Department of English
Stockholm University

Advanced level course
Reformation Literature (ENRFH1), 7.5 credits
Spring 2025
Instructor: Anna Swärdh

Course description

The course addresses different genres of early modern English literature (for example, drama, poetry, letters, and sermons), in relation to the revolutionary changes the Reformation produced in society, not least of all with respect to tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism. Different ways of critically approaching the period and its literature are also addressed, as well as the social, technological and institutional conditions underwriting the literature of the period of the Reformation.

Intended learning outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students are expected to be able to:

- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;
- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

Grading

The course adopts the 7-grade SU scale.
To receive a final grade, students must have completed and passed all the examination assignments (failing to submit an assignment will result in no grade).
To receive a passing grade (A to E), students must complete the written assignments and demonstrate that they achieved all the learning outcomes at least at the minimum level (as described below).

Teaching

To help students reach the requirements, the course offers eight two-hour campus-taught seminars. Before each seminar, students are expected to finish the assigned reading and to be prepared to discuss the reading at the seminar.

Course requirements

The students are required to complete two essays. See below under Examination for details.

Contact information

Course coordinator: Anna Swärdh (anna.swardh@english.su.se)

Course overview
A detailed schedule with dates and times will be available via TimeEdit

Seminar 1. Prose and poetry	Elizabeth I: speeches, letters, and poetry (Norton selection); Extract from Mulcaster, Progress (Norton selection); Extracts from the Knox and Aylmer's debate on queenship; Bell, Ilona. "Elizabeth Tudor: Poet."
Seminar 2. Poetry: Epic	Edmund Spenser, Book I, *The Faerie Queene*; *The Bible*. "Revelation," chapters 4–21: The Geneva Bible (which Spenser used), or the King James Edition; John Bale, selection from *The Image of both churches*, Brownlee, Victoria. "Imagining the Enemy: Protestant Readings of the Whore of Babylon in Early Modern England, c.1580–1625."
Seminar 3. Poetry: The sonnet and lyric poetry	Anne Lock, A Meditation if a Penitent Sinner, upon the 51. Psalme; Mary Sidney, Psalm 51; Richard Crashaw, On the Wounds of Our Crucified Lord Robert Southwell, The Burning Babe John Donne, The Canonization, The Relic; Divine Meditations/Holy Sonnets 5, 10, 17; George Herbert, The Altar, Easter-wings; Serjeantson, Deirdre. "The Book of Psalms and the Early Modern Sonnet."
Seminar 4. Poetry: Narrative poetry	Southwell, *Saint Peter's Complaint*; Shakespeare, *The Rape of Lucrece*; Miola, Robert S. "Publishing the Word: Robert Southwell's Sacred Poetry."
Seminar 5. Drama: Tragedy	Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*; Bezio, Kristin M. S. "Marlowe's Radical Reformation: Christopher Marlowe and the Radical Christianity of the Polish Brethren." (Focus on pp. 135–151.)
Seminar 6. Drama: Comedy	Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*; Smith, Emma. "Was Shylock Jewish?"
Seminar 7. Drama: Romance	Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*; "An Homily against the Peril of Idolatry"; McCoy, Richard. "Awakening Faith in The Winter's Tale."
Seminar 8. Drama: Tragedy	Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*; John Donne, Death's Duel; Shell, Alison. "The Livid Flash: Decadence, Anti-Catholic Revenge Tragedy, and the Dehistoricised Critic."

Course literature

Primary material you need to purchase

The following texts you need to get hold of yourselves. Recommended scholarly editions for Shakespeare are: The Arden Shakespeare, New Cambridge Shakespeare, The Oxford Shakespeare. For Spenser, Marlowe and Webster, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B* (10th ed.) contains the full texts and also many of the poems and prose texts studied on the course.

Greenblatt, Stephen, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. B: The Sixteenth Century and Early Seventeenth Century* (10th ed., 2018).

Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice.* Any recent scholarly edition.

Shakespeare, William. *The Rape of Lucrece.* Any recent scholarly edition.

Shakespeare, William, *The Winter's Tale.* Any recent scholarly edition.

Primary material available at the library

The following texts are available via Stockholm University Library (EEBO), online, or provided as handouts/pdfs:

Bale, John. Selection from *The Image of both churches* (archive.org/handout/EEBO).

The Bible. "Revelation," chapters 4–21: The Geneva Bible (which Spenser used), or the King James Edition (both available online).

