

**THE HUMAN TRAGEDY AND THE DIVINE COMEDY:
THEOLOGY AND RELIGION IN ENGLISH DRAMA UP TO 1642**

Jeffrey R. Wilson
Course:
Time:
Location:

E-Mail:
Office:
Office Hours:
Course Website:

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Literary representations of God are always troublesome at best, but most dangerous of all is when one must costume, direct, and write for God – as one must in dramatic representations of divinity. *The Human Tragedy and the Divine Comedy* examines early-modern drama organized around questions of theology and religion. We shall conduct this investigation by sampling representative works from the beginning of English drama to parliament's closure of the playhouses in 1642, looking at four distinct periods: Middle English drama, early-Tudor drama, Elizabethan drama, and Stuart drama. After looking at the representations of divinity and its discontents in the Middle English mystery plays, our course will cascade down into the attempts of early-Tudor drama to reform humanity according to a divine program. Plays of the Elizabethan age will question the very possibility of communication between the human and the divine, leading to an ambivalent attitude toward this relationship in the Stuart drama.

REQUIRED TEXT

Wilson, Jeffrey R., ed. *The Human Tragedy and the Divine Comedy: Theology and Religion in English Drama up to 1642*. Irvine, CA: Anteater Publishing, 2008.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

My evaluation of your performance in this course will be based on eight papers of increasing sophistication.

Due	Weight	Assignment
April 11	5%	250-word (one page) explication of a play from the York Cycle
April 18	5%	250-word (one page) explication of an issue in <i>Everyman</i> or <i>Mankind</i>
April 28	10%	500-word (two pages) explication of <i>The Pardoner and the Frere</i> or <i>Like Will to Like</i>
May 5	10%	Four-entry annotated bibliography on <i>Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay</i>
May 12	10%	500-word (two pages) explication of an issue in <i>Doctor Faustus</i>
May 21	15%	750-word (three pages) essay on <i>Measure for Measure</i>
June 4	15%	750-word (three pages) essay on <i>The Alchemist</i> or <i>The Witch of Edmonton</i>
June 10	30%	2,000-word (eight pages) research article on a text or theme from the course

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

I assume you will come to class, on time, and participate in our discussions, so you will not be graded on these points. Egregiously poor attendance (i.e. missing more than two classes) or egregiously poor participation (i.e. no questions or comments all quarter) will lower your final grade significantly. The upshot of my attendance and participation policy is that remarkably impressive students can expect me to raise their final grades. This policy is not arbitrary, but it is subjective, so you should do your best to get me to like you. The way to get me to like you is to come to class, always, and always prepared to contribute; make perceptive comments and ask intelligent questions in class discussion; come to office hours, and e-mail me, to discuss ideas; and be a generally decent human being.

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PLAGIARISM

Many of our texts are obscure, and we shall approach them from a unique perspective, so it will be impossible for you to convincingly submit work that wasn't written for this class. That said, if you plagiarize work that you submit to me, I will do my best to make your life miserable, to the choral tune of an F for the course, a note on your official transcript, and a letter in your permanent file.

COURSE SCHEDULE

March 31 Introduction

MIDDLE ENGLISH DRAMA

April 2 Mystery Plays
April 4 The York Cycle: *Barkers, Playsterers, Cardmakers, Fullers, Cowpres, Armourers*
April 7 The York Cycle: *Bocheres, Sadillers, Carpenteres, Merceres*
April 9 Interlude: Literary Explication

EARLY TUDOR DRAMA

April 11 Morality Plays
April 14 *Everyman* (ca. 1495, p. 1508)
April 16 *Mankind* (ca.1470)
April 18 Early Sixteenth-Century Drama
April 21 John Heywood, *The Pardoner and the Frere* (1533)
April 23 Ulpian Fulwell, *Like Will to Like* (1568)
April 25 Interlude: Research and Writing

ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

April 28 Elizabethan Comedy
April 30 Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589)
May 2 Robert Greene, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (c. 1589)
May 5 Elizabethan Tragedy
May 7 Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (c.1589)
May 9 Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (c.1589)
May 12 Shakespeare
May 14 William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1604)
May 16 William Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure* (1604)
May 19 Interlude: Essaying

STUART DRAMA

May 21 Jacobean Theatre
May 23 Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (1610, p. 1612)
May 28 Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist* (1610, p. 1612)
May 30 Rowley, Dekker, and Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621)
May 2 Rowley, Dekker, and Ford, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621)
June 4 Caroline Theatre
June 6 Thomas Carew, *Coelum Britannicum* (1634)

June 10 Final (1:30-3:30)