robyn.adams@ucl.ac.uk))  
**Time:** Tuesdays, 2-4pm, term 1

One of the crucial developments of the period we term ‘the Renaissance’ or ‘early modern’ was the rise of a multitude of cultural forms in the vernacular, in contrast to the medieval Latinate world that had gone before. We will look at how these changes developed in different European countries from their origins in Italy to Spain, England and France. As well as charting these key shifts in cultural practice, we incorporate sessions that introduce crucial changes in material practice, focusing on print culture, communication networks, and visual, aural and material culture. These sessions are designed to complement and dialogue with other modules on the MA in Early Modern Studies that develop the necessary skills for carrying out original research for the dissertation and towards doctoral study, i.e. historical bibliography and the study of manuscript material. In addition to weekly seminar discussion, we will visit libraries, archives and sites of special interest including the National Portrait Gallery, and these visits will include sessions on object-based learning.

Module assessment  
CMII0011 is assessed by one 4,000-word essay on a topic of your choice, to be discussed and agreed with the course convenor. 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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**Reading week (5-9 November 2018)**

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Session Details and Reading Lists

**Session 1: Introduction**
**Tutors:** Dr Lisa Sampson ([l.sampson@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:l.sampson@ucl.ac.uk))

Dr Lisa Sampson will reflect on what we mean by the term ‘Renaissance’, using Jacob Burckhardt as a point of departure. Students will be invited to contribute their own definitions and interpretations, bringing in examples if possible.

**Required Reading**

The question frequently asked in relation to the novel is what are the key features of what we understand as the novel and is there anything essentially modern about it. There is no doubt it has been the dominant form of entertainment over the last three centuries. Key scholars in this field, however, have made the argument that the novel was a fully developed form already in the classical period (Doody). Others have pointed to naive empiricism, verisimilitude, particular configurations of narrative voice, heteroglossia, interest in the workaday and subjectivity and its rise etc. In this seminar we will attempt to evaluate some of these claims by looking at what are seen as pre-novelistic texts (Image of Idleness, Lazarillo de Tormes) and others that are fully incorporated into histories of the rise of the novel (Don Quixote, Novelas ejemplares) and then plot what happens to these so-called innovations in prose fiction in translation, where often they are toned down or excised and reassimilated to previous generic models and expectations, in a nostalgic gesture that resists aetiological, rise, or evolutionary theories of the novel. Would we be better off thinking in terms of plots?

**Required Reading**


*The Image of Idleness*, anon., (c. 1556?). See PDF below.

**Further Reading**


—, *Don Quixote* in any translation from Shelton to Grossman or Rutherford, Prologue, Chapters 1 – 9.

**Secondary Reading**


—, ‘Placing Tudor fiction’, *Yearbook of English Studies* 38 (2008), 136 – 149


Spanish-English Translations Database 1500 – 1640: [http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/apps/index.html](http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/apps/index.html)
Session 3: Print Culture and Reception History  
Tutor: Dr Matthew Symonds (m.symonds@ucl.ac.uk)

Or, “what's so revolutionary about the Printing Revolution?” In this session, we'll be discussing the way historians and critics conceptualise the place of the book in early modern European culture, with a particular focus on the act of reading.

Required Reading


And ONE of:


Suggested Further Reading


Simon Eliot & Jonathan Rose (eds), A Companion to the History of the Book (Chichester, 2009)


Adam Fox, Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700 (Oxford, 2001)


Jason McElligot and Eve Patten (eds), The Perils of Print Culture: Book, Print and Publishing History in Theory and Practice (Basingstoke, 2014)


Session 4: Not Shakespeare
Tutor: Dr Lucy Razzall

In this session we will explore the theatrical culture of early modern London. Our central text will be *The Roaring Girl* (c. 1611) by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, which was based on the life of Mary Frith or ‘Moll Cutpurse’, a notorious pickpocket. We will use this play to think about the theatre and urban space more broadly as sites for the performance of genre and gender, and we will consider in particular the part that clothing plays in the construction of identity. The first printed edition of *The Roaring Girl* offers a case study of how dramatic works were experienced as texts to be read as well as watched in the theatre. We will spend some time thinking about how this play is presented in print, looking at its various paratexts, and the presentation of the protagonist and the author(s) – in order to reflect on the relationship between text, theatre, and the city itself as critical places of performance.

