

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.

William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*

Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moon*

John Milton, *Comus*

Aphra Behn, *Oronooko*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

AIMS AND ORGANIZATION: The seventeenth century is the watershed period in the formation of the modern world. It witnesses the birth of modern science; new theories about the rights of men, women, and private property; and new ideas about the church, education, and the state. All these factors combine to make this period a *Century of Revolution*, as a famous historical account calls it. Conflicting ideas about change—and even about the relative value of order and disorder--not only lead to the first true political revolution in Europe but also to the invention of the modern army under Oliver Cromwell, the birth of modern feminism, and revolutionary encounters of English settlers with the New World of the Americas.

All of the above topics will be studied and discussed while specifically focusing on new literary genres ranging from highly personal war poetry to “lost island” and utopian literature. We will read Shakespeare’s final play on a magical encounter with lost races, John Milton’s first play on a magical forest encounter with tempting spirits, and Daniel Defoe’s realistic description of the “survival of the fittest,” *Robinson Crusoe*. With the poet John Donne we discover a radical or libertine departure from the polite, often flowery poetry of the past and a new emphasis on real experience, with many of his poems reading more like violent or spontaneous “blogs” than like the older courtly love literature. Even Donne’s confrontations with God and Death share a violence and gritty realism rarely if ever seen in the past. These and related readings by both male and female writers also explore new forms of feminine individualism; the nature and rights of aliens, slaves, and “monsters” on both the earth and the moon; disturbing aspects the New World; and the birth of science fiction complete with marvelous new machines and voyages. Entertaining in themselves, these readings offer a thorough encounter with true masterpieces of English literature.

ASSIGNMENTS AND WRITTEN WORK: This class rotates alternate types of sessions, the first with the whole group and the instructor, the second requiring each student to chose a short passage or poem to discuss in class and form into a group response paper. Class participation will be emphasized throughout and graded. Also required are one short oral report, ideally involving two students, and two individual essays on longer readings or on two short poems. The focus of the term paper will be arranged in consultation with the instructor and may be based (in part) on the research involved in preparing the oral report. These assignments will take the place of quizzes and tests.