

SPENSER

E Lit 498 (3 credits)
498W (4 credits)

Loewenstein, with Ladd
& Knox

Syllabus

Amount of Reading: We'll read the entire *Faerie Queene*, averaging 4 cantos per class, about a third of Spenser's shorter poems, excerpts of his prose dialogue on Ireland and his correspondence with Gabriel Harvey, and a selection of criticism on Spenser and his culture. You'll get good exposure to English Renaissance non-dramatic forms and modes.

Amount of Writing: For undergraduates in *The Spenser Lab* (498W), one short essay, as well as lab work, imitations, and the completion of a substantial final editorial task. Because 498W is writing-intensive for undergraduates, writing will be *submitted, revised, and resubmitted*.

For graduate students in 498W, two imitation exercises, editorial lab work, involvement in a final editorial task, and a research paper.

For students in "regular" *Spenser* (498), two imitations, a short essay and a research paper.

Keep copies of all papers.

No late papers.

Attendance required; you must have the assigned reading with you.

No use of cell phones or irrelevant use of tablets or computers during class.

Who would take *Spenser*: Those seeking exposure to the tactics of epic. (Those for whom the novel is the only familiar long literary form, who may enjoy thinking about how other long forms work.) Those for whom the expression "into it" has important imaginative force. Those interested in thinking about the unfolding of literary careers. Those interested in visionary poetics, the relation of literature and politics, male feminism, the ethical claims of literature. The course will also be valuable for graduate students intending to specialize in the Early Modern period or who are considering it as a possible field.

Who would take *The Spenser Lab*: Those seeking exposure to "digital humanities." Those interested in group inquiry in the humanities. Those seeking a writing-intensive course. Those seeking grant-writing experience. Those interested in books as material and historical objects.

Contact Information: Note that JFL has two offices: Duncker 125 (X54404) and Umrath 235 (X59344). He'll keep office hours this term from 11:00 to 12:15 on Mondays in Umrath 235 and from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursdays in Duncker 125. Home phone: 535-2188; feel free to call between 7:30 AM and 11:00 PM. Email: jfloewen@wustl.edu

John will hold office hours in Duncker 014 on Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30, or by appointment. Email: jrladd@wustl.edu

Mr. Knox's office is in Eads 004. Email: dknox@wustl.edu

Texts: Good complete editions of *The Faerie Queene* and of the shorter poems.

More details

The following schedule of readings is at once detailed and provisional. This is the way the schedule of readings will go unless our discussions pull us in a different direction (which could very well happen). If we stick to this schedule, it will get us through the major poems, but will oblige us to skip some of the interesting minor poetry.

Course Schedule

M Aug. 29

Introduction

NEH Grant Narrative (Lab students)

W Aug. 31

Spenser's Ambition, Part 1: FQ I.Pr and I.i, The Letter to Raleigh, and SC December

W Sep. 7

I.ii-iv and SC April

Isabel MacCaffrey, "Learning to Read" and "Spenserian Ontology" from Spenser's Allegory

M Sept. 12

I.v-viii

Janet Adelman, "Revaluing the Body in Book I of the FQ"

Lab: Encoding Spenser [XML Markup and the Spenser Archive]

W Sept. 14

The End of the Beginning: I.ix-xii

M Sept. 19

Spenser's Ambition, Part 2: SC Front Matter, July, August, and October

Richard Rambuss, from *Spenser's Secret Career*

W Sept. 21

II.i-iv

M Sept. 26

II.v-viii

Imitation I Due

W Sept. 28

II.ix-xii

Theresa Krier, "In the Absence of Belphoebe," from Gazing on Secret Sights

M Oct. 3 is Rosh Hashana (no class)

W Oct. 5

III.i-iv

Elizabeth Bellamy, "Gender," from A Critical Companion to Spenser Studies

Lab: Spelling Spenser [MorphAdorner and Orthographic Variation (Visit from Prof. Basu?), Glossary Tasks]

MAKE-UP CLASS: F Oct. 7

III.v-viii

M Oct. 10

III.ix-xii

Judith Anderson, "Acrasian Fantasies: Outsides, Insides, Upsides, and Downsides in the Bower of Bliss"

Lab: Displaying Spenser [Desktop and Mobile Interface] (Visit from Doug Knox and Steve Pentecost?)

W Oct. 12 is Yom Kippur (no class)

Fall Break

W Oct 19

Marriage, Part I: Amoretti (selections) and Epithalamion

M Oct. 24

Before Friendship: from The Spenser-Harvey Correspondence (and a look at E.K.)

