

Medieval to Renaissance: Essay Titles Spring 2018

For visiting students who are here for only part of the year:

One essay of 3000 words to be submitted electronically by noon on Tuesday of week 10 of term 2 (13th March 2018).

For first year students:

Essays of around 2500 words (one paper copy) to be handed in to tutors in week 1 of Term 3 (exact time to be determined by seminar tutor).

For students taking module at *Honours level* and *whole-year visiting students* who are taking the module at *Honours level*:

One electronic submission of an essay of 3000 words due by noon on Tuesday of week 1, term 3 (24th April 2018).

1. 'The text is essentially a performance script, never intended as reading matter, and it repeatedly insists on the presence of an audience' (Beadle). Explore the relationship between the play and the spiritual lives of the audience in any TWO or more texts. You may answer with reference to mystery/cycle plays or morality plays or both.
2. 'Mankind's fall may be charted by whose language he speaks' (King). Discuss the ways in which medieval dramatists exploit different styles and levels of language. You may answer with reference to mystery plays or morality plays or both.
3. Explore the relationship between the everyday human world and the spiritual world in any medieval play or plays.
4. Is Thomas More's *Utopia* a satire on European corruption, a radical proposal for social reform, or something else?
5. In *Utopia* Thomas More create an imaginary commonwealth which is clearly far from ideal in some respects. Why does he do so?
6. 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.
7. How does Thomas Wyatt develop the idea of an individual speaking voice in his poetry? What does this creation owe to poetic convention?
8. The powerful intensity of Wyatt's poetry derives from the fact that neither audience nor poet is permitted to stand at a comfortable distance from the speaker (Greenblatt, adapted). Do you agree with this judgement?

9. Discuss the influence of Petrarch's poetry on Thomas Wyatt AND/OR Philip Sidney. How do they reorient what they borrow to new ends?
10. 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?
11. '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.
12. '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*?
13. Spenser wrote his 'Letter of the Authors' 'as well for avoyding of gealous opinions and misconstructions, as also for your better light in reading thereof'. In what ways can *The Faerie Queene* be viewed as a dramatization of the difficulties of reading and interpretation?
14. Examine Spenser's transformation of the traditions of the classical epic AND/OR the medieval romance in the first book of *The Faerie Queene*.
15. Explore Shakespeare's treatment of ONE of the following in his *Sonnets*: praise, the natural world, time, self worth, duplicity, sexuality.
16. How is the attitude to sexual desire taken by Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* different from that in Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*?