

## Department of English &amp; Writing Studies

**English 3326G (001)**  
**Death in the Renaissance**  
Winter 2025

**Instructor:** J. Doelman

**Delivery:** This is an in-person course.

**Important Note:** while this is an in-person course, students *must* be able to access Owl online for some readings and some assignments.

**Prerequisites:** [English 1020E](#), or both [English 1027F/G](#) and [English 1028F/G](#), or [English 1022E](#) or [English 1024E](#) or [English 1035E](#) or [English 1036E](#) or [English 1901E](#). At least a 70% overall average in English courses. Or by permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Calendar Description

This course considers literary and cultural responses to death from the period 1590 to 1670. It explores the philosophical and theological understandings of death in the period, funeral and mourning customs, and then the literary treatment of death in such writers as Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, and Sir Thomas Browne.

Course Description

Drawing on poetry, drama and prose, this course will consider a range of literary responses to death during the period 1590 to 1670. It will begin with discussion of the period's funeral and mourning customs, and then turn to such works as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Donne's devotional poetry and prose, a range of funeral elegies (including Milton's "Lycidas") and Sir Thomas Browne's meditation on ancient Roman burial urns *Urn Burial*. As student interests lead, we may also relate these literary works to depictions of death in the visual arts and to funeral music from the period.

**Course Objectives (a selection):**

The successful student will be able to:

- Describe in detail the prevailing attitudes towards death and the funerary and mourning customs of the period.
- Articulate the significance of the period's literary response to death.
- Reflect upon the challenges posed by seventeenth-century culture to our own assumptions about death and mourning.
- Probe through close reading the various elegies and other short poems on the syllabus.
- Use effectively a variety of reference and research tools relative to the topics of the course.
- Use and respond to some of the more significant scholarly material on the cultural history and literary works studied.
- Develop well-organized, effective, and rich arguments on literary topics of the period.

### Course Materials

#### **Texts:**

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (any well-annotated edition is acceptable)

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays* (Oxford) ISBN 9780199539284

Custom Course Book of materials available at the UWO bookstore. (indicated by "C.C." in outline below).

A collection of primary materials that will be posted on OwlBrightspace. (indicated by "P.M." in outline below)

Some further materials available on the Internet may also appear on the course.

### Methods of Evaluation

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

Commentary (on an individual elegy) <b>due Tues. Jan. 28</b>	10%
Midterm Test	15%
Final Exam	40%
Essay (2500-3000 words) <b>due Thurs. March 27</b>	35%
	100%

\*Prepared attendance at all sessions is required.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

### OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance:

<https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/>

For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly:

<https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

### Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for the tests and exam of this course. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

### Statements

#### **Academic Consideration**

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
  - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
  - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
  - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Please see the university policy for Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs at [https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

### **Absences at Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, please contact the Academic Advising office of your Faculty of Registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/exam/definitions.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/exam/definitions.pdf)

### **Policy on Late Assignments**

Late essays that have not been approved for academic **consideration** will be penalized at a rate of three percent per day. Late essays will not be accepted after the end of term.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

### **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html). To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### **Intellectual Property/Copyright**

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_religious.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf).

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than one week prior to the writing of the test".

### **Support Services**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:  
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unacknowledged use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT and Google Translate, to create content that is submitted as one's own. In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

### Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

[https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

## Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind is a serious academic offence. Be advised that electronic plagiarism-detection programmes will be used and essay banks checked, if the professor has any suspicion of plagiarism. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing both in the body and at the end of the assignment. Any borrowings from secondary sources, whether wordings or ideas, must be acknowledged BOTH in the main body of your essay AND at the end in a bibliography or works cited! If you have any doubts about how to document your work correctly, check with your professor prior to handing in your essay. For further information, see the Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar and appended to this outline.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

## Schedule of Classes and Assignments

### **Week of Jan. 6 Physical dimensions of illness and death**

Conclusion of Raleigh's *History of the World* (C.C.). Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare* (C.C.)

