

## Medieval to Renaissance: Essay Titles Spring 2016

**First-year students:** please write an essay of 2500 words on one of these titles to be handed in as a paper copy to your seminar tutor in week 1 of term 3. Please also submit a copy electronically on Tabula.

**Honours-level students:** please write an essay of 3000 words, to be submitted electronically by 12 noon on Tuesday 26 April 2016 (that is, Tuesday of week 1 of term 3).

1. Is Thomas More's *Utopia* a satire on European corruption, a radical proposal for social reform, or something else?
2. In Thomas More's *Utopia*, what effect does the abolition of private property have on the intellectual life of the Utopians?
3. Examine the relationship between convention and sincerity in renaissance sonnets. Your answer may make use of any sonnets from the period which you have read.
4. How does Thomas Wyatt develop the idea of an individual speaking voice in his poetry? What does this creation owe to poetic convention?
5. What does the poetry of Thomas Wyatt reveal about the difficulties of Henrician court life?
6. Discuss the influence of Petrarch's poetry on Thomas Wyatt AND/OR Philip Sidney. How do they reorient what they borrow to new ends?
7. What do we gain from reading Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* as a sequence? What do we lose from approaching it through an anthology?
8. Explore Shakespeare's treatment of ONE of the following in his *Sonnets*: praise, the natural world, time, self worth, duplicity, sexuality.
9. 'Poetry is an art of imitation... - that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture - with this end, to teach and delight' (Sidney, *Apology for Poetry*). Examine the application of this principle to one or more of the writers on this course.
10. 'The poet he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth' (Sidney, *Apology for Poetry*). How does Sidney make the poet a moral agent in his *Apology for Poetry*?
11. In the first book of *The Faerie Queene*, Redcross fails repeatedly, but triumphs ultimately. Examine the presentation of error and failure in this first book of the poem.
11. Examine Spenser's transformation of the traditions of the classical epic AND/OR the medieval romance in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.
12. How is the attitude to sexual desire taken by Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* different to that in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?