

RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

Course Overview

This course will deal with Western European literature written primarily in the sixteenth century, although the fourteenth, fifteenth, and very early seventeenth centuries are represented also. Emphasis will be on poetry, fiction, and drama, although (again) there will be exceptions. The first three weeks will be spent on three traditional periods in Western literature: Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance. The first week will begin with a discussion of the term “Renaissance”—its meaning, its origins, and the current debate over its propriety—followed by a review of the literary genres of the Classical period which are most relevant to this course. The second week will deal with the genres and ideas of the Medieval (Middle Ages) in the same manner. The third week will go into detail about the themes to be stressed in this class. To aid in that effort, students will be asked to read passages from two Renaissance authors: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Michel de Montaigne.

The most important themes can be expressed as a series of questions: did the focus among intellectuals and artists in Western Europe shift from God (Medieval) to man (Renaissance)? Was there, during the Renaissance, increased optimism about human nature and human possibilities? Most important, did the individual feel freer than in previous eras to challenge religious and societal norms? These themes will be explored by means of six units, each two weeks in length. Each unit will consist of a pair of authors who provide illuminating comparisons and contrasts on the themes mentioned above. Unit 1 is about religion and will consist of selections from Martin Luther’s “Address to the Nobility of the German Nation” and of Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*. Unit 2 is politics, and students will read Thomas More’s *Utopia* and Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Unit 3 is on romantic love, and consists of selections from Francesco Petrarca’s (in English, Petrarch) *Canzoniere* and selections from John Donne’s *Songs and Sonnets*. The fourth unit is on chivalry, in which selections from Lodovico Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso* and Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* will be read. The fifth is on satire, and features Desiderius Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly* and selections from Francois Rabelais’ *Gargantua*. The sixth and last unit is on social hierarchy and will consist of two plays by William Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*.

About the Professor

This course was prepared by David McPherson, Ph.D., professor emeritus from New Mexico State University. The author of several acclaimed books on Renaissance literature, Dr. McPherson has specialized in Renaissance and world drama.

Course Content

Introduction and Overview

Week 1—Introduction: Renaissance Literature's Debt To Classical Literature

Week 2—Renaissance Literature's Debt To Medieval Literature

Week 3—More About The Renaissance In General

Unit One—The Renaissance and Religion

Week 4—Martin Luther, From "Address To The Nobility Of The German Nation"

Week 5: Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Unit Two: The Renaissance and Politics

Week 6—Sir (Or Saint) Thomas More's *Utopia*

Week 7—Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Unit Three: The Renaissance and Romantic Love

Week 8: Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), Selections From *Canzoniere*

Week 9—John Donne, Selected Love Poems

Unit Four—The Renaissance and Tales Of Knighthood

Week 10—Lodovico Ariosto, Selection From *Orlando Furioso*

Week 11—Miguel De Cervantes, Selection From *Don Quixote*

Unit Five: The Renaissance and Satire

Week 12 --Desiderius Erasmus, "The Praise Of Folly"

Week 13—Francois Rabelais, Selection From *Gargantua*

Unit Six: The Renaissance And Social Hierarchy

Week 14—William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

Week 15: William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. To familiarize the student with great (arguably, the greatest) authors of the period in Western Europe.
2. To explore some key ideas concerning the period, especially ideas relating to religion, politics, romantic love, chivalry, satire, and social hierarchy.
3. To gain an understanding of some of the debts the literature of the period owes to the periods that preceded it—especially as to genre.
4. To encourage an appreciation of the aesthetic dimensions of this literature.

REQUIRED WORK:

1. Weekly reading journal
 - a. One- or two- paragraph reaction to primary text for that week (if there is one).
 - b. One-paragraph evaluation of one secondary text for that week.
2. Term paper approx. 20 pages double-spaced with normal margins and type size. Topics must be approved by the professor. Many of the "Questions for Discussion" in the weekly lessons might provide a topic for the term paper.

LITERARY LEGACIES—WHY THIS AUTHOR MATTERS:

The professor's view on this question is covered in each week's overview.
WEEK 1—INTRODUCTION: RENAISSANCE LITERATURE'S DEBT TO CLASSICAL LITERATURE

Overview:

"Renaissance" means "rebirth," and the term has been used since the nineteenth century to designate the rebirth of intense interest in ancient Greece and Rome and (more debatably) "a turning against medieval mortification and contempt for this world to see humanity as the full measure to which knowledge, achievement, beauty, and enjoyment might expand" (Northrup Frye, et al, *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, 1985, s.v. "Renaissance"). The movement began in Italy in the fourteenth century and continued, in northern parts of Western Europe, into the seventeenth. But the term, along with the term "medieval" (or Middle Ages), has been under attack in recent years because both tend to devalue the Middle Ages (say 500 to 1500 A.D.) as just filler—something in the middle between two glorious eras. Because of the inherent bias in the terms, many nowadays prefer "Early Modern" to "Renaissance." In his course, however, we will stick with the older terms.

"Literature" in this course is interpreted broadly. The focus will be on poetry, fiction, and drama, but readings will also include essays, treatises, orations, and other forms of non-fiction prose.

"Genres" is a third important term.--one of the many ways in which the Renaissance both borrowed from and went beyond the Greek and Roman Classics was in the matter of genres, i.e. *kinds* of literature. Renaissance literary critics strongly advocated that all new literature fit into an established Classical genre.

Key Terms and Concepts:

Here are the genres most prominent in this course, together with Classical authors who wrote in that genre:

1. Epic: a very long narrative poem, normally centering on a national hero. The principal Classical epics are *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer (c. 700 B.C. or before) and the *Aeneid* by Virgil (70-19 B.C.). In this course we will read an excerpt from one Renaissance epic poem, Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.
2. Tragedy: a drama with serious tone. It ordinarily ends unhappily for the main character, who often has a tragic flaw. The principal ancient Greek tragedians were Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), Sophocles (c. 496-406 B.C.) and Euripides (c. 485-c. 406 B.C.), and in Rome Seneca (c. 4 B.C.-65 A.D.). The latter probably influenced Elizabethan playwrights like Marlowe and Shakespeare, whom we will read.
3. Comedy: a funny drama which usually ends happily. Aristophanes (c. 450-384 B.C.) uses gross exaggeration and vulgarity to get his satire across. Roman playwrights Plautus (c. 250-184 B.C.) and Terence (c. 190-159 B.C.) tell funny but more plausible stories of domestic life. *Twelfth Night*, a comedy to be read in Week 15, imitates Plautus' *Menaechmi* in featuring twins who are lost from each other, end up in the same city, and are often comically mistaken for one another.
4. Lyric: a short poem emphasizing sound and imagery rather than a story. Very often the poem is about romantic love. Roman poets often wrote cycles of love poems to a particular beloved; thus, for example, Cornelius Gallus (c. 69 B.C.- 26 B.C.) wrote to and about Lyrcis, Tibullus (c. 55 B.C.-19 B.C.), to Delia; and Sextus Propertius (c. 54 B.C.-c. 2 B.C.), to Cynthia. This kind of lyric cycle undoubtedly inspired Petrarch's cycle of lyrics to Laura (from which we will read selections).
5. Prose fiction: imaginary stories not in verse. Surviving ancient Greek fiction includes *Leucippe and Cleitophon* by Achilles Tatius (second century A.D.) and

Ethiopica by Heliodorus (third century A.D.). These stories featured romantic adventures, and many improbable plots twists. Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a parody of certain kinds of prose fiction.

