

Instructor: Holger Schott Syme

Course number: ENG463

Course title: Christopher Marlowe: The Works

Course Description:

Christopher Marlowe (1564-93) remains one of the most fascinating figures of English literary history. Accused of all sorts of crimes, misdemeanours, and heresies during his lifetime and from the moment of his death, this coiner, spy, and rumoured atheist wrote some of the most genre-transforming plays and some of the most influential poems of the Elizabethan age. His dramatic works redefined formal and thematic conventions, and his poems – playful, transgressive, and deeply learned – were copied and imitated for decades. Queer and scholarly, corrosively satirical and devastatingly bleak, avant-garde and populist, Marlowe continues to tower over most of his contemporaries in critical accounts of the period.

This course offers a rare opportunity to read almost all of Marlowe's surviving works, from his translations of the Latin poems of Lucan and Ovid to his dramatic masterpieces (from the celebration of outrageous ambition in *Tamburlaine the Great* to the exploration of the end of intellectual over-reaching in despair in *Doctor Faustus*, and from the misanthropic universe of *The Jew of Malta*, which manages to hold negative portrayals of Jews, Muslims, and Christians in a fine balance, to the analysis of the lethal end of an unspeakable love in a cold political climate in *Edward II*). His oeuvre has generated a wealth of interesting and challenging critical responses, and we will read those alongside his texts; if there is time, we will also read selections from the many biographies of Marlowe, and study the genesis of his reputation as a multiply subversive figure of scandal.

Required Reading:

All of Marlowe's plays and a comprehensive selection of his poetry

First Three Texts/Authors to be Studied:

Tamburlaine, Parts 1 & 2; *Hero and Leander*

Method of Instruction:

Discussion-based seminars

Method of Evaluation:

Presentations, weekly written comments, active and informed class participation, final research paper