

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3326F (001)
Death in the Renaissance
Fall 2025

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Office Hours (in-person)

Mondays 1:00-2:00
Wednesdays 9:00-11:00

Prerequisites: English 1020E, or both English 1027F/G and English 1028F/G, or English 1022E or English 1024E or English 1035E or English 1036E or English 1901E. At least a 70% overall average in English courses. Or by permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Calendar Description

This course considers literary and cultural responses to death from the period 1590 to 1670. It explores the philosophical and theological understandings of death in the period, funeral and mourning customs, and then the literary treatment of death in such writers as Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, and Sir Thomas Browne.

This is an in-person course.

Important Note: while this is an in-person course, students *must* be able to access Owl online for some readings and some assignments.

Important Note B: The general classroom experience in this course will be computer-free. Except for a few classes where the assigned primary texts are online, students will be required to work from physical copies of the texts and make hand-written notes. Full lecture notes will be posted by the professor on Owl.

Course Description

Drawing on poetry, drama and prose, this course will consider a range of literary responses to death during the period 1590 to 1670. It will begin with discussion of the period's funeral and mourning customs, and then turn to such works as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Donne's devotional poetry and prose, a range of funeral elegies (including Milton's "Lycidas") and Sir Thomas Browne's meditation on ancient Roman burial urns, *Urn Burial*. As student interests lead, we may also relate these literary works to depictions of death in the visual arts and to funeral music from the period.

Course Objectives (a selection):

The successful student will be able to:

1. Describe in detail the prevailing attitudes towards death and the funerary and mourning customs of the period.
2. Articulate the significance of the period's literary response to death.
3. Reflect upon the challenges posed by seventeenth-century culture to our own assumptions about death and mourning.
4. Probe through close reading the various elegies and other short poems on the syllabus.
5. Use effectively a variety of reference and research tools relative to the topics of the course.
6. Use and respond to some of the more significant scholarly material on the cultural history and literary works studied.
7. Develop well-organized, effective, and rich arguments on literary topics of the period.

Course Materials/Texts

Engel, William E. et al., eds. *The Death Arts in Renaissance England*. Cambridge University Press, 2025. ISBN 9781108749565 (\$37.95)

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet* (any well-annotated physical edition is acceptable).

Webster, John. *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Michael Neill. Norton, 2015. ISBN 978-0-393-52294-5 (\$18.67)

A collection of primary materials that will be posted on OwlBrightspace. (indicated by "P.M." in outline below). Students *must* print out a physical copy of this and bring it to all classes where it is in use.

For a few works on the syllabus an internet edition will be used. (These are marked "online"; only in these classes will students be able to use laptops, etc.)

Important Note: The final exam of the course will be an open-book exam, meaning that you will be allowed to bring in your physical copies of Engels, Hamlet, The Duchess of Malfi, and your printed copy of "Primary Materials". Hence it is imperative that you purchase these (and print out "Primary Materials") early in the course. You are allowed to make hand-written marginal notes in the texts.

OWL Brightspace

Students are responsible for checking the course site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. Students may access the OWL Brightspace Learner Support site for assistance: <https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

Methods of Evaluation and Schedule of Assignments

The overall course grade will be calculated as listed below:

Short Quizzes*	15%
Assignment (on an individual elegy) due Wed. Oct. 1	10%
Midterm Test (in-class Wed. Oct. 22)	15%
Final Exam	35%
Research Paper (2500-3000 words) due Wed. Nov. 26	<u>25%</u>
	100%

Formal Documentation Designation statement

Please note that the **mid-term test** is central to the learning objectives for this course. Accordingly, students seeking academic consideration for this assessment will be required to provide formal supporting documentation. Students who are granted academic consideration for this assessment will be provided with the following opportunity to make up this work: make-up test or reweighting.

Note that supporting documentation is always required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled during the last week of the term. When a student receives academic considerations or academic accommodations which overlap with the built-in flexibility of the assessment, the longest period of accommodation will determine the deadline. The built-in flexibility of the assessment should not be taken to extend any considerations or accommodations.

Evaluation Scheme for Missed Assessments

Quizzes: There are five quizzes in the courses; a student may miss **one** of these without penalty or explanation. No make-up quizzes etc. will be possible.

Midterm Test: See above.

Final Exam. When a student misses the Final Exam and their Academic Consideration has been granted, they will be allowed to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam). See the Academic Calendar (Special Examinations), especially for those who miss multiple final exams within one examination period.

Policy on Late Assignments and Essays

Late essays that have not been approved for academic consideration will be penalized at a rate of three percent per day. Late essays will not be accepted after the end of term.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

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<https://brightspacehelp.uwo.ca/> For IT related issues, they may contact Western Technology Services Helpdesk directly: <https://wts.uwo.ca/helpdesk/>.

Electronic Devices

No aids are permitted for the tests and exam of this course. Electronic devices of any kind (including calculators, cell phones and smart watches) are not permitted.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not

attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Mental Health Support

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western University is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be "given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than one week prior to the writing of the test".

Learning Development and Success

Counsellors at the Learning Development and Success Centre <https://learning.uwo.ca> are ready to help you improve your learning skills. They offer presentations on strategies for improving time management, multiple-choice exam preparation/writing, textbook reading, and more. Individual support is offered throughout the Fall/Winter terms in the drop-in Learning Help Centre, and year-round through individual counselling.