6. Orations: speeches for delivery in public gatherings. Orations had a recognizable structure (e.g. exordium, narration, proposition, divisions, examinations, refutation, digressions, and peroration). The most famous orators of ancient times were Isocrates (436-338 B.C.), Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) and the Roman Cicero (106 B.C.-43 B.C.). These orations influenced (among others) Martin Luther, Machiavelli, Thomas More, and Erasmus—all of whom will be read in this course.

Primary Texts:

Required: none.

Recommended: brief passages from each of the Classical authors listed above.

Secondary texts:

Required:

Articles on the Classical genres and authors listed above. Find them in a reputable reference work such as *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (1996) or—free and online-- in *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org>.

McCoy, Richard C. "Recent Studies in the English Renaissance," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 40 (2000): 157-88. [Good discussion of "Renaissance" vs. "Early Modern" as terms.]

Questions for Discussion:

1. If given a choice between the term "Renaissance" and the term "Early Modern," which would you choose? Why?
2. Should courses in literature include non-fiction prose? For instance, is a political speech really "literature"? Why? Why not?
3. What are the advantages for any literary period of having established genres?
4. What are the disadvantages?
5. What were the advantages for the Renaissance of confining themselves, by and large, to Classical genres?
6. What were the disadvantages?

WEEK 2—RENAISSANCE LITERATURE'S DEBT TO MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

Overview:

Despite Petrarch's stigmatizing name for the Early Middle Ages ("the Dark Ages") and despite the slurs on the whole period by many humanists, Renaissance literature owes a great deal to medieval literature. Leading medieval authors like Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer made writing in the so-called vulgar languages (vernaculars) respectable. Latin remained the language of many fine literary works, the church, diplomacy, and even trade; but great works of art were also being created in Italian, French, German, English, and the other European languages.

Just as in the classical period, the Middle Ages created literary genres that were useful to the Renaissance. Epic, for instance, was modified by medieval romance. Thus Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* is called a "romantic epic" because its form and subject matter are a combination of Classical epic and Medieval romance. The fabliau, a short and often indecent funny tale, helped Rabelais along, and the Medieval morality play aided Christopher Marlowe in writing *Doctor Faustus*.

Key Terms and Concepts:

1. Feudalism—the socio-economic and military system that dominated the Middle Ages. Every knight, for instance, swore fealty to his overlord rather than to some centralized king or emperor.
2. Allegorical characters—fictional characters who are named for some abstract quality and indeed personify that quality (e.g. Good Deeds). All of the characters in Medieval morality plays are of this kind.
3. *Chansons de geste*-- verse narratives of knighthood. The most prominent were the *Chanson de Roland*, eleventh century, and the Arthurian stories of Chretien de Troyes, twelfth century. Ariosto, in his romantic epic, even uses the same character as the former (Orlando=Roland).
4. Medieval romances in prose—same subject matter as the *chansons*, but in prose and less finely crafted. The most famous author in this genre was Thomas Malory, whose English version of some French stories is called *Le Morte d'Arthur*, written about 1470. The various prose tales of knighthood were Cervantes' main target in *Don Quixote*.
5. Fabliaux—short, usually satirical stories of common life, often indecent. Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Miller's Tale" in his *The Canterbury Tales* is a fine example. The genre was very useful to Rabelais in *Gargantua*.
6. Morality play—a drama featuring allegorical characters and designed to teach moral and theological lessons to the common folk. The most famous is *Everyman* (c. 1485), but the earlier *Castle of Perseverance* (c. 1350-1399) was a greater influence on Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*; both Marlowe and *Castle* use characters called "Good Angel" and "Bad Angel" who try to sway the protagonist their way.

Primary Texts:

Required: none

Recommended: brief excerpts from all of the Medieval authors mentioned above.

Secondary texts:

Required: articles from some reputable reference book on the Medieval genres and authors mentioned above—for example, try *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911), <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org>.

Recommended:

Weisenger, H. "The Renaissance Theory of the Reaction Against the Middle Ages as a Cause of the Renaissance," *Speculum* 20 (1945): 461-67.

Questions for Discussion:

While the writing of great literature in the vernaculars of Western Europe seems both admirable and inevitable, can you see any ways in which even greater works might have been created if authors had confined themselves to Latin?

1. After reading about Medieval literary works, was the scorn heaped on the period during the Renaissance justified?
2. Do you suppose (without doing any research) that medieval tales of knighthood had much to do with the way of life of real knights of the period? How might feudalism enter in here?
3. Is the indecency found in most fabliaux just a part of life and hence to be included in literature, or is literature better off without indecency?
4. Are allegorical characters effective in literature, or are they boring because they are what their names indicate and nothing more, i.e. they are one-dimensional?

WEEK 3—MORE ABOUT THE RENAISSANCE IN GENERAL

Overview:

Causes of the Renaissance included the invention and spread of printing from movable type (see "Gutenberg" under "terms and concepts," below); the discovery of America, which (some argue) expanded man's horizons and thus led to rebellion against received opinions; and economic changes (including expanded world trade).

In defining the Renaissance we start with the historian Jacob Burckhart, who in *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860) argued that this movement is characterized not only by a passion for ancient Greece and Rome but also by a new spirit of humanism—not a rejection of religion by any means, but a shift in emphasis from the divine to the human, a higher estimate of man's capabilities, and increased individualism.

In assessing Burckhart, all agree concerning Greece and Rome, but not all agree concerning the new spirit. Take, for example, the idea of the higher estimate of man's capabilities. Burckhart and his supporters (who are still very much around) dwell on Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's eloquent "Oration on the Dignity of Man." But Michel de Montaigne, in his "Apology for Raymond Sebonde," argues with equal eloquence that man's vaunted reason is hollow, his senses unreliable, and his pretended superiority to animals false.

Also helping define the Renaissance was the obsession among scholars with the ancient Greek and Latin languages. Ancient Greek was little known during the Middle Ages, but passionately studied during the Renaissance. Also important to humanists was "pure" Latin, i.e. the avoidance of words and constructions from the vernaculars which had crept into Medieval Latin.

Key Terms and Concepts:

1. Individualism—the increase in the freedom that individuals felt to challenge society's norms, and the frequency and intensity of their doing so.
2. Christian Humanism—*not*, like modern humanism, a rejection of religion but rather a passion for reviving ancient texts and (arguably) a turning away from

medieval contempt for the world to an enthusiastic embrace of the human possibilities created by God.

3. Christian skepticism—*not*, like modern skepticism, a rejection of religion but rather a deep questioning of human ability to arrive at truths. Montaigne is such a skeptic. But he argued that man's weakness and corruption should actually increase religious faith: man must needs rely upon God.
4. Original sin—the idea that all men inherit from Adam and Eve, the first humans, a corrupt and erring nature. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and other prominent Protestants stressed this concept, and thus were closer to Montaigne than to Pico as far as the basic nature of man is concerned.
5. Greek studies and the fall of Constantinople—it used to be argued that Renaissance studies in Greek got a big push from the fall of Constantinople (1453) because many Greek Orthodox scholars fled to Italy; but many now believe that Italian interest in classical Greek was already strong a half century before that event.
6. Johann Gutenberg (1400?-1468?) pioneered printing from movable type, which made books much cheaper to produce and put them in reach of even middle-class citizens. His first success was *The Bible*, c. 1454.