Required Reading


James M. Bromley, “Quilted with Mighty Words to Lean Purpose’: Clothing and Queer Style in *The Roaring Girl*, *Renaissance Drama* 43 (2015), 143-172

Suggested Further Reading


Heather C. Easterling, *Jonson, Middleton, Dekker and City Comedy’s London as Language* (New York, 2016)


Nina Levine, *Practicing the City: Early Modern London on Stage* (New York, 2016)


David Scott Kastan and Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Staging the Renaissance: Reinterpretations of Elizabethan and Jacobean Drama* (New York, 1991)


Kelly J. Stage, ‘*The Roaring Girl*’s London Spaces’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 49 (2009), 417-436


Books and libraries are constantly in the public eye, even in this digital age, especially since the management of big data and the fear of information overload have become common concerns. Predictions of the obsolescence of the printed book and the extinction of public libraries are reported with anxiety in the media. And, in this time of budget cuts, worries over the funding of local, national, and university libraries grow: the public acutely senses the value of institutions that provide accessible educational and social opportunities.

The existing volatile political and economic period has, moreover, focussed attention on the book as a collectible object that can have monetary value. The collecting of fine books can be correlated to the fascination with luxury goods, the obsession with ‘curation’ as observed in social media (e.g. Pinterest), and the current preoccupation with people’s relationship to their possessions – as evidenced by discussions of consumerism and hoarding, and de-cluttering and tidying in both the popular press and in academic writing – that includes bibliomania.

This session will consider the roots of these concerns, which are to be found in seventeenth-century culture, in Britain and on the Continent. We will look at seventeenth-century library formation within the broader contexts of the increase in printed information, the spread of education, and the rise of capitalism, and then proceed to a case study: the essays on the ideal library and the role of its librarian by John Dury.

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Further Reading**

**On John Dury:**


On 17th-Century Libraries and Access to Information:


Session 6: Political Thought in the Renaissance
Tutor: Dr Angus Gowland (a.gowland@ucl.ac.uk)

This session will focus on one of the most famous political works of the Italian Renaissance, the Discourses on Livy (1515[?]-1519) by Niccolò Machiavelli. Having long been recognised as a pivotal document in the development of modern political theory and a key contribution to republican ideology, the Discourses is also rooted in history, as a sophisticated humanistic engagement with classical antiquity. Published posthumously in 1531, Machiavelli’s commentary elaborates a vision of politics and history that seeks to align political values with political reality, addressing the pressing issues faced by contemporary Italian city-states and reformulating many of the central concepts of classical political thought – including republic, virtue, liberty, corruption, and fortune. In this session we shall address the key elements of ‘Machiavellian’ republicanism, and assess the relationship between its early modern and modern interpretations.

Required Reading

- Dedication;
- Book 1: preface, disc. 1-27, 34-36, 39-40, 49, 55, 58;
- Book 2, Preface, disc. 1-5, 13, 29;
- Book 3, disc. 1, 3-5, 41.

Suggested Further Reading

A. Arienzo and G. Borrelli (eds), Anglo-American Faces of Machiavelli (2009), esp. essays by Coli, Ion, Geuna, and Visentin
G. Bock, Q. Skinner, and M. Viroli (eds), Machiavelli and Republicanism (1990), pts 1-2
- Visions of Politics, 3 vols (2002), vol. 2, chs. 5-7
Session 7: Confessional Cultures  
Tutor: Dr Jaap Geraerts ([jaap.geraerts.09@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:jaap.geraerts.09@ucl.ac.uk))

In this session students will be introduced to recent approaches to the cultural and social history of religion in the early modern period. We will focus in particular on the ways in which the programmes of reform initiated by the different confessional churches were translated in practice and how this influenced and shaped the actual religious identities that emerged.

**Required Reading**
Alexandra Walsham, 'Translating Trent? English Catholicism and the Counter Reformation', *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp. 288–310 [e-journals via UCL Library website]

Council of Trent, *session XXIII*: ‘Decree on Reformation’; *session XXV*: ‘On the invocation, veneration, and relics, of saints, and on sacred images’ [available at: https://history.hanover.edu/texts/trent/trentall.html]

George Gifford, *A briefe discourse of certayne points of the religion, which is among the common sort of Christians, which may be termed the countrie diuinitie With a manifest confutation of the same, after the order of a dialogue* (London, 1598) [EEBO, recommended edition: STC (2nd ed.) / 11847], pp. 1-18 [images 4-13]

**Suggested Further Reading**
Craig Harline and Eddy Put, *A Bishop's Tale: Matthias Hovius Among His Flock in Seventeenth-Century Flanders* (New Haven, 2000), esp. Ch. 6 (pp. 92–107)
Craig Koslofsky, ‘Honour and Violence in German Lutheran Funerals in the Confessional Age’, *Social History* 20, 3 (October 1995): 315-337.
Session 8: Renaissance Letters at The National Archives (field trip)
Tutor: Dr Katy Mair (Katy.Mair@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

The study of early modern letters has become an increasingly popular area of scholarship, as the seductive promise of a handwritten missive proves too much for the modern reader to resist.

