

Department of English & Writing Studies

**English 4320F (001)**

**Seminar in Renaissance Literature: Songs and Sonnets**

Fall 2024

**Instructor:** John Leonard

**Prerequisites:** 1.0 from English 3000-3999 or 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.

### Course Description

A study of the sonnet, with primary emphasis on early modern poets (especially Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne, and Milton) but with reference also to later poets who have used the sonnet form (Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Derek Walcott, Tyehimba Jess). Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* will also be brought in for comparison, even though that posthumously published collection does not include any traditional sonnets. The course will focus on close reading and practical criticism, but will also examine the historical development of the sonnet form.

### **Objectives:**

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Instantly recognize a sonnet whenever they see one;
- Distinguish between sonnet forms (Italian, English, various hybrids and experimental reinventions);
- Understand the sonnet 'from the inside' by attempting their own poetic composition(s) in the form;
- Understand the history and development of the sonnet form and sonnet cycles

### Course Materials

We shall use the following three required texts, to be purchased from the bookstore:

1. Shakespeare, *Complete Sonnets and Poems*, ed. Colin Burrow (Oxford)
2. Sir Philip Sidney, *The Major Works*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Oxford)
3. John Donne, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed. Charles Coffin (Modern Library)

In addition to the above, we shall read selected sonnets by Wyatt, Surrey, Spenser, Lady Mary Wroth, Herbert, Milton, Wordsworth, Keats, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Derek Walcott, Tyehimba Jess, *et. al.* For the most part, these will be made available via OWL as pdfs or powerpoints, sometimes as sight poems or posted on OWL only shortly before the class. The additional material introduced for comparison with the primary texts, to show how a later poet engages with his or her predecessors, sometimes in an adversarial way or for political ends (as when Tyehimba Jess alludes to Milton when writing a sonnet on police brutality and the BLM cause).

### Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

**Seminar presentation** (approx. 20 minutes). You may present on the same topic as one of your essays. **Weighting: 25%**. Due date: to be arranged with instructor. Presentations will be spaced so that there will be one or at most two per class. Once set, this date **cannot be changed without supporting documentation**. See below, "Academic Consideration."

**Short essay** (1500 words). Topics TBA. **Weighting: 25%**. Due date(s): 11-18 October. Flexible deadline (accommodation built into system). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy!)

**Long essay** (2500 words). Topics TBA. **Weighting: 40%**. Due date(s): flexible deadline. 13-20 November (accommodation built into system). Submit via OWL portal (not hard copy!)

**Participation. Weighting: 10%.**

**NB. THERE IS NO EXAM FOR THIS COURSE. PLEASE DO NOT SEEK ACCOMMODATION FOR AN EXAM. THERE IS NO EXAM.**

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>.

### Additional Information

After an assessment is returned, students should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting the instructor. The table below outlines the university-wide grade descriptors:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

### LATE PAPER POLICY

Late assignments. If you submit a paper after the flexible due date but within two weeks of the final date in the flexible range, the paper will be counted as late and the following procedures will apply:

- The paper will not be read until all the assignments handed in on time have been read and returned (all papers are read in order of receipt).
- The paper will be read and a grade given, but **NO COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS** will be made on it.
- The grade will be reduced by **a penalty of two marks (2%)** for each calendar day that it is late. Note that when a paper is late, every day counts (including weekends).

**PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED IF SUBMITTED MORE THAN TWO WEEKS AFTER THE DUE DATE UNLESS PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE.**

**VERY IMPORTANT:** I AM NOW SEMI-RETIRED AND WORK ONLY JULY-DECEMBER. IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT YOU COMPLETE ALL ASSIGNMENTS BY THE END OF THE SEMESTER. NO WORK WILL BE GRADED OR ACCEPTED AFTER DECEMBER 2024.

Laptops may be used in class for academic purposes only (no social media). Phones may not be used (no texting).

### 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**. BUT since this course already has flexible deadlines, documentation will be necessary for ALL accommodations.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the in-class seminar presentation **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration. In this course, both essays have flexible deadlines and so are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

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.

There is NO EXAM for this course. DO NOT request accommodation for an exam that does not even exist!