Primary texts:

Required: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, "Oration on the Dignity of Man," trans. Anon., free online at <http://www.cscs.umich.edu/~crshalizi/Mirandola/>

Michel de Montaigne, selection from "Apology for Raymond Sebonde" in *Essays*, trans. John Florio (1603), free online at <http://www.uoregon.edu/~rbear/montaigne/>. Find the Greek quotation from Herodotus which begins (in English) "Of greater, better wiser mind than he . . . [etc]." Begin reading at "Let us suppress this overweening . . ." continuing through several quotations from Manilius, and ending with a quotation from Lucretius, translation of which begins, "Whole hears . . ."

Recommended:

The entire essay "Apology for Raymond Sebonde" in the modern-spelling translation by Donald Frame (New York: Anchor Books, 1948), pp. 112-308.

Secondary Texts:

Required:

Burke, Peter. "Framing the Renaissance," in *The European Renaissance*, pp. 1-18. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. [Skeptical of Burckhardt's "spirit" idea.]

Cassirer, Ernst. "Pico: a Study in the History of Renaissance Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3 (1942), 123-44: 319-46. [Older assessment, but still valuable.]

Kerrigan, William and Gordon Braden, "Burckhardt's Renaissance," [Chapter 1] in *The Idea of the Renaissance*, pp. 3-35. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989. [Generally supports Burckhardt.]

Questions for Discussion:

1. How would you summarize Pico's argument step by step?
2. How would you summarize Montaigne's?
3. Which of the two arguments do you personally find more convincing?
4. How did the spread of ancient Greek studies help Renaissance scholars of the New Testament portion of the Bible?
5. Was the insistence on "pure" Latin mere snobbery? Are there any rational arguments in favor of it?

UNIT ONE—THE RENAISSANCE AND RELIGION

WEEK 4—MARTIN LUTHER, from “Address to the Nobility of the German Nation”

Overview:

Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the German monk who began the Reformation, the movement that split Christianity into two camps: Catholic and Protestant. He was also a humanist, very knowledgeable about the ancient Greek and Roman languages and texts. He was individualistic enough to rebel against the Pope, both politically and in a doctrinal sense. But he did not share Pico della Mirandola’s optimism about human nature because he believed in Original Sin (see “Terms and Concepts,” Week 3). His “Address to the Nobility of the German Nation” (1520) is a concise statement of some (but by no means all) of his important and innovative beliefs and arguments. Luther was a prolific writer; one edition of his works runs to 50 volumes, but the only poems he ever wrote were the lyrics to many well-known Protestant hymns such as “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.”

Themes in this Author’s Work:

1. Priesthood of the believer (see the section in the “Address” called “The First Wall”).
2. Reliance on the Bible rather than Church doctrine, and on the importance of every believer studying it for himself (see the section called “The Second Wall”).
3. Corruption of the Roman Catholic priesthood, especially the Papacy itself (see the section called “Of the Matters to be Considered by Councils”).

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. If the individual can pray directly to God without a priest intervening (priesthood of the believer), then rebellion against the established church and its hierarchy becomes a much stronger possibility.
2. If the Bible trumps all Church pronouncements (e.g. Papal bulls), then (again) rebellion becomes much easier because every man (a priest of sorts) can interpret the Bible for himself. The need for every man to read the Bible increases the demand of literacy in a much wider segment of the populace.
3. If the Church is corrupt, it must be reformed—thus, the historical movement called the Reformation.

Reading:

Primary Texts: Selections from “Address to the Nobility of the German Nation”—read Introduction, “The Three Walls of the Romanists,” and “Of the Matters to be Considered in the Councils” at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsell/mod/luther-nobility.html>.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography—*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., 1911 at http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/LUP_MAL/LUTHER_MARTIN_1483_1546_.html. NOTE: please read the entry in this edition of *Britannica* online for each of the eleven authors following Luther (one per week).

2. Historical and Political Contexts:

Bainton, Roland H. "Interpretations of the Reformation," *American Historical Review* 66 (1960): 74-84.

Cameron, Euan. Review of Lewis W. Spitz, *Luther and German Humanism* at <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/paper/cameron.html>.

1. Essays on Works by this Author:

Gow, Andrew Colin. "Kurt Stadtwald, Roman Popes and German Patriots: Antipapalism in the Politics of the German Humanist Movement for Gregor Heimberg to Martin Luther," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51 (1998): 255-56.

Furey, Constance M. "Invective and Discernment in Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, and Thomas More," *Harvard Theological Review* 98 (2006): 469-88.

WEEK 5: Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

Overview:

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was born in the same year as William Shakespeare but was murdered in a tavern just as Shakespeare was establishing himself as an actor and playwright. Marlowe was a rebel in his personal life, having been a government spy and (allegedly) a homosexual and an atheist. *Doctor Faustus* (1587-92) was based on tales about a wandering German theologian and magician who lived at the time of Luther (Luther apparently never met Faust, but mentions in his *Table Talk* that if he did, he would admonish him). Faustus gives the Devil his soul in exchange for magic powers. He gets certain powers, all right, but the Devil refuses to answer his questions about ultimate religious mysteries. In the end the Devil does indeed get his soul—and his body too; in a spectacular piece of staging he is carried into Hell Mouth right before the audience's eyes.

The most interesting critical question about this play is where the author stands in relation to his main character. Does Marlowe, himself a rebel, sympathize with Faustus' rebellion against God? Certain passages seem to suggest as much. Or does the ending mean that, like a Medieval morality play (to which this drama has clear resemblances), this play is designed to teach a moral and theological lesson: do not question God, do not try to get above your station, and always shun the Devil and his minions?

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Some men's aspirations are virtually limitless—Faustus wants all knowledge and all power; in fact, he wants to become a God. Is such aspiration admirable?
2. God will punish Pride, the deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Faustus' soaring aspirations remind one of Pico della Mirandola's soaring estimate of man's capabilities and place in the universe (but without Pico's submission to God).
2. Faustus' end reminds one of Montaigne's Christian skepticism—the vanity of all human knowledge and the need to trust in God alone.
3. Faustus and Luther both question religious authority—Luther rebelling against the Pope, but Faustus against God himself.

Reading:

Primary Texts:

Required: the entire play. A good edition with footnotes (notes are extremely necessary because the English language has changed so much since about 1590) is at <http://www.bartleby.com/19/2/10.html>.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica* (as for Luther, above).
2. Historical and political contexts:
 - Fletcher, Angus. "Doctor Faustus and the Lutheran Aesthetic," *English Literary Renaissance* 35 (2005): 187-209.
 - Hamlin, William. "Casting Doubt in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," *Studies in English Literature* 41 (2001): 257-75.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
 - Barber, C.L. "The Form of Faustus' Fortunes Good or Bad," *Tulane Drama Review* 8 (1964): 92-119.
 - Tate, William. "Solomon, Gender, and Empire in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*," *Studies in English Literature* 37 (1997): 257-76.

Questions for Discussion:

1. If you were directing this play, would you aim for a Faustus who is grandly heroic, or a Faustus who is ultimately just a fool? Something in between? Why?
2. What are some stage techniques by which you could influence the audience's judgment of the character?
3. Some critics see the comic scenes interspersed throughout as frivolous and have even suggested that Marlowe did not write them. Others see them as parody which reinforces the play's themes. Which of these views would you take?
4. The comic scenes are in prose; the serious in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter—look up in a handbook). Why do you suppose the author created this difference?
5. The vast majority of people in the original audiences of this play believed firmly in the existence of real devils. Why, then, weren't they too scared to enjoy the play? (Records show that it was quite popular.)
6. From what you now know about Martin Luther, do you think he would have enjoyed this play?