USC

Additional student-run support services are offered by the USC, <https://westernusc.ca/services/>.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the unacknowledged use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Google Translate, to create content that is submitted as one's own. In this course, the use of AI (automatic translation tools, grammar checkers, ChatGPT...) is prohibited. If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. Students are expected to retain these materials until after final grades have been entered. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, students may be asked to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against them.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any kind is a serious academic offence. Be advised that electronic plagiarism-detection programmes will be used and essay banks checked, if the professor has any suspicion of plagiarism. Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing both in the body and at the end of the assignment. Any borrowings from secondary sources, whether wordings or ideas, must be acknowledged BOTH in the main body of your essay AND at the end in a bibliography or works cited! If you have any doubts about how to document your work correctly, check with your professor prior to handing in your essay.

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, here: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week of Sept. 7

Historical Overview Reading: Black, Jeremy. *A Short History of Britain [Electronic Resource]*. Second edition., Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2015. (p. 57 ("Reformations") to p. 80 (end of "Restoration" section) [**Quiz on Wed. Sept. 17**]

Physical dimensions of illness and death.

Conclusion of Raleigh's *History of the World* (P.M.); Selection from Dekker, *The Wonderfull Yeare* (Engel, pp. 168-73) Abraham Holland, Selection from *Naumachia*, (Engel, pp. 240-45.)

Week of Sept. 14

Philosophy and Theology of Death; Literary Treatment of Death

Reading: Engel, *Death Arts*, pp. 1-43. **Quiz on Wed. Sept. 24**

Selection from "The Burial of the Dead", *Book of Common Prayer*, (Engel, pp. 136-41)

Selections from Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* (Engel, pp. 112-6)

Bacon, "Of Death" (Engel, pp. 245-249)

Anonymous, "Upon a Deaths head" (P.M.)

Week of Sept. 21

Funerals, graves and commemoration

Reading: Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph*, ch. 1, pp. 15-49. (available https://ocul-uwo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01OCUL_UWO/r0c2m8/alma991044897263605163)

[quiz on Wed. Oct. 1]

A gathering of epitaphs (P.M.) and A gathering of mock or satiric epitaphs (P.M.)

Katherine Philips, selected poems (Engel, pp. 196-201)

Week of Sept. 28

Funeral Elegies

Henry King, "The Exequy" (P.M.)

Ben Jonson, "To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of That Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir Henry Morison" (P.M.)

Thomas Carew, "An Elegy upon the Death of the Dean of Paul's, Dr. John Donne" (P.M.)

Anne Southwell, "An Elegie written by the Lady A: S: to the Countesse of London Derrye" (P.M.)

Please read the commentary on Southwell's Elegy, posted in this week's Lecture Notes.

Week of Oct. 5

Norbrook, David. "Lucy Hutchinson's "Elegies" and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with Text)." *English Literary Renaissance* 27 (3) (1997): 468-521.

<http://www.jstor.org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/stable/pdf/43447764.pdf>

The elegies themselves are included in the latter part of the essay; we will be particularly focusing on Elegies 1 and 2 (pp. 487-89)]

Wed. Oct. 8, Quiz on Norbrook/Hutchinson reading

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Week of Oct. 15

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Sir Thomas Overbury, or the Poysoned Knights Complaint [P.M.]

Shirley, "The Glories of our blood and state" [P.M.]

Week of Oct. 22

Donne and Death

John Donne "Death be not Proud" (Holy Sonnet 10), "Death I recant" ("Elegie on Mrs. Boulstred") (both in "P.M".)

John Donne or Lucy, Countess of Bedford: "Death be not proud, thy hand gave not this blow" ("P.M.")

Midterm Test (in-class Wed. Oct. 22)

Week of Oct. 29

Donne and Death

John Donne, "Epitaph on Himself", "A Nocturnal upon St. Lucy's Day", "Since she whom I loved" (all in "P.M.")

"The Relic" (P.M.)

Donne, "Hymn to God, my God, in my sicknesse" (P.M.)

Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* [P.M.]

Week of Nov. 2 – Reading Week

Week of Nov. 9 Death and the Pastoral World

Spenser, *Shepherd's Calendar*, "November" ([online](#)), Mary Sidney, "Doleful Lay of Clorinda" (Engel, pp. 163-8), Milton, "Lycidas" ([online](#))

Marvell, "The Nymph Complaining for the Death of her Fawn" (Engel, pp. 362-7)

Death in Emblem Books

Selections from George Wither, *A Collection of Emblemes* (1635) (Engel, pp. 98-103)

Week of Nov. 16

Horatian Immortality: Selected Shakespeare sonnets (P.M.)

Herbert and Vaughan

Herbert, "Church-Monuments", "Mortification", "Death", "Doomsday" (all in P.M.)

Secondary Reading: Russell M. Hillier's "Herbert's pepper corn: Responsibility and reciprocity in *The Temple*", *Christianity and Literature* 66 (1): 130-135 [available online through UWO library]

Vaughan, "Silence and Stealth of Days", "I Walk'd the Other Day", "The Day of Judgement" (beg. . "O day of life, of light, of love!"), (all in P.M.)

Week of Nov. 23

Webster, *Duchess of Malfi*

Wed. Nov. 26: Quiz on *The Duchess of Malfi*

Week of Nov. 30

Duchess of Malfi

The Last Will and Testament of Philip Herbert (Engel, *Death Arts*, pp. 357-61)

Mon. Dec. 8

Milton, Passages from *Paradise Lost*: 2: 629-849; 10: 235-305; 11:461-499; 12: 386-435 ([online](#))

Conclusion (Chapter 5) of Browne, *Hydriotaphia or Urne-Buriall* ([online](#))