Joseph Loewenstein, Critical Introduction to the Letters

W Oct. 26

IV.i-iv

Lab: Decoding Spenser [Twitter Bots and Spenser in the Stream, Deformance I]

Imitation II Due

M Oct. 31

IV.v-viii

Jonathan Goldberg, "Other Voices, Other Texts," from *Endlesse Worke*

W Nov. 2

Marriage, Part II: IV.ix-xii, Prothalamion

M Nov. 7

Troubling Spenser: Vewe of the Present State of Ireland

W Nov. 9

V.i-iv

M Nov. 14

V.v-viii

Richard McCabe, "The Rival Poets," from *Spenser's Monstrous Regiment*

Lab: Visualizing Spenser [The Colors of the Faerie Queene]

W Nov. 16

V.ix-xii

M Nov. 21

VI.i-iv

Thanksgiving Break

M Nov. 28

VI.v-viii

W Nov. 30

VI.ix-xii

M Dec. 5

The End of All Things: *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie*

Jane Grogan, "After the Mutabilitie Cantos: Yeats and Heaney Reading Spenser," from *Celebrating Mutabilitie*

Lab: Mutating Spenser [Deformance II and the Mutable Stanzas, visit from Steve Pentecost]

W Dec. 7

The End, Elaborated: More *Two Cantos of Mutabilitie*

How to do the reading: Although the reading assignment for most class sessions is four cantos a session while we're working on the *Faerie Queene*, we recommend that you read six cantos for the first class on any given book—you'll be much better oriented if you make it to the mid-point of a given book for the first class. Since the *Faerie Queene* can be a bewildering poem, you'd do well to *take notes as you read*. Above all, try to allow for a half hour's reflection on the reading after you've done it: make sure you know what happened in the narrative and in what order, and start thinking about the logic of that sequence. Such reflection will make much of the difference between good classes and bad ones.

Assignments:

Students of E Lit 498W (Spenser Lab: 4 Credits)

Undergraduate Students

—6 pp. paper on an assigned portion of the Spenser corpus, to be revised within ten days of its having been returned

—Two imitation exercises.

—Lab work, including completion of a substantial final editorial task, due on Wednesday, December 14.

—Revisions as assigned.

Grade weightings: short paper, 10%; revision of short paper, 20%; imitations 10%, final project, 20%; other lab work, 25%; contributions to regular discussion, 15%.

Graduate Students

—Two imitation exercises.

—Lab work, including editorial support of a substantial final editorial task.

—15-20 pp. essay, due on Wednesday, December 14.

Grade weightings: imitations, 10%; final paper, 40%; contributions to final undergraduate projects 5%; general contributions to lab work, 30%; contributions to regular discussion, 15%.

Students of E Lit 498 (3 credits)

—6 pp. paper on an assigned portion of the Spenser corpus.

— Two imitation exercises.

— Final paper, due on Wednesday, December 14:

for undergraduates, either an independent 12-15 pp. essay or a 20-pp. expansion of an earlier essay.

for graduate students, a 20 pp. essay

Grade weightings: short paper, 25%; imitation 10%; final essay, 50%;
contributions to class discussion, 15%.

Students enrolled Pass/Fail will need the grade equivalent of a C to pass the course.

Once enrollments settle, we'll distribute more detailed explanations of each assignment along with the schedule of short papers on assigned portions of the corpus.

You should not hand papers in late. Please remember that we don't assign papers in order to gauge your intelligence. They are exercises; their principal function is to stimulate heightened engagement and particular kinds of attention different from those the poems might initially elicit from you, which is also to say that they are part of the *design* of the course, part of the sequence of readings and discussion. To hand a paper in late is, in a sense, to begin to distance yourself, to withdraw from the course. As a way of confirming this assessment, we lower the grade on papers submitted late, regardless of the cause of the delay, so make backups of computer files, keep your hardware in good repair, get to know the library hours, familiarize yourself with your software, and keep lots of supplies on hand. *Keep copies of all papers that you submit.*

Spenser Criticism

History: I -- this is JFL, not JFL and JRL -- used to believe that there was no great tradition of critical reflection on Spenser prior to the middle of the twentieth century, and that that distinguished him from Shakespeare, Milton, and even Donne. It's more complicated, actually: reflection on Spenser begins in the work of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century imitation; criticism proper begins at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, largely in reaction to the publication of Todd's disappointing edition. Spenser becomes the object of strenuous scholarship in the late nineteenth century, when he became a special darling of American scholars. (No one has written on this subject; specialists on American literary history take note.) But he became the special province of philologists in the early twentieth century and critics only began to produce challenging interpretive work of high quality in the late fifties (in the wake, I think, of the critical re-engagement with Milton, whose reputation had suffered from a very odd and quite sustained political assault at the hands of conservative ideologues like Leavis and Eliot, although other modernists piled on as well.) Some very good work from this early "renaissance" in Spenser criticism is no longer in vogue, studies that place Spenser in an "epic tradition," that investigate how allegory works and what its contribution might be to the development of English figurative practice, or that trace the intellectual history of Spenser's ideas. But some of the topics broached in the sixties have continued to hold the interest of younger critics: the ideological work of pastoral and of "nature poetry," Spenser's place in the history of eroticism and romantic love, Spenser's contribution to the cult of Elizabeth, Spenser's Protestantism, his achievement in transmitting the idea that poetry is "visionary," Spenser and the idea of literary tradition, the

tactics of shaping a literary career, etc. Excellent feminist and psychoanalytic criticism has been done on Spenser's work since the seventies; "Spenser and Ireland" became a hot topic in the nineties and has remained so; and there's been a curious return to biographical readings within the last decade or so.

