



SYLLABUS

ENGLISH 4592

The Worlds of Hester Pulter and Margaret Cavendish

Spring 2025

Online (w/ live Zoom discussions TuTh 1:30-2:50 p.m.)

Please note: this copy is a shortened version without course policies, meant to show the course's design and content. Fellow teachers are welcome to use or adapt aspects of it, with credit to me.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Instructor

Instructor: Prof. Elizabeth Kolkovich

Email address: kolkovich.1@osu.edu

Course description

This section of “Special Topics in Women and Literature” explores the innovative writing of two of the most groundbreaking authors in seventeenth-century England: Hester Pulter (1605-1678) and Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673). Even just a few decades ago, this statement would have seemed outrageous to most English professors and students, who believed that the only seventeenth-century writers worth studying were men. But by 2025, Pulter and Cavendish have rocketed into the literary canon. We will investigate why their poetry, novels, and plays were ignored and why they deserve attention now. We will learn about the culture in which they wrote and discuss how their gender—together with class, education, religious and political identities, sexuality, and race—shaped how they defined their roles and imagined their audiences.

As we read works from a “private” manuscript and “public” books, we will ask: what does it mean to have a public voice? Taking inspiration from Pulter and Cavendish, we will find our own voices and write for specific audiences. As a class, we will create content for online venues, including a Pulter glossary and individual pieces that speak to your passions. Although I cannot guarantee publication and do not require it, each student will have the chance to submit their work for publication.

English 4592 fulfills the diversity requirement (“Diversity in English Studies”) for the English major because it explores the experiences, literature, culture, and history of women writers who have been underrepresented in literary study. Alternatively, with help from an advisor, you can petition to count this section as a pre-1800 or pre-1900 course.

Learning goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Identify features of the careers and styles of Hester Pulter and Margaret Cavendish.
- Understand and analyze representative texts and genres in early modern England.
- Explain aspects of seventeenth-century English culture, especially the historical and cultural factors that defined gender and other identity categories in this period.
- Use digital tools to explore multiple, historical meanings of words.
- Produce written deliverables as part of a team, including writing with a specific audience in mind, editing others' writing, and responding to written feedback.

Prerequisites

- English 1110 (first-year writing) or equivalent
- Two English courses at the 2000 or 3000 level

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

Mode of delivery: This course is 100% online. At [Carmen](#), it is delivered into weekly modules with two deadlines each week: Tuesday and Thursday. Because I develop the course as we go based on your interests and needs, I release modules only about a week in advance. Our activities will consist of: (1) independent reading; (2) live Zoom discussions on most Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:30-2:50 p.m. that will frequently involve breakout rooms; (3) asynchronous written discussions at our course Carmen page on select class days; and (4) research and writing assignments you will complete individually.

Credit hours and work expectations: This is a 3-credit-hour course. In a typical week, according to [Ohio State policy](#), students should expect around 3 hours of direct instruction (e.g. Zoom discussions) in addition to 6 hours of homework to receive a grade of (C) average.

Live Zoom sessions: Zoom fatigue is a real thing, and it can make us forget what an amazing technology Zoom is. Think about it: it is incredible that we can bring two OSU campuses together and attend class from anywhere in the world. In my experience, video meetings work best when the participants have clear, shared goals—something to do *together*. Therefore, our Zoom meetings are not lectures, but conversations and time for collaborative work. I will do my best to create clear agendas and provide questions and topics so you can prepare your thoughts. I will contribute what I know about the latest research and thinking in this field, as well as a willingness to listen, experiment, and adapt. From you, I expect active listening and participation, as well as a willingness to share questions and half-formed ideas in a spirit of experimentation. Let's work together to make sure our time together is useful and helps us achieve the course goals.

Because so much of our work will happen in these discussions, I expect you to attend all Zoom meetings unless you have an important and unavoidable conflict. Please note the following policies:

- Turn on your video as often as possible. Virtual or blurred backgrounds are welcome. If you cannot turn on your video, please upload a still photo to use as your avatar.
- Keep yourself muted when not speaking.
- Participate by raising your hand to speak aloud or by typing in the chat box.

- The class voted to record Zoom discussions. I will post recordings on Carmen after class. If you miss a live session or attend without engaging, you may earn 1 point by watching the recording and submitting a post that answers two questions within one week of the missed class.
 - What is one thing you learned from watching the recorded session?
 - Complete the breakout room activity (if applicable) and submit the results. Or specify what idea or question you wish you could have contributed to the conversation.

How to prepare for each Zoom session:

1. Complete the assigned reading and any other activities listed for that day at Carmen.
2. Read assigned texts carefully. Early literature is not easy, so give yourself plenty of time. Look up unfamiliar words in the [Oxford English Dictionary](#) (OED). Take notes somewhere you can access during class.
3. Submit a thinking journal entry, following the day's prompt.
4. Come to class with access to the day's texts, your reading notes, and your journal entry. Ideally, you will be ready to share at least one more comment or question beyond your answer to the journal prompt.

