

Fall 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Dickson

Course: ENGL 415.500

Title: John Donne

Description: This seminar will explore one of the major writers of the early modern period and one of the greatest poets of any age, John Donne (1572-1631). We will begin by contextualizing his work within the Petrarchan tradition, which he transform 1) through his creative imitation/transformation of its tropes and attitudes and 2) through his adaptation of the elegies of Ovid; then we will work our way through his poetry and some of his prose. We will focus on his development as a poet—i.e., his apprenticeship in the Ovidian tradition and his emergence with a distinctive voice—the effect that manuscript “publication” has on his poetry, and the issues posed by his Catholic upbringing in Protestant England. We will also read from two biographies of Donne and essays from the critical tradition.

Proposed Readings: John Donne’s Poetry. Donald R. Dickson, ed. New York: Norton, 2007.