Carleton University
ENGL 5303W/4301B/HUMS 4902: Studies in Early Modern Literature

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I do not read or respond to email between Friday 4:30 PM and Monday 9:00 AM.
Office Hours:

Tudor Queens: Sex, Power, and Writing in the Lives of Katherine Parr, Mary Tudor, Elizabeth I, and Mary Queen of Scots

Renaissance queens have long fascinated the reading public, but their political power and literary writings have only recently become the objects of academic study. In this seminar, students will develop an in-depth understanding of four Renaissance queens who made the most of their unusual social status and made lasting contributions to English culture. In this course, we will explore early modern attitudes towards the concepts of a "queen consort," a "queen regent," a "queen regnant" and a "dowager queen," and we will focus on the four queens' textual and visual productions including speeches, published prose works, diplomatic letters, poetry, translations, and portraits. Students will be introduced to early modern paleography and book history. Those who wish can also explore digital versions of manuscript writing. We will also consider the depictions of these queens in recent films and TV programs.

Katherine Parr (1512-1548) was the final wife of Henry VIII. Although she is often depicted in popular culture as the woman who nursed Henry in his old age, she was actually a literary powerhouse and one of the most influential religious activists of the 1540s. We will examine her three published literary texts, her narrow escape from being arrested and executed, and her scandalous marriage to Thomas Seymour after Henry's death.

Mary Tudor (1516-1558) was the eldest daughter of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon. After acceding to the throne in 1553 as queen regnant, she restored England to Catholicism and became famous for overseeing the burning of three hundred Protestants. For centuries she has been vilified as "bloody Mary" and as an incompetent ruler, but current scholars are offering new accounts of her political skills and successes.

Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was Parr's step-daughter and is one of the most famous British monarchs. As a queen regnant, Elizabeth obviously wielded extraordinary agency and yet her status as an unmarried woman was an on-going concern throughout her reign. Through an examination of her public speeches, private letters, portraits, poems and prayers we will consider how she brilliantly managed her public image and how she contributed to important political and literary developments. The representation of Elizabeth in recent movies (1998, 2007, 2018) will be addressed.

Mary Stuart (1542-1587) acceded to the Scottish throne when she was only six days old and lived a life plagued by assassinations, political rebellion, and political intrigue. During her sixteen years of house arrest in England, Mary used poems and tapestries to attempt to negotiate with her cousin, Elizabeth I. We will consider Mary's failed political strategizing and its afterlife in film (2018).

Requirements:

TBD

Required Texts, Movies, and TV:

Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence, ed. Janel Mueller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011. Available on reserve or through a book store of your choice.

Elizabeth I: Collected Works, eds. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Available on reserve or through a book store of your choice.

Reading Monarch's Writing: the Poetry of Henry VIII, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth I, and James VI/I, ed. Peter C. Herman. Tempe, Ariz.:Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002. On reserve.

Selections from *The Tudors* (Showtime, 2007-2010). Rent on iTunes for 2.99 each.

Elizabeth (directed by Shekhar Kapur, 1998). rent on iTunes for 5.00

Elizabeth: The Golden Years (directed by Shekhar Kapur, 2011). rent on iTunes for 5.00.

Mary Queen of Scots (directed by Josie Rourke, 2018). Rent on iTunes.