Textbooks

I will make most texts available digitally at our Carmen page. You will need two physical books:

- Hester Pulter, *Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda*, ed. Alice Eardley (Iter Press, 2014). ISBN 9780772721648.
- Margaret Cavendish, *The Convent of Pleasure and Other Plays*, edited by Anne Shaver (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). ISBN 0801861004. \$27.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

How your grade is calculated

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS
Contributions to class discussions	27
Thinking journal entries	27
The Pulter Project Curation review	6
Keyword research project	20
Public writing final project	20
Total	100

Assignment information

Contributions to class discussions: You can earn up to 27 points by engaging in Zoom discussions, submitting posts to our written Carmen Discussion forum, and completing assigned collaborative activities. You can skip one discussion (Zoom or asynchronous) with no penalty to your grade, or I will drop your lowest score.

- You can earn 1 point for engaging in each Zoom class. I define engagement as one or more of these activities:
 - Raise your hand and talk during the discussion.
 - Listen actively with your camera on. Virtual or blurred backgrounds welcome.
 - Type your contribution to the discussion in the chat.
- You can earn 1 point for each asynchronous session, which are designated on the syllabus as written conversations instead of Zoom meetings. Follow the directions in Carmen to submit discussion posts or contribute annotations on a shared class document. Posts and annotations earn full credit if they follow the instructions and are submitted on time. Late or incomplete posts can earn partial credit.

Thinking journal entries: To develop ideas *before* class, you will keep a “thinking journal,” a place where you use informal writing to play around with beginning ideas. You will give a short response to each day’s prompt in a private space (visible to you and me) in Carmen. See below, in the reading schedule, for journaling questions. Responses can be typed or voice-recorded, or you can keep a physical journal and submit photographs. Each entry is worth 2 points. You may skip one entry with no penalty to your grade, or I will drop your lowest score.

The Pulter Project Curation review: To prepare for the keyword research assignment, each student will evaluate a short piece called a “Curation” published at [The Pulter Project](#). In a short essay, you will explain what is useful about the Curation and how it might be revised to contribute to our class glossary.

Keyword research assignment: Our first major assignment invites you to research one word that Hester Pulter uses frequently in her poetry. After choosing from a list I have prepared, you will become an expert on that word. You will use digital tools to research its history, identify and read poems by Pulter that use it, and create a glossary entry for it, accompanied by one or two images and possible audio content. We will work together as a team to edit, revise, and compile our entries.

Public writing final project: In lieu of a final exam, you will write a public piece related to class materials. You can choose to write an essay, make a podcast, or create videos for YouTube or TikTok. I will supply samples for inspiration, along with venues for this kind of material. I hope that some of you might publish your pieces after this semester.

I provide detailed instructions for all assignments on our Carmen page. All work submitted in this course must be your own. If you take any ideas, quotations, or images from anywhere else, you must give credit to your source.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule provides a brief semester overview; always refer to [Carmen](#) for detailed instructions. On Carmen, you'll also find 1-2 pieces of recommended reading and listening for most class days. This optional reading consists of academic essays, public writing, and podcasts that provide context or interpretive help. Assignments and due dates might change based on class needs.

Date and topic	Do before class (homework)	In-class activities
Week 1, class 1: Tuesday, Jan. 7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions to the course and each other.
Week 1, class 2: Thursday, Jan. 9 Gender, then and now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Dolan, "Historicism"; excerpts from Renaissance conduct books; "International Women's Day 2024." • JOURNAL: How do we think about gender "then" versus "now"? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the reading. What did we notice, and what questions do we have? • Introduce seventeenth-century English literature and culture.
Week 2, class 1: Tuesday, Jan. 14 Pulter's style, part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ "What Is The Pulter Project?"; Pulter, "On the Horrid Murder of that Incomparable Prince" (Poem 14) and "Why Must I Thus Forever Be Confined" (Poem 57). • JOURNAL: Choose one of today's poems. Identify one thing you notice and one thing you don't understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share what we learned about Hester Pulter and <i>The Pulter Project</i>. • Discuss Poem 14, drawing on our journal entries. • Discuss Poem 57, drawing on our journal entries.

Date and topic	Bring to class (homework)	In-class activities
<p>Week 2, class 2: Thursday, Jan. 16</p> <p>Pulter's style, part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, "The Center" (Poem 30) and "View but This Tulip" (Emblem 40, Poem 105); Kolkovich, "Dissolved to Tears." • JOURNAL: Find or create an image to accompany one of today's poems. Explain why you chose it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share chosen images. • Discuss today's poems. • Introduce Curation review assignment. • Evaluate the "Dissolved" Curation. What information does it provide readers, and how? What doesn't it do that it could?
<p>Week 3, class 1: Tuesday, Jan. 21</p> <p>Pulter's style, part 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, "To Aurora [1]" (Poem 22), "To Astraea" (Poem 23), "The Wish" (Poem 52), and "The Weeping Wish" (Poem 61). • JOURNAL: Your choice. What do you want to discuss about these poems? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today's poems and journal entries. • Mini-lesson: searching The Pulter Project. • Mini-lesson: the OED vs. Merriam-Webster. • Prof. Kolkovich will assign Curations.
<p>Week 3, class 2: Thursday, Jan. 23</p> <p>Digging into The Pulter Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUBMIT survey about keyword preferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-lesson: searching LEME and EEBO. • Write-on-site: use class time to work on Curation review.
<p>Week 4, class 1: Tuesday, Jan. 28</p> <p>Pulter on the universe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, "The Eclipse" (Poem 1), "This Was Written in 1648, When I Lay in, with my Son John" (Poem 45), and "A Solitary Complaint" (Poem 54). • JOURNAL: How does Pulter imagine our universe? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today's poems and Pulter's ideas about the universe. • Prof. Kolkovich will assign keywords and introduce the keyword research assignment.