UNIT TWO: THE RENAISSANCE AND POLITICS

WEEK 6—Sir (or Saint) Thomas More's *Utopia*

Overview:

Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) is important in England's political, religious, and literary history. Chancellor under Henry VIII, he opposed (for reasons of conscience) Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. More was beheaded and Henry led England into the Protestant fold. Much later More became a Catholic saint.

An ardent humanist, More avidly pursued the study of ancient Greek, and his witty work of fiction, *Utopia* (1516), was written in "pure" Latin. He clearly uses Plato's *Republic* as a model for parts of *Utopia*.

From a literary standpoint More's most brilliant ploy in *Utopia* is that he has created a fictional character (whom he cleverly pretends is a real person) named Rafael Hytholoday who describes in glowing terms the commonwealth of Utopia (where he claims he was shipwrecked). But the narrator, whom we may call "Thomas More the Character," is more cautious about the radical political innovations of Utopia (e.g. its use of a form of communism).. This enables Thomas More the Author to claim that he is not endorsing these radical ideas—that's just Hytholoday, who is portrayed as admirable but definitely eccentric. But that leaves us with the fascinating question of just where the author actually stands .

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Humans are capable of constructing a fair and just society, if only in fiction.
2. Pride and greed are the sins that stand in the way of achieving a society like Utopia's.
3. The Utopians are by no means perfect, but their laws, institutions, and customs force them to work for the common good. Paradoxically, however, their society works only because it is, by most definitions, repressive.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. More is cautiously on Pico's side in the debate about man's capabilities; indeed, More translated into English an admiring life of the great Italian humanist (translation published 1510).
2. Both More and Pico, however, are talking about capabilities, about potential—not about achievement. As a devout Christian More believed in Original Sin.

Reading:

Primary Texts:

More, Sir Thomas. *Utopia* (read all). Free online at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsell/mod/thomasmore-utopia.html>.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography—*Britannica*, as under Luther, above.
2. Historical and Political Context
Lehmberg, Stanford E. "Sir Thomas More's Life of Pico della Mirandola," *Studies in the Renaissance* 3 (1956): 61-74.
3. Essays on Works by this Author
Elton, G.R. "The Real Thomas More?" in *Reformation Principle and Practice, Essays in Honour of A.G. Dickens*, ed. Peter Newman Brooks. London: Scholar Press, 1980. Also in *Utopia*, trans. Robert M. Adams, 2nd ed., pp. 195-204. New York: Norton, 1992.
Elliott, Robert C. "The Shape of Utopia," *English Literary History* 30 (1963): 317-34.

Questions for Discussion

1. As in the case of Marlowe and Faustus, we want to know where Thomas More the author stands. Is he suspicious of Utopian innovations (e.g. their communism) like Thomas More the character, or does the author agree with Hythloday that Utopia is, well, utopian? Somewhere in between?
2. Does More use humor in *Utopia*? If so, give examples.
3. How does Utopian communism differ from Marxism?
4. Although the world "utopian" is used in English to signify something hopelessly idealistic, are there in fact aspects of the social and political system which were visionary in More's day but which have since been actually adopted by some societies?
5. If Utopia is not a perfect place, what's wrong with it? Would you personally want to live there? Why? Why not?

WEEK 7—Machiavelli, *The Prince*

Overview:

Niccolo` Machiavelli (1469-1527) was in a sense the first political scientist. The advice he gives his patron Lorenzo di Medici in *The Prince* (written c. 1513, published 1532) is based not on morality, i.e. how a prince ought to rule, but on reality, i.e. what really works in politics when the chief aim is not to do good but to get and retain power. Although Machiavelli in most of his works favors a republican form of government (partly because he so admired the ancient Roman republic), *The Prince* is geared to one-man rule. Thus it was appropriate to the Renaissance, where centralized monarchies were replacing feudalism. Chapters seventeen through nineteen encapsulate much of what is new in Machiavelli's thought, and therefore should be read with particular attention (especially the famous metaphor of the lion and the fox). Machiavelli was an Italian patriot (as the final chapter, in particular, shows) and was reacting in *The Prince* to the French invasion of Italy.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. A ruler should be both loved and feared, but (since that is difficult to attain) it is better for him to be feared than loved.
2. A ruler should keep promises only when it is in his interest to do so.
3. The ruler should put military matters at the top of his agenda.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Machiavelli's advice is based on the premise that most men are selfish and weak; hence he is on Montaigne's side, not Pico's.
2. *The Prince* provides a striking contrast to *Utopia*; Utopia is Hytholoday's ideal commonwealth, whereas the state which Machiavelli is writing about is anything but ideal.

Reading:

Primary Texts:

Niccolo` Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. W.K. Marriot (read all). Free online at <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince>.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political context:
 - Fiore, Silvia Ruffo. Review of Victor Anthony Rudowski, *The Prince: a Historical Critique in Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995): 371-72.
 - Masters, Roger D. "On Reading Machiavelli's 'The Prince,'" in *Machiavelli, Leonardo, and the Science of Power*, pp. 29-84. Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1996.
 - Parel, Anthony. "Machiavelli's Method and Its Interpretation," in *The Political Calculus: Essays on Machiavelli's Philosophy*, ed. Anthony Parel, pp. 3-32. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
 - Dietz, Mary G. "Trapping the Prince: Machiavelli and the Politics of Deception," *The American Political Science Review* 80 (1986): 777-99.
 - Lukes, Timothy J. "Lionizing Machiavelli," *The American Political Science Review* 95 (2001): 561-75.
 - Tarleton, Charles D. "Machiavelli's 'The Prince' as Memoir," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46 (2004): 1 -19.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Considering *The Prince* as a whole, does Machiavelli's advice strike you as evil? Or just cold-hearted? Or as merely practical?
2. How important a part does religion play in *The Prince*? Is it more important than it is in *Utopia*, or less important?
3. To Marlowe and Shakespeare, Machiavelli was a negative stereotype: the arch-villain. After reading *The Prince*, can you see how Machiavelli might have gotten that reputation? In your opinion, was the reputation justified?
4. Italy in Machiavelli's time was split up into many different principalities. Do you think that his advice in *The Prince* has been shaped, to some extent, by that fact?
5. What is your opinion of this passage from *The Prince*, Chapter 15:
"A man who wishes to make a profession of goodness in everything must necessarily come to grief among so many who are not good. Therefore it is necessary . . . to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge and not use it, according to the necessity of the case."

UNIT THREE: THE RENAISSANCE AND ROMANTIC LOVE

WEEK 8: Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), selections from *Canzoniere*

Overview:

Francesco Petrarca (in English, Petrarch) is the only author to be studied in this course who lived in the fourteenth century (1304-1374); all others lived much later. Petrarch is the father of the whole humanist movement, the beginner (one might say) of the Renaissance. He valued his serious treatises and epic poems in classical Latin much more highly than he did his love poetry in Italian. But it was the latter which was still strongly affecting Western European literature as late as the 1590's, when a kind of fad for love sonnets modeled on Petrarch developed in England and culminated in the publication of the best sonnet sequence of all, the one by William Shakespeare (published 1609).

