

Sonnets and Sonneteers in the English Renaissance

סונטות ברנסנס האנגלי

Advanced Course

Dr. Noam Reisner

Course no.: 0626266301, Fall term 2018-19, 2hr credit for BA

Thursday 10-12, Webb 103

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 or Intro to British (for students who started their studies before 2016), and Poetry Analysis.

Course Description

The sonnet is perhaps one of the most immediately recognizable poetic forms. What has come to be known as a "Shakespearean sonnet" – a fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameters divided into three quatrains in alternating rhyme and a concluding rhyming couplet – is especially famous today as an enduring testimony to the genius of the poet who lent his name to this form, as well as to the golden age of Renaissance English literature, when the sonnet was at the height of fashion. But Shakespeare's perfection of the sonnet was a late development in a long-established tradition of sonnet-writing, which began with the Italian sonnets (or songs) of Petrarch, and subsequently flourished throughout Renaissance Europe, especially in France, Spain, and England. As the sonnet form evolved, so did the cultural and artistic demands made of it, and in this course we will survey the poetic, rhetorical and conceptual development of the sonnet in the English Renaissance. Our objective throughout will be to study the close interaction between the development of poetic form on the one hand, and the complex ideas about art, poetry, love, religion, or politics attached to this evolving form on the other. The material will span the development of the sonnet in England, from the direct influence of the early Italian songs of Petrarch, through the sonnets of the early Tudors, to the great sonnet sequences of Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare and some of their lesser known contemporaries, including Henry Howard the Earl of Surrey, Fulke Greville, Richard Barnfield, and Mary Wroth.

Course Reading

Weekly assigned readings of poems and other relevant texts to be posted on the course website or available on the internet. Where possible (as with Shakespeare's sonnets), it is recommended to use a scholarly, annotated edition of the poems. See bibliography below for some suggested editions.

Course Requirements

Attendance: attendance is compulsory. As this is a short course consisting only of 13 meetings students who accumulate more than 2 unjustified absences, or more than 5 justified absences, will not be able to complete the course.

Take-home midterm paper (30% of grade): there will be a single take-home midterm paper to be submitted within one week of the start date through moodle (see schedule below). IMPORTANT: it is not possible to complete the course with a failed or incomplete midterm grade.

Final exam (70% of grade): see the Yedion for exam dates

Detailed Schedule (please note this schedule is subject to change)

18.10 – The evolution of the sonnet, from the 13th century to the High Renaissance

25.10 – Petrarch and his legacy

1.11 – Petrarch and his legacy

8.11 – English beginnings: Wyatt and Surrey

15.11 – English beginnings: Wyatt and Surrey

22.11 – Elizabethan maturity: wit and irony in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*

29.11 – Elizabethan maturity: wit and irony in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*

*** Midterm assignment handed out**

6.12 – Elizabethan maturity: time and paradox in Spenser's *Amoretti*

*** Midterm assignment due**

13.12 – Elizabethan maturity: time and paradox in Spenser's *Amoretti*

20.12 – Elizabethan maturity: the Ovidian self in sonnets by Barnfield and Greville

27.12 – The Shakespearean twist: parody and ambiguity in the *Sonnets*

3.1 – The Shakespearean twist: parody and ambiguity in the *Sonnets*

10.1 – The anti-Petrarchan voices of Mary Wroth

Bibliography

Edmund Spenser, The Shorter Poems, Penguin Classics (1999)

Jones, Emrys, ed., *The New Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse* (1991)

Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones, The Arden Shakespeare (1997)

Sir Philip Sidney: A Critical Edition of the Major Works, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (1989)

Vendler, Helen, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1999)