"An Homily against the Peril of Idolatry," *Certain Sermons and Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth...* (Online hathitrust.org/handout).

Extracts from the Knox and Aylmer's debate on queenship (EEBO/handout).

Southwell, Robert. *Saint Peter's Complaint.*

Secondary material

The following articles and chapters are available via Stockholm University Library or provided as handouts/pdfs:

Bell, Ilona. "Elizabeth Tudor: Poet," *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 30:1 (2004), 1–22.

Bezio, Kristin M. S. "Marlowe's Radical Reformation: Christopher Marlowe and the Radical Christianity of the Polish Brethren." *Quidditas* 38 (2017): 135–162.

Brownlee, Victoria. "Imagining the Enemy: Protestant Readings of the Whore of Babylon in Early Modern England, c.1580–1625." In *Biblical Women in Early Modern Literary Culture, 1550–1700*, ed by Laura Gallagher and Victoria Brownlee. Manchester UP, 2016.

McCoy, Richard. "Awakening Faith in The Winter's Tale." Ch. 11 in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*. Eds. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore. Cambridge UP, 2015. 214–30.

Miola, Robert S. "Publishing the Word: Robert Southwell's Sacred Poetry." *Review of English Studies* 64.265 (2013): 410–432.

Serjeantson, Deirdre. "The Book of Psalms and the Early Modern Sonnet." *Renaissance Studies* 29.4 (2015): 632–49.

Shell, Alison. "The Livid Flash: Decadence, Anti-Catholic Revenge Tragedy, and the Dehistoricised Critic." Ch. 1 in *Catholicism, Controversy, and the English Literary Imagination*. Alison Shell Cambridge UP, 1999. 23–55.

Smith, Emma. "Was Shylock Jewish?" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 64.2 (2013): 188–219.

Examination
Students are required to complete and pass two argumentative essays of 2,000–2,500 words each, which must make reference both to primary and secondary sources according to the instructions below. Each essay counts for 50% of the final grade.

Essay 1 (A-F): Poetry or prose (26 February 2024, 23:59)
The essay should focus on one of the poems or prose texts studied on the course but may refer to more, and it should make use of three or more article-length secondary sources, one of which should be a text studied on the course. The topic of the essay should be one that is relevant to the English Reformation and its literature. (This does not mean that the essay must take religion or the Reformation as its main topic, but it must show awareness of how the Reformation context affects our understanding of for instance a genre, a text, a theme, a detail of style etc.) The essay should present a thesis that allows students to show their understanding of Reformation literature and relevant critical and theoretical material. The thesis should be argued throughout the essay, supported by close reading of primary texts and interaction with relevant secondary material. Formatting and referencing should be in agreement with domain-specific conventions.

Essay 2 (A-F): Drama (21 March 2025, 23:59)
The essay should focus on one of the dramatic texts studied on the course but may refer to more, and it should make use of three or more article-length secondary sources, one of which should be a text studied on the course. The topic of the essay should be one that is relevant to the English Reformation and its literature. (This does not mean that the essay must take religion or the Reformation as its main topic, but it must show awareness of how the Reformation context affects our understanding of for instance a genre, a text, a theme, a detail of style etc.) The essay should present a thesis that allows students to show their understanding of Reformation literature and relevant critical and theoretical material. The thesis should be argued throughout the essay, supported by close reading of primary texts and interaction with relevant secondary material. Formatting and referencing should be in agreement with domain-specific conventions.

Resubmission deadline, both essays: 25 April 2024, 23:59

Grading criteria
A: Excellent
The student shows excellent ability to:
- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;
- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

B: Very good
The student shows very good ability to:
- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;

- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

C: Good
The student shows good ability to:
- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;
- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

D: Satisfactory
The student shows satisfactory ability to:
- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;
- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

E: Adequate
The student shows adequate ability to:
- Account for ideas, theories, themes and concepts that appear in Reformation literature;
- Critically analyse Reformation literature as well as relevant critical and theoretical texts;
- Independently formulate and motivate interpretations of Reformation literature using relevant concepts and methods;
- Express themselves in academic English, in writing as well as in discussions and presentations.

Fx: Fail, some additional work required
The student has displayed some but not all required skills specified in the learning outcomes at a minimally adequate level.

F: Fail, much more work required
The student's work does not demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the course.