Petrarch's love poetry has three main characteristics: (1) his love of his beloved Laura is ardent, faithful, and—here is the key—unrequited; (2) to express this unrequited love, the poet employs elaborate and exaggerated comparisons (e.g. the pagan Greek God of Love, Cupid, has pierced his heart with arrows of love); and (3) a rigid poetic form: many, many short poems which do not have a story connecting them and which must have exactly fourteen lines and rhyme in a prescribed manner. It is difficult to understand the popularity and longevity of this kind of poetry, but popular and longlasting it was.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Emotional ambivalence—the speaker of the poem is very often of two minds about his situation: he adores Laura and her beauty, but his pain at being spurned is intense.
2. Commitment—despite the ambivalence, the speaker repeatedly says that his love for Laura will last all of his life, whether she responds favorably or no.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Pico undoubtedly learned much from Petrarch. There is a kinship in their idealism: Petrarch idealizes his beloved (and, by extension, all women), while Pico goes a step further, idealizing the whole human race. Both Petrarch and Pico drew some of their idealism from Plato.
2. Petrarch's speaker is idealistic about women because his emotion does not depend upon sexual satisfaction; such ethereal love tends to put women on a

pedestal—where they had, to an extent, resided ever since the Troubadour poets of the twelfth century. This pedestal treatment probably raised the status of women throughout Western Europe.

Readings:

Primary Texts:

Petrarch, selected sonnets. At website.lineone.net/~sigeman/petrarch, read Numbers 1, 2, 12, 15, 19, 41, 56, 61, 82, 83, 90, 140, 153, 218, 219, 224, and 269.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and Political Contexts:
 - Baron, Hans. "Petrarch: His Inner Struggles and the Humanistic Discovery of Man's Nature," in *Florilegium Historiale: Essays Presented to Wallace K. Ferguson*, ed. J.G. Rowe and W.H. Stockdale. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971.
 - Weiss, R. "The Dawn of Humanism in Italy," *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 42 (1969): 1-16.

Essays on Works by this Author:

1. Bernardo, Aldo S. Review of Aldo Scaglione, *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*." *Renaissance Quarterly* 31 (1978): 353-57.
2. Freccero, John. "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," *Diacritics*, 5 (1975): 34-40.
3. Young, David. "Petrarch: an Introduction," in *The Poetry of Petrarch*, pp. ix-xxxv. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How is Petrarch's cycle of poems indebted to ancient Roman poetry? (see Week 1).
2. How is Petrarch's cycle indebted to the poems of the troubadours (twelfth century)?
3. Laura probably symbolizes womanhood (to some extent), but is it possible that she also symbolizes something else as well: e.g. fame, or ambition, or idealism?
4. Find some specific examples of exaggeration in the poems assigned. How do you suppose the poet expects the reader to respond to this exaggeration? By scoffing? Or by admiring the ingenuity of the poet for thinking it up?
5. Some critics have argued that, considering the cycle as a whole, we learn very little about Laura and a great deal about the emotions of the speaker; therefore, these critics continue, the poetry is not really about women but about men. Judging from the few selections you have read, do you agree with this idea? Why? Why not?

WEEK 9—John Donne, Selected Love Poems

Overview:

John Donne (1573-1631) wrote most of his love poetry in the 1590's—before he married, settled down, and began his brilliant career in the English church (in which he became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, the leading preacher of the day, and author of sparkling religious poetry and religious meditations). In his youth he had a reputation as quite a ladies' man.

His love poetry is witty, difficult, and sometimes indecent; the mood varies widely from one poem to the next. Many poems, for example, are quite insulting to women, while others seem to place women on a Petrarchan pedestal. Even in the latter, however, Donne's speaker is seldom in the hopeless position of Petrarch's. Often Donne's speaker has already made sexual conquest of the woman, gaining her love either as mistress or wife (some later poems seem to celebrate his beloved wife).

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Women are untrustworthy.
2. Women are quite trustworthy.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. The critic Donald Guss has written a whole book entitled *John Donne: Petrarchist* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), and indeed Petrarch's influence on Donne is strong and worthy of study.
2. But the irreverence and playfulness in some of the poems presages the breakdown of Petrarch's dominance of Western European love poetry; some of Donne's style is still Petrarchan (e.g. the elaborate metaphors) but Donne's content is much more varied. Also, Donne's love poetry is not addressed to a single mistress like Laura.

Reading:

Primary Texts: First sixteen poems at <http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit//donnebib.htm>.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and Political Contexts:
Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "The Metaphysical Poets" in *Selected Essays*, pp. 241-50. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1932.
Halperin, Richard. "The Lyric in the Field of Information: Autopoiesis and History in Donne's *Songs and Sonnets*," *The Yale School of Criticism* 6 (1993): 185-215.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
Cunnington, David. "Donne's New Days," *Essays in Criticism* 54 (2004): 16-37.
Rajan, Tilottama. "'Nothing Sooner Broke': Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* as Self-Consuming Artifact," *English Literary History* 49 (1982): 805-28.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Which, if any, of the poems in our selection are insulting to women? Why? Give examples.

2. Which poems, if any, place women on a Petrarchan pedestal? Why? Give examples.

3. How might one account for the apparent inconsistency (if there is one)? Judging by these sixteen poems only, is it possible to pin down Donne's true attitude toward women?

4. Dr. Samuel Johnson, dictionary-maker and sage of the eighteenth century, did not like the kinds of metaphors used by Donne. He said they consisted of "heterogeneous objects yoked by violence together." Do you find any unusual comparison in the poems we have read? Give examples.
5. What does the licentious young Jack Donne have in common with Dr. John Donne, the eminent religious figure?

UNIT FOUR—THE RENAISSANCE AND TALES OF KNIGHTHOOD

WEEK 10—LODOVICO ARIOSTO, Selection from *Orlando Furioso*

Overview:

Lodovico (also spelled Ludovico) Ariosto wrote in several genres but is known today almost solely for his romantic epic *Orlando Furioso* (1516, later revisions). His immediate predecessor in romantic epic, Matteo Boiardo (1434-94) wrote *Orlando Innamorato*, left unfinished. Ariosto set out to complete it and in the process wrote a much greater poem. His artistry shows in his light touch; many think that he handles his knights with what Ian Watt calls "comic sophistication"—he does not take himself or his heroes too seriously. Perhaps he is already halfway to the parody of chivalry that we will read next week, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

Important aspects of the form of Ariosto's epic come from medieval romance, especially the habit of alternating in the telling of several different stories which do not necessarily intersect with one another. For this course we will read one of the minor stories, the tale of Ariodante and Ginevra (Canto IV, Stanza 51 through Canto VI, Stanza 16). This story has been chosen because it is representative, because it is self-contained, and (finally) because two later artists, William Shakespeare and George Frederick Handel, made use of it in their work.