Surveying: Graduate students should familiarize themselves with the full range of critical writing about Spenser. Take short cuts: for the older work, read around in older critical anthologies like *Essential Articles on Edmund Spenser*, *The Prince of Poets*, *Elizabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism*, and so forth. *The Spenser Encyclopedia* is an invaluable resource—everyone in the class should look at it from time to time—and graduate students will find that it will point them to key books and articles from the seventies and eighties. Newer work is easy to find and inspect on the library shelves; it is showcased in collections like *Worldmaking Spenser*, *The Cambridge Companion to Spenser*, *The Oxford Handbook of Edmund Spenser*, and in serials like *Spenser Studies*, *ELR*, and the online *Spenser Review*. The footnotes in responsible recent articles from those journals will help you trace the most influential scholarly and critical work of preceding years. I think you'll find curious gaps in writing about Spenser, though: he received little critical attention from distinguished post-structuralist critics (David Miller's *The Poem's Two Bodies* is exceptional), his relation to the *immediate* religious, intellectual (especially scientific), and political environment still has not been worked out in detail (as, for example, it has been for writers like Milton or Blake), the work on Spenser and the late-medieval tradition of romance has stalled out quite disappointingly, and no one since the Victorian period seems to care much about Spenser's roots in low-brow Tudor culture. Still—and this is the important thing—Spenser has elicited a lot of very intelligent critical work over the past fifty years, so even graduate students not specializing in Early Modern literature should find it useful to immerse themselves for a few months in Spenser criticism. You'll get ideas and discover poachable techniques.

Iconography and Psychoanalysis: Aside from straight literary criticism, you may find two bodies of modern speculation, from two distinct interpretive traditions, particularly useful for thinking about Spenser: I'm referring to the literatures of iconography and of psychoanalysis. You can get a very good introduction to iconography from Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* and from the first and last essays in E. H. Gombrich's *Symbolic Images*. To my mind, the best stimuli to psychoanalytic reflection on Spenser are Freud's "Fetishism" and his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Klein's "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States" and "Some Theoretical Conclusions Regarding the Emotional Life of the Infant," and Erikson's, *Childhood and Society*, Chapt. 7. Janet Adelman has responded brilliantly to that tradition.

Prosody: Students concerned that they may not have yet mastered the basic vocabulary for talking about poetry will want to read John Hollander's wonderful (and very short) *Rhyme's Reason*. It's been a long time since a prosody geek has enrolled in this course, but Spenser was involved with the most extraordinary set of formal experiments of the sixteenth-century, so if this is your sort of thing, let me know.

Contacting us: Let us know if something's bothering you about the course: its mechanics, drift, tone, focus, degree of clarity. We can't correct a problem of which we're ignorant, or to which we're blind. There will be inevitable confusions, particularly because we're dealing with complicated and probably unfamiliar material—but it's also possible that we'll be to blame for

confusions. If you can't bring yourself to address such confusions in class, then you should voice them during office hours.

If you don't understand our evaluation of your work or think my evaluation flawed, please ask us as soon as possible for clarification and, if you feel it warranted, reconsideration.

There are lots of good reasons to come by to talk. Undergraduates may want to talk about the major, about whether graduate school is right for them, or about how this course relates to others. Grad students may want to talk about professional development, about specializing in Early Modern Studies, or about trends in the profession. If you want to ask me (JFL) for a letter of recommendation, don't forget to give me lead time: two weeks is a very bare minimum.

On some occasions—though never during office hours—I will be in my office but will be unable to talk with you if you drop in. In such instances, I'll arrange another time for us to talk as soon as possible and I'll try to remember to be profusely apologetic for putting you off.

Special needs: Any student who has special needs pertaining to class administration should contact the Disability Resources office (<http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/DisabilityResources.aspx>) to arrange for accommodations. The university is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students who have documented disabilities or special needs.

Academic integrity: We expect you to adhere to high standards of academic integrity. It's not *just* that dishonesty can endanger people and sadden the polity. Strict honesty doesn't come naturally; it requires effort and practice, which is why we expect you to hold yourself to strict standards of academic conduct no matter how important or unimportant the subject of the course seems to you: we all need the practice.

The institution has a position on academic integrity as well. Because of the university's policies, if we think you have plagiarized, we're obliged to inform the Committee on Academic Integrity. For more on the College's official policy in these matters, you can consult <http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>.