#### **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.

### **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](mailto:MentalHealth@Western): <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

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

AI may be used to create visual images for powerpoints in seminar presentations, but not for writing essays. Anyone caught using CHATGPT or similar software for the purpose of written assignments will be subject to disciplinary action. I hate having to write that last sentence, but I hate academic dishonesty even more. I know this material and the criticism written about it very well. It will not be easy to deceive me. I have caught no fewer than three academic offences in the past two years. I shall show no mercy. You have been warned!

### 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 [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

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

## Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

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

Please note that is a tentative outline. I may be willing to tweak it to accommodate student interests, especially since you will giving presentations on most of these days. The basic plan is to have at least one major reading from one or more of the three printed editions in each class. This reading will be supplemented by other poems accessible via the resources folder OWL (once we all figure out how the new OWL works).

September 11. Introduction. A brief introduction to the sonnet (its history and form). Wyatt, "Whoso List to Hunt"; Spenser, *Amoretti* 77, "Like as a huntsman"; Wyatt, "They Flee from me"; Edna Saint Vincent Millay, Sonnet 41, "I being a woman, and distressed". All on powerpoint.

September 18. Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*. Introduction. The major questions: 1) Are the poems autobiographical? 2) Is Astrophil bad (a "negative example")? Reading: Sonnets 1-72 plus the First Song. Critics: Scanlon and Sinfield (both on OWL).

September 25. Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*. The Kiss. Song 2, sonnets 73-85, and Song 10. This may seem like less reading than last week, but we shall be reading closely. A question to ponder: Does Stella ever kiss Astrophil willingly? Critic: Melissa Sanchez (on OWL). Poems for comparison, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* 38, "First time he kissed me"; Edna St. Vincent Millay, Sonnet 43, "What lips my lips have kissed."

October 2. Sir Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*. Sonnet 63, sonnets 86-108, Fourth Song, Eighth Song. What does Stella want? Does she secretly reciprocate Astrophil's affection (whether or not she takes action)? Comparison of Eighth Song with Donne's "The Ecstasy." All printed texts.

October 9. Shakespeare's sonnets to the fair young man. Sonnets 1-126. Comparison with same-sex desire in Richard Barnfield's sonnets. (Barnfield on OWL). Question for discussion: are Shakespeare's sonnets love poems? Comparison with same sex desire in Donne, "Elegie XVI" (pp. 78-80), and "Sapho to Philaenis" (pp. 87-89).

October 16. READING WEEK.

**ESSAY #1 due. Flexible deadline (accommodation built in!): 11-18 October. Submit by OWL, not hard copy!**

October 23. Shakespeare, the “Dark lady” sonnets (127-end). Comparison with Carol Ann Duffy, “Ann Hathaway” (on OWL) and Donne, “The Sunne Rising” (p. 11) and “Loves Alchymie” (p. 31).

October 30. Shakespeare’s sonnets on Time. Comparison with Spenser, *The Ruins of Rome* and Shelley, *Ozymandias*. Milton, “On Shakespeare. 1630”, Sonnet 8 (“Captain or colonel, or knight in arms”). Keats, “On First looking into Chapman’s Homer”; Derek Walcott, “A City’s Death by Fire” (Spenser, Shelley, Milton, Keats, Walcott on OWL).

November 6. Dream sonnets. Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, 38, 39. Shakespeare, Sonnets 27-30. Milton, “Methought I saw my late espoused Saint” and excerpt from *Paradise Lost*. Wordsworth, “Surprised by Joy.”

November 13. Tyehimba Jess, “When I consider how my light is spent”. Milton, “When I consider how my light is spent”, “Avenge, O lord”, “I did but prompt the age”, “A book was writ of late”. All on OWL.

**ESSAY #2 due. Flexible deadline (accommodation built in!): 13-20 November. Submit by OWL, not hard copy!**

November 20. Ambiguities and textual variants. Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 31; Shakespeare, Sonnets 40-42, 94 (“They that have power to hurt”); Donne, “The Good Morrow”, “Elegy XIX: to his Mistress Going to Bed”; Milton, “Lawrence of virtuous father, virtuous son”.

November 27. Platonism. Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* 25. Shakespeare, Sonnet 53. Donne, “Aire and Angels” (p. 19).

December 4. We’ll wait and see.