The plot, related very briefly, will show what kind of story it is. Rinaldo, cousin of Orlando, is shipwrecked in Scotland and (in the manner of these heroes) goes in search of adventure. He saves Ginevra, the Princess of Scotland, from execution by exposing and defeating in single combat the villain Polynex, who has falsely accused her of pre-marital sex. She has remained faithful to her true love Ariodante, who (because he supposes the accusations to be true) temporarily deserts her and attempts suicide but returns in disguise to fight in her behalf. The trick by which the villain fools Ariodante (and the whole kingdom) is this: he seduces the Princess' lady-in-waiting Dalinda, gets her to dress in the Princess' clothing, then has Ariodante (and his brother in hiding) see him climbing onto the Princess' balcony by a rope ladder and passionately courting the lady (whom the witnesses suppose to be the Princess herself). The trick is exposed when Dalinda finally confesses all. Shakespeare uses this tale as the basis of the Hero-Claudio plot in *Much Ado About Nothing*, and Handel uses it in his opera *Ariodante*.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Most stories of knighthood follow certain conventions: knights are expected to (a) wander about seeking adventures, (b) vindicate the honor of fair ladies, and (c) fight each other a lot.
2. Class differences are apparent here, as in most stories of knighthood. For example, the Princess is to be given in marriage to anyone who saves her, but

only if he is of noble birth; also, the Princess is sexually pure, whereas her lady (of lower rank) allows herself to be seduced.

3. Women are defended by Rinaldo even when they are sexually licentious (see IV.63-67).

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Stories of knighthood, even when handled with a light touch, are on the idealistic side in the debate about the nature of man; the heroes are impossibly brave and altruistic—they go about righting wrongs and expect no reward except fame.
2. Women in these stories are put on a pedestal as in Petrarchan sonnet sequences, but in a different manner. Knights exist, in large part, just to do them service, it is true; but a knight's love is not always unrequited: Ariodante and Ginevra get married at the end of the tale.

Readings:

Primary text: Lodovico Ariosto, selection from *Orlando Furioso*: Canto IV, Stanza 51 through Canto VI, Stanza 16), tr. William Steward Rose, www.omacl.org/Orlando/

Secondary texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political contexts:
 - Hart, Thomas. Chapter One in *Cervantes and Ariosto: Renewing Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
 - Durling, Robert. "Ariosto [Chapter 5], in *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*, pp. 112-81. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1965.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
 - Gough, Melinda. "'Her filthy feature open showne': Ariosto, Spenser, and *Much Ado About Nothing*," *Studies in English Literature* 39 (1999): 41-67.
 - Javitch, Daniel. "The Poetics of 'Variatio' in *Orlando Furioso*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 66 (2005): 1-19. Free online at <http://mlq.dukejournals.org/cgi/reprint/66/1/1.pdf>.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Do you find Rinaldo's attack on the double standard (IV.63-67) surprising, given the typical attitudes toward women in Ariosto's society? [The double standard is the idea that it is acceptable for men to engage in pre-marital and extra-marital sex, but not acceptable for women to do so.]
2. How does Ariosto manipulate the plot so that brother is in great danger of killing brother?
3. Is Dalinda, the lady-in-waiting, a sympathetic character?
4. Why does the villain Polinessa want to destroy the heroine Ginevra?
5. Should Ariodante have refused to believe that his true love was unfaithful?

WEEK 11—MIGUEL DE CERVANTES, selection from *Don Quixote*

Overview:

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547-1616) was second son to a man of modest income and was himself short of money most of his life. In his youth he was a soldier for many years. Afterward he tried many jobs, being unable to make a living by writing. His masterpiece, *Don Quixote* was first published in 1605—quite late in his life.

Don Quixote is a parody of the thousands of tales of knighthood. (*Orlando Furioso*, it will be recalled from last week, may be halfway toward parody itself.) But Cervantes

endows his hero, the demented Don, with such humanity and perseverance—and gives him such a delightful squire in the person of the earthy Sancho Panza—that the book, while remaining a parody, also becomes a story with universal appeal. Yes, the book is hilarious, and Don Quixote is crazy; but one cannot help feeling some sneaking admiration for him too.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Tales of knighthood were too fantastic, too divorced from reality, to be taken seriously at the end of the sixteenth century; they were utterly out of date and full of clichés.
2. Sancho Panza (his name means "stomach") can neither read nor write, but he makes more sense than his educated master. A writer himself, Cervantes is not attacking reading *per se*; but he is perhaps suggesting that it is better to read nothing at all than to read trash all the time.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Excessive idealism (expecting too much of human nature, as Pico did) is not just unwise; it can lead to actual insanity.
2. At the same time, there is something admirable about excessive idealism, about dreaming the impossible dream. Don Quixote cannot be a knight-errant; it is too late. But his pursuit of knightly ideals is not only foolish but also touching and appealing.

Readings:

Primary Text: Cervantes, from *Don Quixote*. Read the first ten chapters, trans. John Ormsby, online at http://www.csd.tamu.edu/cervantes/english/ctxt/DQ_Ormsby.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica* (as before)
2. Historical and political contexts:
 - O'Neill, Mary Anne. "Cervantes's Prose Epic," *Cervantes* 12 (1992): 59-72.
 - Watt, Ian. "Don Quixote of La Mancha," in *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*, pp.48-89. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
3. Essay on Works by this Author:
 - Boruchoff, David A. "On the Place of Madness, Deviance, and Eccentricity in *Don Quixote*," *Hispanic Review* 70 (2002): 1-23.
 - Mancing, Howard. "Knighthood Compromised," in *The Chivalric World of Don Quijote: Style, Structure, and Narrative Technique*, pp. 49-84. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Some critics see Don Quixote as mainly an object of ridicule; others think that the author actually admires him to some degree. Where do you stand on that issue?
2. Why is Sancho Panza such a delightful character?
3. *Don Quixote*, some say, gives a window into the life and manners of sixteenth-century Spain—this, we imagine, is the way daily life really was. Can you give some specific examples to support this generalization?
4. Among the episodes that we have read, which one do you consider the funniest? Why?

5. Ariosto is mentioned in passing in the text of *Don Quixote*, Chapter VII. Do you consider the mention complimentary or insulting?

UNIT FIVE: THE RENAISSANCE AND SATIRE

WEEK 12 --Desiderius Erasmus, "The Praise of Folly"

Overview:

Desiderius Erasmus (1466?-1536) was the greatest of all the humanists. He was born and educated in what is now Holland. He was forced by lack of funds to enter a monastery, but left as soon as he could afford to; he then lived in several different countries. His life was devoted mainly to the recovery of ancient Greek and Roman texts, many of which he edited and saw through the press. His edition of the Greek New Testament, though flawed, is the foundation of modern textual scholarship on *The Bible*. His *Adages*, his *Colloquies*, and his manual on writing elegant Latin epistles were in every schoolroom in Western Europe. Both Protestants and Catholics tried to enlist him in their cause, but (except for one minor treatise against Luther) he chose to remain neutral though ostensibly Catholic.

His witty satire "The Praise of Folly" was written in 1509 in the house of his close friend Sir Thomas More, and was dedicated to More. Satire tends to get its authors in trouble, so any device that can help deflect criticism is desirable. Erasmus hits upon a brilliant one: he put the praise of folly in the mouth of Folly herself, personified as a Greco-Roman goddess. Then Erasmus can say that all the attacks on fools in the oration are not his, but belong to Folly herself. She argues, with paradoxical plausibility, that the world cannot run without foolishness—it's everywhere, and everyone is guilty of it. It would be an impossibly dull world if everyone were solemn and wise all the time; even Christianity has a certain amount of salutary foolishness in it, since mystics are regarded by many as crazy.

Ancient Roman satire had two principal kinds: Horatian and Juvenalian. Horace's satire was witty, urbane, but relatively mild in tone; Juvenal's was slashing, bitter, and often obscene. Thanks (in part) to the device of making Folly praise herself, the tone of Erasmus' satire is relatively mild. In his preface to More, Erasmus—with accuracy-- asserts:

"I have so moderated by style that the understanding reader will easily perceive

my endeavors herein were rather to make mirth than bite. Nor have I, after the example of Juvenal, raked up that forgotten sink of filth and ribaldry, but laid before you things rather ridiculous than dishonest."

