

ENGL 2820: Philosophy and Literature

Winter Quarter, 2022

Wednesdays, 4:00 – 7:40pm

CRN: 5639 // SH 492

Canvas: <https://canvas.du.edu/courses/141400>Zoom: <https://udenver.zoom.us/j/81719644447>**W. Scott Howard**showard@du.edu

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<https://portfolio.du.edu/showard>**Course Description:**

This course investigates the legacy of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (*The Nature of Things*) that sparked radical changes in poetry and science, philosophy and prose, politics and religion during the early modern era (from Europe to England to the Americas). The scope of our studies engages classical times through the early modern and into the modern & postmodern eras. We will pay special attention to colonialism, postcolonialism, and racial justice; sects, science, and the sublime; the politics of gender and sexuality; travel, translation, and trade; and various manifestos concerning poetics and praxis—from eidetic making to vitalist/materialist contingency to political resistance. We will also recover an almost forgotten conversation about *simulacra* at the crux of our concerns with the freedom of expression and social justice, prophecy and protest, reform and revolution. Research projects may include a variety of critical, theoretical, and creative approaches. Within this context, we will study the philosophy of time (following Lucretius), giving particular attention to works by Margaret Cavendish, John Milton, William Blake, and recent works from Lisa Robertson (*3 Summers*, 2016), Vincent James, Rowland Saifi, and McCormick Templeman (*Swerve*, 2021). We will also visit (via Zoom) the JILA / NIST Development & Analysis Laboratory at CU Boulder to learn more about their strontium lattice atomic clock.

Required Texts:

Blake, William. *MILTON: a poem*. Ed. Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. ISBN: 9780691001487

Cavendish, Margaret. *Paper Bodies: A Margaret Cavendish Reader*. Ed. Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2000. ISBN: 9781551111735

Dutton, Danielle. *Margaret the First*. New York: Catapult, 2016. ISBN: 9781936787357

Ebner, Shannon, Nathaniel Mackey, Susan Howe. *STRAY*. Portland, OR: Fonograf, 2019, <https://fonografeditions.com/albums/vinyl/>

Greenblatt, Stephen. *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern*. New York: Norton, 2011. ISBN: 9780393343403

James, Vincent, Rowland Saifi, McCormick Templeman. *SWERVE*. Vermillion, SD: Astrophil Press, 2021. ISBN: 9780998019949

Kincaid, Jamaica. *Lucy*. New York: FSG, 1990. ISBN: 0374527350

Lucretius. *The Nature of Things*. Trans. A. E. Stallings. New York: Penguin, 2007. ISBN: 9780140447965

Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Ed. John Leonard. New York: Penguin, 2000. ISBN: 9780140424393

Robertson, Lisa. *3 Summers*. Toronto: Coach House, 2016. ISBN: 9781552453308

Rovelli, Carlo. *The Order of Time*. Trans. Simon Carnell and Erica Segre. New York: Riverhead Books, 2018. ISBN: 9780735216112

Fair-use excerpts from texts and electronic resources (to be freely provided): TBA

Course Policies: Our activities and assignments must be completed as noted for each class meeting; guidelines will be distributed in advance via Canvas. Your regular and punctual attendance and spirited engagement are required.

During each class meeting, you are expected to participate in our work, to listen to your peers, and to respond respectfully. To facilitate our discussions, I will call on you, ask you to engage with the ideas of others, and will challenge all of our assertions in order to energize critical thinking at the center of our work. As part of our conversations, we may discuss details and events in our literary and critical materials that confront matters concerning race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, politics, religion, prejudice, and violence. It is imperative that you read all of our assigned materials and come to class with an open mind, knowing that while we are all welcome to our feelings, the point of exploring these felt responses in a classroom setting is to learn to think critically about them within and against the context(s) of the materials we are studying as well as with respect to our contemporary moment(s) in the 21st century. Several excellent articles in *The Atlantic* and *Psychology Today* discuss the importance of confronting difficult topics in the classroom.

