

ENGL 4200: Early Modern Special Topic
Poetics & Historiography
M & W 10:00 – 11:50
CRN 4607, Fall Quarter, 2014
Margery Reed Hall 019

W. Scott Howard
SH 387-E
303-871-2887
showard@du.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Commonplace Book Prompts:

- Find one or more anthologies for Renaissance / early modern literature and reflect on the designs for these collections, re: scope & focus, texts & contexts, topics & methods, authors & works, etc. How and why have these boundaries and emphases been established? What has been excluded?
- Read the Invocations to *Paradise Lost*, Books 1, 3, 7, and 9. Which personae are speaking in these Invocations? Why so many different names for the Muse? Do these Invocations articulate a poetics (and perhaps a politics) for the whole poem? If so, elaborate. Or, if not, why not?
- Find significant moments in *Paradise Lost* of Humanist syncretism. And, in those moments, do you also see evidence of contradictions and transgressions (i.e. disjunctive poetics) at work?
- In CTSP, read Keats's letters, especially the one dated December 21, 1817. Reflect upon the dynamic rhetorical context that shapes *negative capability*. How many possibilities are there here—given the layers of mediation, the different genres and modes of art, the other poets and contemporaries invoked, and the syntax—for elaborations upon this theoretical trope?
- In the spirit of Ronald Johnson, create an erasure poem from one or more passages from *Paradise Lost*. Or, create a collage text, working with photocopied passages. Or, create an altered book.
- In the electronic *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://library.du.edu/>, search for *individual* and note the many changing connotations from 1425 onward through the Renaissance and early modern eras. Also note the source texts. Any surprises there? How does this genealogy inform your reading of Milton's and Cavendish's works?
- In the electronic *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://library.du.edu/>, search for *cabbala* (also spelled *cabala* and *kabbalah*) and note the many connotations and source texts that would have been contemporary for Milton's and Cavendish's times. And then, in *Early English Books Online*, <http://library.du.edu/>, do a basic keyword search for *cabala* [note the spelling this time] and sort the records by the earliest first. Reflect upon how these meanings, texts, and contexts inform your readings of *Paradise Lost* and *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*.
- How do you see *Blazing World* (or any of the other works by Cavendish) engaging—that is, celebrating and critiquing—the history of poetics we have been studying?
- In the electronic *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://library.du.edu/>, search for *fancy* and note the many changing definitions from the earliest through the Renaissance and early modern eras. Also note the source texts. How does this genealogy inform your reading of *Paradise Lost*, V. 469-505 and of *Blazing World*, 151-53 and 211-16?
- Reflect upon Cavendish's hybrid forms (of writing and of self-fashioning) in the works collected in Part I and Part II of *Paper Bodies*, paying close attention to passages that articulate or underscore such hybridity. Do these passages articulate a poetics (and perhaps a politics) for Cavendish's works? If so, elaborate. Or, if not, why not?
- Trace the many nuances in the poetics of the sublime among the CTSP texts from Longinus, Boccaccio, Boileau, Dennis, Burke, Kant, and Hegel.