Catalog description: A study of the development of British drama from the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century, excluding Shakespeare.

The period to be covered in this course begins with medieval mystery and morality plays, covers the great Renaissance explosion of secular drama, takes the early development of the theater to the closing of the theaters during the Civil War in the 1640s, then picks up with the reopening of the theaters with the Restoration in 1660 and concludes with the drama of the late eighteenth century. Among the figures that this course will cover are such excellent playwrights as Marlowe, Ford, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Jonson, Dryden, Etheredge, Wycherley, Behn, Congreve, Lillo, Goldsmith and Sheridan as well as the anonymous drama of the middle ages and the Renaissance. We will focus on a general theme of women, although a few plays are not on this very general subject.

Film representations of some plays will allow students to understand more clearly how these plays work on the stage. If any live theater productions become available, we will try to arrange for student attendance.

Objectives: The course will be a chronological study of the various forms of drama from medieval plays (mostly linked to religious themes, liturgical observances, and biblical dramatizations) to the secularized theater that developed in the Renaissance and particularly after the Protestant Reformation. The students will read plays of these periods, study the innovations and conventions of each period, the theatrical arrangements (from plays given in churches as part of the liturgy, to the outdoor productions at inns, to the great theaters of Tudor England, the beginning of indoor productions in the Jacobean period and the rise of the modern theater in the Restoration). Acting styles and their influence upon texts will also be touched upon. The social context of the plays and their importance as a means of examining important problems will be considered.

Texts: Medieval plays will be provided. Internet sources.


These three books have been ordered through the UPR bookstore. They are listed in the order they will be used. A few other plays will be made available in photocopy or through an Internet text.

Students will read between ten and twelve plays as well as some critical material. Each student will do research for an oral report and write three essays. The course will end with a final exam.

Supplemental sources will be available through the UPR Blackboard site. Blackboard is on: http://virtual.rnp.upr.edu. Search for the course number English4035 and my name or by the course title, British Drama from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century. You must open an account on Blackboard if you have never used it in another class. Register in my course. Extensive bibliographies as well as very good links are available to you. I will try to keep a number of Reserve books, articles and plays in the Richardson Seminar Room, but users of the online site will have other sources (which I cannot duplicate) for their use as well. Discussion boards will enable you to comment on the plays, films, etc, and will give you extra points for the class participation component.

Course requirements:

1. Students will be expected to attend classes regularly. Class attendance and participation count as an exam grade. Each day a list will be circulated for you to sign. Make certain that you do, even if you are late. NO BEEPERS OR CELL PHONES OR OTHER NOISE’MAKING ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASS. Please switch them off when you come into the classroom.

2. One final exam will be given, which will be administered on the day of the final. It will be primarily made up of essay questions.

3. Students will write three short papers (3-5 pages long) on a choice of topics to be assigned. These papers will not be primarily research papers, but essays in which students develop their own ideas and interpretations. You are, however, expected to annotate properly any sources you do use. Plagiarism means an automatic F grade. Annotation style should be MLA (Modern Language Association). The MLA Handbook can be found in the Richardson Seminar Room, or you can buy a copy of your own. If
you are an English major, the latter is strongly recommended.

4. Students will give an oral report (15 - 20 minutes or so) on a topic from a list which I will circulate soon. Other short assignments may be given as well.

5. Students will be expected to keep up with the readings, look up words and terms they don't understand, use dictionaries, and generally appear to be alert, intelligent human beings. Should I find that I am alone in having read a text, a reading quiz will be given as a corrective for your negligence. You don't like answering reading quizzes, I hate making them up and correcting them. Let’s avoid the whole thing by keeping up with the readings.

6. Students should bring to class some sheets of “theme” or binder paper (8 ½ by 11”).

7. I will show several videos and expect everyone to attend those sessions like a regular class. If you miss a video, you must make it up by watching it at home.

CLASS SCHEDULE (more detail will be provided on class calendar)

First week: Introduction to drama, ancient history of drama, transition into Christianity and beginnings of medieval drama. English drama as an independent phenomenon.

Second-third week: Mystery (scriptural and saints' lives) and morality plays.

Fourth-sixth week: Transition to secular theater; professionalization of the acting and acting companies; Tudor drama (including the Elizabethan age) and the Elizabethan theater.

Seventh-tenth week: Jacobean drama. The court masque; the indoor stage.

Eleventh-fourteenth week: Restoration and eighteenth-century drama. The development of the modern theatrical setting; the introduction of women on the stage; heroic drama; comedy of wit and manners; sentimental comedy; middle-class influence on drama.
Fifteenth week: Summary and review.

Final exam: On the day assigned by the Registrar in the official calendar. All assignments and papers must be in by that date or earlier.

GRADES: Relative weight of grades will be: 3 essays, 20% each; class participation and oral report, 20%; final exam, 20%.

Office Hours

My name is Dr. Frances M. Bothwell del Toro, known as Prof. Bothwell. My office is in Pedreira 2A. My office hours this semester will be on Tuesday from 1:00 PM to 2:20 PM and and Thursdays from 4:00-5:20. On Saturdays I will be in from 12:30 to 3:00 PM. If you need to see me and cannot come during my regular hours, please make an appointment. My assistant will be available for help with papers, research and other individual tasks.

My email is fmbothwell@gmail.com Try to reach me through Blackboard, if possible. Also: tanchi@coqui.net