

CHRISTIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

PR 4545

Gracia Grindal
Gullixson 102

ggrindal@luthersem.edu
Monday 6:30

The greatest poetry in both England and America, until recently, was specifically Christian. Such literature was fundamental to the preacher's library as a source for sermon illustrations and pastoral care because of the pleasure of great language in the face of sorrow, suffering, and joy. This course will read and analyze some of the greatest English and American poetry from Chaucer to Anne Sexton.

REQUIREMENTS

The course will consist of reading and discussing the assigned poems in class. The students will each write a paragraph on one of the poems we are reading for each week. Bring it to class to be used as a basis for our discussion of the work.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. REGULAR ATTENDANCE IN CLASS
2. PARAGRAPH FOR EVERY CLASS
3. TEN PAGE FINAL PAPER—Write on one poem you find to be most interesting to you. While you should do a literary analysis of it—its form, major metaphors, style, the occasion for it, its author, its audience—you should conclude the paper with a brief meditation as to how you think knowing this poem can help you with some pastoral issues, your own character as a preacher, writing a sermon, pastoral visits, difficulties in the parish, your own struggle to find nourishment, etc. In other words, where might you use it in your life in the church? This is wider than pastoral care, it's about the Christian life, finding devotional materials that feed and nourish you, and having a quiver full of good and deep words you can use when you need them in a variety of situations.

WEEK 1

Getting started

(This is only the briefest selection of poems, but it will give you some of the major poems. I have chosen mostly those with clear religious significance, but all of it can instruct you in how to see the world and speak of it.)

How to read poetry—meter, rhyme, etc. and their conventions

THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

Medieval carols, etc.

Geoffrey Chaucer—We will start by reading *The Nun's Priest Tale* aloud in class, and conclude with the *Pardoner's Tale*.

WEEK 2

RENAISSANCE

Edmund Spenser—*Faerie Queene* (Don't read it, unless you get hooked, but you should glance at it to see the great story of the Christian knight—kind of the 16th century's version of Star Wars or other fantasy literature, and the poetry is incomparable, but very difficult) but do read *Sonnet 68*, and the *Prothalamion*, one of two great Christian wedding poems by Spenser from all time.

Shakespeare—Read around in the sonnets, especially 18, 30, 55, 116, 129, 146

Ben Jonson—*To Penshurst, A Hymn to God the Father*

John Donne—*Good Friday, 1613, Riding Westward, Holy Sonnets, Hymn to God My God*

George Herbert—the most elegant religious poet in English, all the poems in your book, most surely, *Redemption, Easter Wings, Prayer, Jordan, The Windows, Virtue, The Collar, The Pulley, The Elixer, Love (III)*

WEEK III

PURITANS/ ENLIGHTENMENT/

John Milton *Lycidas, Sonnets—How Soon Hath Time, When I Consider How My Light is Spent, Methought I Saw, Paradise Lost, Book IX,*

Andrew Marvel—*The Garden*

Henry Vaughan—*The World, They Are All Gone into the World of Light*

John Dryden—*Elegy on Sir Thomas Oldham*

Alexander Pope—*Essay on Man*

Samuel Johnson—*Vanity of Human Wishes*

WEEK IV

ROMANTICS/VICTORIANS

William Blake—*Songs of Innocence, and of Experience*

Samuel Taylor Coleridge—*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan*

Alfred Lord Tennyson—*Ulysses, In Memoriam*

Robert Browning—*My Last Duchess, Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister, The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church*

WEEK V

MODERN

Gerard Manley Hopkins—*God's Grandeur, The Windhover, Pied Beauty, Spring and Fall, No Worst, There is None, Pitched Past Pitch of Grief, I Wake and Feel the Fell of Dark, Not Day, Thou Are Indeed Just, Lord*

William Butler Yeats—*The Second Coming, Sailing to Byzantium*

Wallace Stevens—*Sunday Morning*

T. S. Eliot—*Journey of the Magi, The Dry Salvages* (If you haven't read "The Wasteland," you might glance at it—it's fundamental to the modern era)

W. H. Auden—*Musee des Beaux Arts,*

WEEK VI

IMPORTANT AMERICAN POETRY TO CONSIDER—FROM THE BEGINNING TO NOW!

Edward Taylor--*Houswifery*, **Anne Bradstreet**--, **Paul Laurence Dunbar**—*When Malindy Sings*, **Robert Frost**—*Design*, **Robert Hayden**—*Mourning Poem for the Queen of Sunday*, **Frederick Douglass**, **Allen Ginsburg**—*Howl* (just glance at this as it is the prime poem of the beat generation and may explain a lot if you haven't read it)

Robert Lowell—*The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket*, **Richard Wilbur**—*Praise in Summer* **Philip Larkin**—*Church Going*, **Anne Sexton**—**Vassar Miller**, **Stevie Smith**—these last ones I'll have to hand out for you