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. If Folly runs the world, the best stance toward it is tolerance and a sense of humor.
2. Moderation is less foolish than extremism of any kind.
3. As Johan Huizinga puts it, "salutary folly . . . is true wisdom [whereas] deluded wisdom is pure folly" (*Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*, 1957, p. 74).

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Erasmus, though theoretically a believer in Original Sin, actually put his faith in reason, and believed that Christianity could be rescued by reviving the Ancients. Hence he was, I believe, basically on Pico's side—he was at heart an optimist about human nature.

2. Erasmus wrote a treatise in favor of free will, man's freedom of choice in religion, in opposition to Luther's kind of determinism. It is no wonder that Erasmus and More were good friends, since More also wrote against Luther.

Readings:

Primary texts: Desiderius Erasmus, "The Praise of Folly," trans. John Wilson (read all). Free online at www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1509erasmus-folly.html.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political contexts:
 - MacDonald, Stewart. "Erasmus and Christian Humanism," *History Review* 36 (2000): 1-51.
 - Schoeck, R.J. "The Praise of Folly," in *Erasmus of Europe: The Prince of Humanists 1501-1536*, pp. 95-108. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
 - Huizinga, Johan. Chapter IX, "The Praise of Folly," in *Erasmus and the Age of Reformation*, trans. from the Dutch by F. Hopman, 1924; reprinted New York: Harper, 1957: 69-78.
 - Watson, Donald Gwynn. "Erasmus' 'Praise of Folly' and the Spirit of Carnival," *Renaissance Quarterly* 32 (1979): 333-53.
 - Wesseling, Ari. "Dutch Proverbs and Ancient Sources in Erasmus' 'Praise of Folly,'" *Renaissance Quarterly* 47(1994): 351-78.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Luther, in his *Table Talk* (Vol. 54 of *Luther's Works: American Ed.* 1967, p. 81), says "If I were to cut open Erasmus' heart I would find there nothing but ridicule of the Trinity, about the sacrament, etc. Everything for him is a laughing matter." Judging by "The Praise of Folly," do you find this criticism justified?
2. Why do you think Sir Thomas More and Erasmus were such good friends?
3. Erasmus has been called a pacifist in his politics. Do you find any indications of that in "The Praise of Folly"?
4. Do you agree that Erasmus should be placed on Pico's side in the debate about the dignity of man?
5. Erasmus worked directly with two of the greatest printers in the Renaissance: Aldus Manutius of Venice and Joannes Froben of Basel. How do those facts tie in to the idea discussed in Week 3 that printing was an important cause of the Renaissance?

WEEK 13—Francois Rabelais, selection from *Gargantua*

Overview:

Francois Rabelais (1494?-1553) was, like Erasmus, a monk for a time, a humanist, and a satirist. But their differences outweigh their similarities. They write very different kinds of satire: Erasmus, Horatian; Rabelais, Juvenalian (see last week's Overview). Erasmus's character Folly is urbane and polite; Rabelais' character Gargantua is crude and vulgar. Rabelais, as suggested in Week 2 above, owes something to the obscene fabliaux of the late Middle Ages, whereas Erasmus studiously avoided anything that smacked of the medieval. Rabelais made his living in the latter part of his life as a medical doctor, and it can be argued that human body parts get inordinate attention in *Gargantua* for that very reason.

Rabelais' main technique is not indirection (like Erasmus) but exaggeration. He piles it on. Gargantua is literally a giant, and Rabelais delights in describing the size of his male member when he was but a baby. Another example of the exaggeration: his father Grangousier "ordered meat by the ton, wine by the thousand gallon." Rabelais is the master of the belly laugh, not the chuckle.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Excessive drinking of wine and gluttonous eating, far from being condemned, are joyously celebrated (but this is of course part of the exaggeration). Also, scatology looms large.
2. Hypocrisy in religion and pedantry in education are Rabelais' favorite satiric targets. He detests "the gentlemen of the Sorbonne," Paris' university which in that era was far behind the times. Humanism had scarcely penetrated the Sorbonne; instead, Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas still reigned.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. Rabelais would not have agreed with Pico about the dignity of man. In arguing that man is no better than the animals, Montaigne may have had his fellow-Frenchman's work in the back of his mind.
2. Laughter is the cure for what ails man because it will prevent us from getting too high an opinion of ourselves.

Readings:

Primary Texts: Francois Rabelais, *Gargantua*, trans. Thomas Urquhart, Chapters 1-21, free online at www.etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/r/rabelais/francois/.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political contexts:
 - Kelley, Donald R. "France," in *The Renaissance in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, pp. 123-45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992..
 - Weinberg, Bernard. "Rabelais as an Artist," *Texas Quarterly* 3 (1960): 175-88.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
 - Greenblatt, Stephen. "Rabelais and Carnival," in *Learning to Curse: Essays on Early Modern Culture*, pp. 64-68. London: Routledge, 1990. Free online at www.idehist.uu.se/distans/ilmi/Ren/carn-rab-greenbl01.htm.
 - Tetel, Marcel. "Grotesque Achieved and Exceeded," in *Rabelais*, pp.32-48. New York: Twayne, 1967.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Some have argued that Rabelais' savage satire on church officials means that, underneath, he was a skeptic in religion. What do you think of that theory?
2. Does the obscenity and scatology add to or detract from the effectiveness of the satire?
3. Does the exaggeration add to or detract from the effectiveness of the satire?
4. Rabelais is said to be difficult to translate. Why might that be true?
5. Do you prefer Erasmus' brand of satire, or Rabelais'? Why?

UNIT SIX: THE RENAISSANCE AND SOCIAL HIERARCHY

WEEK 14—William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*

Overview:

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was a middle-class lad from a country market town and never (as far as we know) attended a university. Because his plays are so brilliant (perhaps the best ever written), many have suggested that he did not really write them himself. But that idea is mere snobbery—note that it is usually some nobleman who is proposed as the real author. Shakespeare made a good living from the theater because London had grown so much that a mass market had become available (it was the largest city in Europe at the time). He was an actor, playwright, and partowner of his acting troupe.

Twelfth Night (c. 1601) is usually classified as a romantic comedy because its main plot (Viola and Orsino, Sebastian and Olivia) consists of love stories ending in mass weddings. Through the centuries, however, the most popular character has always been Malvolio, and he will be our main focus in this course; his story forms what is known as the sub-plot. Malvolio is steward (general manager) to the rich noblewoman Olivia and would like to marry her. But he is a servant, albeit the chief servant of the household. He is presumptuous, the play seems to argue; he is trying to get out of his proper place in the social hierarchy. His punishment is to be the butt of a very funny but also cruel practical joke played on him by Sir Toby, the waiting woman Maria, and the fool Feste. Malvolio's self-love and gullibility are exposed. He refuses an offer of peace, stomping off at the end shouting, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you."

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. Attempting to transcend class boundaries is ludicrous and probably even harmful to the social order.
2. Those who trick Malvolio are motivated not only by his presumptuousness but also by his tendency to be a wet blanket; he does not like festivity and fun. The play itself, then, may be seen as endorsing festivity.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. In respect to social hierarchy, William Shakespeare would appear to be a conservative; he seems to believe in maintaining the traditional boundaries between social classes. In that sense he might be said to be on Montaigne's side, not Pico's; he does not approve of man trying to climb higher; he is not a rebel against the status quo as to the class system.
2. One of the most effective tools for keeping presumption down is laughter and ridicule.

