

COURSE NUMBER AND TITLE: English 3213, British Seventeenth Century Literature

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Catherine Martin

Patterson 449

678-2686

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Alan Rudrum, Joseph Black, and Holly Nelson, eds. *The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth Century Verse and Prose*. Broadview Press.

Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis*

Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone*

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (excerpts)

Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*

AIMS AND ORGANIZATION: The seventeenth century is the watershed period in the formation of the modern world, producing a series of “firsts” that combine to make it a true *Century of Revolution*, as a famous book title proclaims it. This title refers to the first successful “people’s revolution” in Europe, which took place as England executed its rightful king (Charles I) and founded the first truly democratic republic in Europe, the unfortunately short-lived English Commonwealth. While this event provides an important context for our seventeenth century studies, the course will mainly focus on other startling innovations: the birth of both modern science and science fiction, the birth of political science, of the first feminist writers, of the first modern socialists, the first novelist, Daniel Defoe, and the first modern biblical/historical epic, John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. As the latter especially shows, Christianity remains a central part of this culture, but the Protestant epic and its real world equivalents abruptly introduce new, more highly individualized, and often idiosyncratic forms of belief. These developments begin early in the century with two of the greatest Reformed writers, John Donne and George Herbert. Donne will receive greater attention because he is certainly the more modern of the two, a “free-thinker” and sexual libertine who evolved into a great religious poet but also a great defender of religious tolerance. Milton loosely belongs in the same camp, while together Donne, Herbert, and Milton “invent” another first, a thoroughly modern “plain style” sonnet equally suitable to love poetry and political protest. The course will be divided into 3 separate units dealing with 1) the new science/science fiction; 2) the new politics and its socialist and feminist outgrowths; and 3) the new literary forms listed above: the modern sonnet, epic, and novel

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITTEN WORK: The first course unit on science and science fiction will be covered both by power point lectures and by a short written essay assignment. The second unit on politics will be covered by power points, class discussions, a few quizzes, and a midterm exam; while the third unit on the new sonnet and epic will be partly covered by a slightly longer written essay and partly by a final exam on Defoe’s scandalous *Moll Flanders* and two film versions of it, one historical and one a modern parallel of this great novel. Each assignment—two essays and two exams-- will have roughly equal weight in the student’s final grade, with the quizzes being averaged in with the midterm exam.