F2F, Canvas, E-mail, Zoom: Our class meetings during the first two weeks of winter quarter will take place via Zoom. Your synchronous attendance during those Zoom meetings is required. (Should further Zoom class meetings be necessary during winter quarter, this policy may be updated.) Beginning January 18, our meetings will be held as in-person F2F classes. All students must follow DU's public health protocols, including regular Covid testing, masks, social distancing, individualized access to each building on campus, and responsible classroom conduct (seating charts, no food, etc.). Students who do not follow these public safety procedures will not be allowed to attend our class meetings. In addition to our Zoom and F2F meetings, we will be using Canvas and e-mail to facilitate our daily and weekly communications and workflow. It is your responsibility to follow our daily Announcements on Canvas that will provide detailed instructions for our work.

Note on attendance: For each unexcused absence, your grade in the class will be diminished by -0.5.

Note on assignments: Assignments are due at the dates and times specified by guidelines that will be distributed at least two weeks in advance. Assignments deviating from those noted guidelines will be considered late. Work submitted late will receive a deduction of -0.5 per day.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

Three Écrits (5-pages each + works cited)	30%
One Notebook* (includes participation)	30%
One Presentation	10%
One Research Project (8 – 10 pages, or the equivalent depending on media)	30%

*Notebook (hand-written) in which you engage consistently with our work, responding to in-class prompts as well as following your own path through the course. 150 words per response. Your Notebook writing in response to prompts will be reviewed periodically during the quarter (as noted in the calendar, below).

DU Honor Code: Students are expected to follow the rules of conduct outlined in DU's Honor Code and to submit original work for all assignments. Plagiarism will result in an automatic F in the course.

Note on grading: *The Check System.* I'll be grading your Écrits with a check system that will follow these guidelines. A check plus on all your Écrits will translate to a grade of 4.0/A for that percentage of your overall grade in the course. Each check will reduce your grade for that component of your overall grade by -0.5. Each check minus, by -1.0; each missing Écrit, by -2.0. If you ever receive less than a check plus, you'll have the option to revise & resubmit the work for a higher grade. Those revisions will be due by the beginning of the next class meeting. *The Point & Letter System.* I'll be grading your Notebook, Presentation, and Research Project with a point & letter system corresponding to this scale: A (4.0-3.9); A- (3.8-3.5); B+ (3.4-3.2); B (3.1-2.9); B- (2.8-2.5); C+ (2.4-2.2); C (2.1-1.9); C- (1.8-1.5); D+ (1.4-1.2); D (1.1-0.9); D- (0.8-0.5); F (0.4-0).

CALENDARS (subject to changes):

The syllabus provides a macro-calendar; micro-schedules (for our daily and weekly meetings) will be posted via Canvas and will be updated following each class meeting.

Week 1: *Beginnings*

1/5

Week 2: Lucretius & Greenblatt // Cosmology & Poetics

1/12

Week 3: Lucretius & Greenblatt // Milton & Cavendish

1/19

Week 4: Lucretius & Greenblatt // Milton & Cavendish

1/26 Notebook passages due // Écrit #1 due

Week 5: Rovelli & Milton & Cavendish // Kincaid & Dutton

2/2

Week 6: Rovelli & Milton & Cavendish // Kincaid & Dutton

2/9

Week 7: Rovelli & Milton & Cavendish & Blake // James, Saifi, Templeman

2/16 Notebook passages due // Écrit #2 due // Project proposals due

Week 8: Lucretius & Rovelli & Blake // James, Saifi, Templeman // Robertson

2/23

Week 9: Lucretius & Rovelli & Blake // Robertson, Ebner, Mackey, Howe

3/2

Week 10: Lucretius & Rovelli // Ebner, Mackey, Howe // Poetics & Cosmology

3/9 Notebook passages due // Écrit #3 due // presentations

Week 11: Exams (3/15 – 3/18)

3/18 Research Projects due