### **Philosophy and Theology of Death; Literary Treatment of Death**

Selections from Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (C.C.)

Francis Bacon, "Of Death" (C.C.)

Anonymous, "Upon a Deaths head" (C.C.)

**Reserve Reading:** Ralph Houlbrooke, "Death, Church and Family in England Between the Late Fifteenth and the Early Eighteenth Centuries" in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, (London, 1989), pp. 1-24.

### **Week of Jan. 13**

#### **Funerals, graves and commemoration**

**Reserve Reading:** Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*, ch. 1, pp. 15-49.

A gathering of epitaphs (P.M.)

Music: William Byrd, "Elegy for Thomas Tallis". (Text in P.M.; Recording available [here](#).)

emblem books and death? consult Calabritto, Monica, and Peter M. (Peter Maurice) Daly, eds. 2014. *Emblems of Death in the Early Modern Period*. Geneve: Droz.

#### **Poetic treatment of death: Funeral Elegies**

Ben Jonson, "An Elegy on the Lady Jane Pawlet, Marchioness of Winton" (P.M.)

Francis Beaumont, "Elegy on the Death of Lady Markham" (P.M.)

### **Week of Jan. 20**

Norbrook, David. "Lucy Hutchinson's "Elegies" and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with Text)." *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (3) (1997): 468-521.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/pdf/43447764.pdf>

[Particular focus is on Elegies 1 and 2 (pp. 487-89)]

Lady Ann Southwell's mock elegy on the Countess of Londonderry (Folger V.b.198) (C.C.)

**Week of Jan. 27**

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

**Week of Feb. 3 Personification of Death**

John Donne "Death be not Proud", "Death I recant" ("Elegie on Mrs. Boulstred") (C.C.)  
"Death be not proud, thy hand gave not this blow" (ascribed in some manuscripts to Lucy, Countess of Bedford) (C.C.)  
"Death thou art Proud" (Elegy on Arthur Chichester) (P.M.)

**Week of Feb. 10 John Donne, Death and Resurrection**

**Midterm Test: Tues. Feb. 11**

Donne, "An hymne to the Saints, and to Marquesse Hamylton" (C.C.)  
Donne, "Hymn to God, my God, in my sicknesse" (C.C.)  
Donne, Selections from *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*

**Reading Week**

**Week of Feb. 24**

**Orpheus, Poetry, and Immortality**

Selections from Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*: Orfeo's lament at end of Act II (Selection 10-12 on Disc 1 on the Naxos recording). Orfeo's solo at the beginning of Act 5 (Selection 11 on Disc 2)

<https://uwolib-naxosmusiclibrary-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/catalogue/item.asp?cid=8.554094-95>

Catalogue Number is 8.554094-95

Or Performance at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ma4OeIX45I>

Spenser, selections from "The Mutabilitie Cantos"

Selected Shakespeare sonnets

**Week of March 3 Death and the Pastoral World**

Spenser, *Shepherdes Calender*, "November"

Spenser and Mary Sidney, "Astrophel and the Doleful Lay of Clorinda" (C.C.), Milton, "Lycidas" (C.C.)

**Week of March 10 Herbert and Vaughan**

Herbert, "Church-Monuments", "Mortification", "Decay", "Death", "Doomsday" (C.C.)

Secondary Reading: Russell M. Hillier's "Herbert's pepper corn: Responsibility and reciprocity in *The Temple*", *Christianity and Literature* 66 (1): pp. 130-135 [available through UWO library]

Vaughan, "Resurrection and Immortality", "Day of Judgement" (C.C.)

**Week of March 17**

Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*

**Week of March 24**

*Duchess of Malfi*

**Week of March 31**

Milton, Passages from *Paradise Lost*: 2: 629-849; 10: 235-305; 11:461-499; 12: 386-435 (C.C.)

Conclusion of Browne, *Hydriotaphia or Urne-Buriall* (C.C.)