

Christopher Marlowe and his Influence

היצירות של כריסטופר מרלו

BA Seminar

Dr. Noam Reisner

Course no.: 6262346501 Spring term 2019, 4hr credit for BA

Monday and Thursday, 10-12, Webb 301

Reception hours: Monday, 12:00-13:00 or by appointment, Webb 506

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Course prerequisites: Students must have completed successfully either Introduction to British Culture part 1 and 2, or (for students who started their studies before 2016), Intro to British + Shakespeare, Poetry Analysis, Intro to Theory and Proseminar

Course Description

Christopher Marlowe – poet, dramatist, government spy, suspected atheist, and compulsive transgressor – is one of the most fascinating and enigmatic literary figures of the high English Renaissance. Compared with the fame of his contemporary and fellow-playwright, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe is relatively unknown today, but at the height of Marlowe's success in the late 1580s and the early 1590s it was Shakespeare who was struggling to emerge from his rival's shadow, until Marlowe's brutal murder in pub brawl in 1593. Marlowe was the great innovator of the Elizabethan stage. His string of sensational theatrical hits, starting with the two *Tamburlaine the Great* plays and followed by the outrageous *Doctor Faustus* and *The Jew of Malta*, completely reinvented the theatrical and poetic conventions of English declamatory poetry and drama. Marlowe brought to life sensational characters, all outlandish caricatures of human ambition alive with flamboyant rhetorical and poetic energy never seen before on the London stage. In his brief but brilliant career as a semi-professional poet and dramatist, Marlowe also transformed English poetry. He almost single-handedly unleashed a rampant, yet refined, Ovidian eroticism on the English imagination, and introduced a rhetorical edge and sensuality to English verse that would haunt English poetry for generations to come. Moreover, and perhaps most significantly, Marlowe achieved all this while offending every conventional and platitudinous sensibility of his time, whether about religious faith and morality, gender and sexuality, political power and sovereignty, or of the very idea of what it is to be human. In this seminar we will examine in detail Marlowe's surviving body of work, which includes several English translations of classical Latin poetry, a number of original poems in a variety of classical genres (pastoral, Ovidian love lyric, epigrams and epitaphs) and seven plays. Throughout, we will try and come to terms with Marlowe's unique imaginative world, where the Renaissance conceit of man as a microcosm gifted with infinite powers of self-fashioning and self-improvement is relentlessly explored for its most lurid absurdities and its equally alluring power.

Seminar Reading

The seminar will cover almost all of Marlowe's extant plays and poetry. From Marlowe's poetry, we will read the translation of the first book of Lucan's *Pharsalia* and Ovid's elegies, *Hero and Leander*, *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love*, and a selection from his epigrams, epitaphs and attributed poems. Marlowe's poetry will be available on the course website. From Marlowe's drama we will read and discuss in detail six of his seven surviving plays: *Tamburlaine the Great, part I and II*, *Edward II*, *Doctor Faustus* (1604 A-Text), *The Jew of Malta*, and *The Massacre at Paris*. The recommended single edition for the plays is *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays* (Penguin Classics), to be ordered online on bookdepository.com or similar websites.

Seminar Requirements

Attendance: Attendance is compulsory. Students who accumulate more than 3 unjustified absences will lose 5% of the final grade per absence. Students who miss more than 30% of the classes, regardless of circumstances, will not be able to complete the course.

Active class participation and preparation: Class discussion will require all students to read texts in advance of class and always to have a text in class for reference.

Take-home midterm assignment (20% of grade): there will be a single midterm take-home assignment, posted through the moodle website. Students will have two weeks to write and submit the assignment through moodle. Late submissions will not be accepted.

IMPORTANT: it is not possible to complete the seminar with a failed or incomplete midterm grade. Further information about the assignment will be given closer to the time on moodle and in class.

Final seminar paper (80% of grade): The deadline for submitting final papers follows the dates and guidelines as published in the Yedion. As per faculty regulations, all papers must be submitted on or before the stated deadline in hard-copy to the department's office. I also request that students send a corresponding electronic version to me by email.

Late submissions will not be accepted. Requests for extensions must be processed through the proper channels before the expiration of the deadline.

I must approve all topics for final papers (see schedule below). I will not accept papers whose topics I did not previously approve.

Detailed Schedule

(please note that this schedule is tentative and may be subject to change)

Introduction

28.2 – The enigma of Marlowe: myth, fact and slander

4.3 – Marlowe the university wit

7.3 – Marlowe the atheist transgressor

The translator

11.3 – Ovid's Elegies

14.3 – Lucan's First Book (The *Pharsalia*)

The Poet

18.3 – *Hero and Leander*

25.3 – *Hero and Leander*

28.3 – 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' and other attributed poems

Playwright

1.4 – *Tamburlaine the Great, Part 1&2*

4.4 – ***There will no class on this date. Missing class to be made-up**

15.4 – *Tamburlaine the Great, Part 1&2*

*** Make up class (date to be determined) - *Tamburlaine the Great, Part 1&2***

PESSACH BREAK

29.4 – *Edward II*

2.5* – **Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony (no class)**

6.5 – *Edward II*

13.5 – *Edward II*

16.5 – *Doctor Faustus*

20.5 – *Doctor Faustus*

23.5 – **Yom Hastudent (no class)**

27.5 – *Doctor Faustus*

30.5 – *The Jew of Malta*

3.6 – *The Jew of Malta*

6.6 – *The Jew of Malta*

10.6 – *The Massacre at Paris*

13.6 – *The Massacre at Paris*

* **Make-up class (for Holocaust memorial day)** – *The Massacre at Paris*

Bibliography

Cheney, Patrick, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christopher Marlowe* (Cambridge, 2004)

Smith, Emma and Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr., eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Tragedy* (Cambridge, 2010)