

MODULE CODE: CSEN7026
TITLE: Epic, Religion and Philosophy: Spenser and Milton
DATED: 27/02/2012

LEVEL: 7
CREDITS: 20

JACS CODE: Q320

AIM(S)

- To enable students to demonstrate a detailed and critical understanding of epic in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century and issues surrounding the definition of epic as a genre and of the heroic mode and its engagement with philosophy and religion, by the use of appropriate theoretical methods and concepts.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate:

- a detailed knowledge and understanding of Renaissance or early modern exemplars of the heroic mode and epic genre;
- the ability to display an independent critical assessment of secondary literature, including a range of history and literary criticism and theory;
- a critically and historically informed understanding of the production, publication, circulation and reception of literary texts from specifically book-historical, bibliographical and literary-critical perspectives;
- the ability to show an advanced and sustained awareness and appreciation of the cultural and historical nature and importance of the literary response to philosophical and religious ideas and its contribution to their development in sixteenth and seventeenth- century culture.

INDICATIVE CONTENT

- This module involves detailed and sustained study of two epic poems – Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* – and it considers their place in the development of the genre of epic and its imaginative re-creation in the Renaissance or early modern period. Students will analyse these texts in terms of various ancient, Renaissance, early modern and modern criteria for defining the 'epic kind' of literature and, as appropriate, the modes or genres of allegory, romance, and more broadly narrative fiction. Students will also be encouraged to employ a wide range of interpretative skills in the analysis of ways in which works in the genre of epic, and these works in particular, engage with philosophical, moral, religious, and theological ideas and practices, discursive or material. Other earlier or contemporaneous literary texts (or extracts of texts) will be read for purposes of comparison and elucidation, including other poetic and prose works by Spenser and Milton. Students will consider the place and functions of epic narrative within society, the ways in which literary writings are affected by changing political, social and economic factors and are embedded in, even while they critique, the discursive and material practices and ideologies of their culture, and the relevance of poetic influence,

critical groupings, coteries and literary circles for our understanding of these and other works of early modern poetry. An appreciation of the importance of the material transmission of texts, their production, publication and circulation will be enabled through the consultation of early printed books in the Roderic Bowen Library and Archives.

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

Tutorials and **seminars** are used to support the discussion and critical evaluation of what has been learned, normally in a smaller group size than a lecture.

Guided independent study allows students to further their independent learning skills with appropriate support provided by the module tutor(s) (e.g. preparation for lectures and seminars, follow-up work, background reading, revision, completion of assessment tasks).

The allocation of teaching to deliver the module is:

Activity type	Hours	Percentage
Scheduled learning	20	10%
Independent learning	180	90%
Placement learning		
TOTAL	200	100%

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Component 1 – 30%

1500 word assignment

Exemplar: The topic of the assignment is chosen by the student in consultation with the module tutor but must be related to the content of the module and have a bibliographical or book-historical dimension which involves consultation of early printed books in the holding of the Roderic Bowen Library and Archives and/or digitised and made available through Early English Books Online or other internet resources. E.G. 'Examine the bibliographical and historical significance for the copy of Thomas Newton's 1749 edition of John Milton's *Paradise Lost: A Poem in Twelve Books*, held by the 'Roderic Bowen Library and Archives.'

Assessment Component 2 – 70%

4000 word assignment

Exemplar: The topic of the second assignment is chosen by the student in consultation with the module tutor but must be related to the content of the module. E.G. 'Critically analyse Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* in relation to Renaissance theory of poetry. You should pay particular attention to the importance of Cicero's "affective triad", the status of epic in renaissance Italian hierarchies of genre, and Sidney's description of the poet's role as "that fayning notable images of vertues, vices, or what else, with that delightfull teaching."

Assessment Summary

Activity type	Percentage
Written exam	
Coursework	100%
Practical	
TOTAL	100%

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

Does the module contribute to ESD?	Yes
<p>If yes please provide brief details (no more than 100 words):</p> <p>This module is designed in line with 2 of the 5 pedagogic approaches to sustainable development identified by UNESCO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critical and Creative thinking Critical and creative thinking enables people to explore new ways of thinking and acting, make informed decisions, and create alternatives to present choices. It involves reflecting on how people interrelate with one other, understanding cultural differences and creating alternative ways to live together.• Systemic thinking Thinking systemically is essential to sustainable development, as piecemeal approaches have proved not to work - instead resolving one issue while creating other problems. Sustainable development requires approaches which go beyond analysis in terms of 'problem-solving' and/or 'cause-effect'.	