Confronted with a document that bears such clear signs of usage – splattered ink blots, the trace of a broken seal, the deep grooves of the fold lines – it is difficult to reject the notion that it represents the unmediated thoughts of the author. The persistence of the basic structure of the letter, and its continued use as a mode of communication in life today, lends the letter form a deceptive simplicity and tempts the modern reader to approach it with less historical sensitivity than they would apply to other manuscript documents.

Recent scholarship has attempted to recuperate the process of letter-writing in early modern England, resulting in a body of research that aims to untangle the rhetorical, social and material significance of these texts. It is now widely understood that letter writing had its own material and linguistic codes bound up with the culture of social deference, and these conventions are critical to interpreting letters. Letters therefore need to be situated both within the context of the renaissance of epistolary theory and practice enshrined in the work of Erasmus, alongside the evolving practice of familiar letter writing letter apparent in the archives of the Stonor and Paston letters.

This session will introduce you to the key collections of medieval and early modern letters at The National Archives. We will look at the role of the Secretary of State and the types of correspondence these officials accumulated, and then we will look in more detail at how letters are structured. Finally we will consider the afterlife of letters, and think about the filing and endorsement processes.

Required Reading


Suggested Further Reading

Carlo M. Bajetta, Guillaume Coatalen, Jonathan Gibson Elizabeth’s Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric and Politics (Palgrave, 2014)


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


Gary Schneider, The Culture of Epistolarity (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005)


Alan Stewart, Shakespeare’s Letters (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Susan E. Whyman., Sociability and Power in Late-Stuart England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

Session 9: The materiality of poetry
Tutor: Dr Dianne Mitchell (dianne.mitchell@queens.ox.ac.uk)

When we learn to be good close readers of poetry in secondary school or university, we don’t always think about the tactile forms in which these poems found their early readers. This session will introduce the rich corporeality of Renaissance poetry in manuscript, print, and other media. We will consider how our understanding of poetic form might develop in response to early moderns’ practices of material transmission and to their abiding interest in the “thingness” of their poetry.

Required Reading


ALSO

Skin George Herbert, The Temple (1633) and William Shakespeare, Shake-speares Sonnets (1609) on EEBO (Early English Books Online) (or look at copies in a special collections library) to get a sense of these poetic collections as material objects. Get in touch with your course conveners if you have trouble finding these items on EEBO. How do these artifacts – or a modern edition – compare to the image below, from a manuscript collection at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC?

https://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/detail/FOLGERCM1~6~6~878011~158218:Poetical-miscellany--manuscript,-c

Suggested Further Reading


Session 10: Visual Culture: Overseas-trained painters in Tudor and early Stuart London

Tutor: Professor Karen Hearn (k.hearn@ucl.ac.uk)

One of the most striking aspects of 16th and 17th century British art – especially painting and sculpture - is how much of it was produced by incomers. This was certainly true of art for the court, aristocracy and gentry, but the evidence suggests that it was also the case for images produced for wider audiences. In 1531, the courtier and writer Sir Thomas Elyot observed that the English felt compelled “if we will have any thinge well paynted, kerved, or embrawdred, to abandon our own countraymen and resorte unto straungers [that is, ‘foreigners’].” For most of the 16th and 17th centuries, numerous craftsmen – including painters – travelled from overseas, and especially from the Northern and Southern Netherlands to work in England (and, indeed, Scotland). Their motives seem to have differed, at differing times. At some periods they came for reasons of religion, and at others purely economic ones. Following the re-imposition of Catholic Habsburg rule in the Netherlands in 1567, Protestant England became a refuge for Netherlandish members of the Reformed religion, including artists. Some settled there, gaining naturalization, while others came for only a few years. Their offspring, in turn, grew up and worked in Britain. With the accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of Great Britain, further Netherlandish painters came to England, but for professional rather than confessional reasons. In certain London parishes, incomers could practise their trade outside the jurisdiction of city guilds. It remains a paradox that most of the best known surviving images of leading Britons of the period – and especially of the monarchs – were produced by overseas-born and -trained practitioners.

Required Reading


Additional Suggested Reading