Readings:

Primary Texts: William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (read all). Free online with link to a Shakespeare dictionary; go to www.william-shakespeare.info/script-text-twelfth-night.htm.

The student may, however, wish to obtain an edition which has footnotes and act, scene and line numbers.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography: *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political contexts:
Krieger, Elliot. "Twelfth Night: the Morality of Indulgence," in *A Marxist Study of Shakespeare's Comedies*, pp. 97-130. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Tillyard, E.M.W. "The Great Chain of Being" and "The Links in the Chain," in *The Elizabethan World Picture*, pp. 25-82. New York: Random House, no date [first published 1944].

3. Essays on Works by this Author:

Barber, C.L. "Testing Courtesy and Humanity in 'Twelfth Night,'" in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy*, pp.248-57. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1959.

Everett, Barbara. "Or What You Will," *Essays in Criticism* 35 (1985): 294-314.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How do you suppose most people in Shakespeare's original audience reacted to Malvolio's plight? Did they laugh at him? Feel sorry for him? Both?
2. How do you personally react to his plight?
3. Is Feste the clown (a wise fool?) related in any way to Erasmus' character Folly?
4. Is Sir Toby a jolly old spokesman for having fun, or a reprehensible alcoholic?
5. Almost all comedies in this era end with reconciliation; all is forgiven. Is there significance in the fact that Malvolio refuses reconciliation?

WEEK 15: William Shakespeare, *King Lear*

Overview:

Many regard *King Lear* as Shakespeare's greatest play. Such a multi-faceted tragedy contains many, many themes, of course, but the one chosen for this course is generational conflict. Elizabethan society was built not only on a class hierarchy that was fairly rigid but also on a patriarchal system in which the father ruled the family like the king ruled his kingdom: both fathers and kings were expected to consult their underlings, of course; but ultimately the decision lay with the patriarch/king.

In *King Lear* the fathers Lear and Gloucester find themselves challenged by some of their own (adult) children—but supported by other adult children. The rebellious daughters Goneril and Regan oppose King Lear just as Edmund opposed his father Gloucester. But Cordelia supports her father just as Edgar supports Gloucester. Not surprisingly, the rebellious children form an alliance, as do the faithful children. The tragic outcome of the play sees the rebellious children defeated and dead, so the challengers definitely do lose. But in the process the fathers die of broken hearts and Cordelia, the purest character of all, dies an apparently undeserved death.

Themes in this Author's Work:

1. The patriarchal order is preserved, but at great cost; the innocent suffer along with the guilty.
2. Disturbing the order seems to be condemned. The fathers are partly at fault, surely; but the rebellion of the children is seen as wrong, as unnatural.

Connections to Themes in this Course:

1. *King Lear*, like *Twelfth Night*, ultimately supports the social system of the day; rebellion is seen as wrong.
2. But the play may also be questioning accepted values in a different sense, namely by questioning cosmic justice: do people ultimately get what they deserve? The death of Cordelia suggests that they do not.

Readings:

Primary Texts: William Shakespeare, *King Lear* (read all). Free online at

www.william-shakespeare.info/script-text-king-lear.htm. But the student may want to buy an edition with footnotes and act, scene, and line numbers.

Secondary Texts:

1. Biography *Britannica*, as before.
2. Historical and political contexts:
Hardison, O.B. "Myth and History in *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26 (1975): 227-42.
Kinney, Arthur F. "Some Conjectures on the Composition of *King Lear*," *Shakespeare Survey* 33 (1980): 13-25.
3. Essays on Works by this Author:
Bloom, Harold. Chapter on *King Lear* in *Shakespeare: the Invention of the Human*, pp.476-515. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998.
Halio, Jay. "Gloucester's Blinding." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43 (1992): 221-23.

Syllabus

General Course Objectives: For Specific Learning Objectives, Refer to the Study Guide

- O1. Identify major works and to analyze them from different critical stances.
- O2. Demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the works by responding to questions focusing on the context, authors, themes, and motifs.
- O3. Compare works and documents from different periods, traditions, and sub-genres.
- O4. Apply critical reading strategies to determine alternative interpretive possibilities, as well as motifs, figurative language, and potential interpretive possibilities,
- O5. Discuss the historical, social, cultural, or biographical contexts of the works' production
- O6. Compare and contrast themes, genres, and movements.

General Program Objectives

1. To provide students with a broad perspective of approaches to world humanities and an understanding of the various ways in which they manifest themselves and to assess students' ability to express their perspectives through exams and essays.
2. To provide students with a deeper understanding of diverse traditions in the humanities the course focus and to express this deepened understanding in written tests and a critical essay.
3. To provide an overview of textual analysis and interpretation methods at a graduate level and help students apply these skills in writing essay examinations and a critical essay.
4. To read widely and critically in a variety of literary forms found in different genre studies and to demonstrate the depth and breadth of this reading in a critical essay.
5. To conduct graduate-level library research on a particular text or body of work, an individual writer, or an issue in the area of genre studies and to write a critical essay which incorporates their research.

Course Content:

1. Texts that have been designated as being produced within the category of the course topic.
2. Discussion of the historical, social, cultural and biographical contexts in which those works were

- produced.
3. Literary movements in various periods.
 4. Discussion of the theoretical issues and questions related to historical, social, cultural, and biographical approaches to the study of the course topic.
 5. Historical contexts.
 6. Criticism and reflection upon political and economic systems as reflected in literature.
 7. Discussion of the relevance of course readings to the understanding of contemporary global issues.
 8. Critical analysis and interpretation.
 9. Scholarly research on and off-line.

Course Outline:

For the detailed course outline, please see the Study Guide.

Course Readings:

For a list of course readings, please see the Readings page on the Study Guide

Course Preparedness:

This course is a graduate-level literature course. It assumes the mastery of prerequisite college-level skills in spelling, grammar, punctuation, paragraphing, and essay writing. It also assumes the ability to read and analyze literary texts. This course provides instruction in world literature and does not address remedial writing issues at the sentence, paragraph, or essay level.

This course focuses on literary texts and analysis and requires college-level writing skills that exceed those required at the secondary level.

However, in some cases, students who have not yet completed a bachelor's degree may be allowed to take the course.

Course Workload:

For a sixteen-week course, students can expect to devote a minimum of 6 hours of independent study per week in order to complete the coursework. If students are taking the course in an accelerated 8-week mode, they can expect to devote a minimum of 12 hours per week of study.

Assessment Strategy

Learners will demonstrate their knowledge of the subject and their ability to engage in critical thinking and problem solving activities.

- *Journal Entries/Discussion Questions.* Designed to help students identify authors, their works, literary terms, and concepts. Students will also analyze texts, connect the authors, texts, and critical concepts. Finally, students look at texts from multiple perspectives in order to evaluate their own thought processes.
- *Synchronous Online Activities.* Designed to help learners apply the concepts in the course to texts, and to share their insights.
- *Essay / Research Paper.* Designed to help students write scholarly papers and engage in literary analysis. Students will develop a clear thesis which they support with literary citations, a close reading of the text, application of critical theories and perspectives. Students will focus on developing multiple interpretations of a single text, or will look at multiple texts within a movement, genre, or author's oeuvre.