Date and topic	Bring to class (homework)	In-class activities
<p>Week 4, class 2: Thursday, Jan. 30</p> <p>Digging into The Pulter Project</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUBMIT Curation review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout rooms to share reviews. • Each group will share a revision plan.
<p>Week 5, class 1: Tuesday, Feb. 4</p> <p>Pulter on illness, death, and the blazon</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, “Upon the Death of my Dear and Lovely Daughter, Jane Pulter” (Poem 10), “Tell Me No More [On the Same]” (Poem 11), “Made When I Was Not Well” (Poem 51), and “My Love is Fair” (Poem 59). • JOURNAL: Based on today’s poems, identify ideal characteristics for women in Pulter’s time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s poems and journal entries. • Identify meanings of “blazon” and “fair” and their value for today’s reading. • Check in: what is one interesting thing you have learned about your keyword?
<p>Week 5, class 2: Thursday, Feb. 6</p> <p>Pulter on life on earth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, “The Invitation into the Country, 1647” (Poem 2), “The Pismire” (Poem 35), and “Pardon Me, My Dearest Love” (Poem 42). • JOURNAL: What does one of today’s poems reveal about its speaker’s emotional state and relationships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s poems and journal entries.
<p>Week 6, class 1: Tuesday, Feb. 11</p> <p>Pulter glossary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUBMIT keyword research assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group peer feedback on keyword research assignment.

Date and topic	Bring to class (homework)	In-class activities
<p>Week 6, class 2: Thursday, Feb. 13</p> <p>Pulter: God and mortality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, “The Welcome [1]” (Poem 19), “My God, I Thee (and Only Thee) Adore” (Poem 50), “Dear God, From Thy High Throne Look Down” (Poem 63), and “The Hope” (Poem 65). • JOURNAL: What ideas about death appear in these poems? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s poems and journal entries.
<p>Week 7, class 1: Tuesday, Feb. 18</p> <p>Pulter’s emblems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, “Heliotropians” (Emblem 3), “This Poor Turtledove” (Emblem 20), “Mark But Those Hogs” (20Emblem 34), and “The Ugly Spider” (Emblem 37). • JOURNAL: Emblems are meant to teach moral lessons. Choose one of today’s emblems and explain its lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s poems and journal entries.
<p>Week 7, class 2: Thursday, Feb. 20</p> <p>Pulter on current events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, “Of a Young Lady at Oxford, 1646” (Poem 43); “To Sir William Davenant: Upon the Unspeakable Loss of the Most Conspicuous and Chief Ornament of His Frontispiece” (Poem 60); Cock, “Sticking Her Nose In: Hester Pulter’s Fleshy Gift.” • SUBMIT revised keyword research assignment. (No journal entry due today.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s poems and assigned secondary essay.

<p>Week 8, class 1: Tuesday, Feb. 25</p> <p>Pulter's novel, part 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, <i>The Unfortunate Florinda</i>, pp. 272-303 (stop after the letter at the top of the page). • JOURNAL: What do you notice and wish to discuss in today's reading? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today's reading and journal entries.
<p>Week 8, class 2: Thursday, Feb. 27</p> <p>Pulter's novel, part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, <i>The Unfortunate Florinda</i>, pp. 303-337 (stop at the break after "he thus began"). • No journal entry due today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Zoom meeting; asynchronous day. • Contribute two posts to Carmen Discussions.
<p>Week 9, class 1: Tuesday, March 4</p> <p>Pulter's novel, part 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Pulter, <i>The Unfortunate Florinda</i>, pp. 337-366. • JOURNAL: Now that we've spent half a semester on Pulter, what interests you the most about her works? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today's reading and journal entries.
<p>Week 9, class 2: Thursday, March 6</p> <p>Writing about Pulter and Cavendish</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Taff, "Death and Revolution: Thinking with Hester Pulter"; Kolkovich, "How My Postpartum Guilt Was Healed by a 17th-Century Poet"; Peacock, "Her Blazing World"; Wright, "She Said: Women's Authority, #MeToo and Margaret Cavendish." • No journal entry due today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Zoom meeting; asynchronous day. • Contribute two posts to Carmen Discussions.

Date and topic	Bring to class (homework)	In-class activities
Week 10: SPRING BREAK March 10-14		
Week 11, class 1: Tuesday, March 18 Introduction to Cavendish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, “To All Noble and Worthy Ladies,” “To All Writing Ladies,” “The Poetress’s Hasty Resolution,” and “The Hunting of the Hare.” • JOURNAL: How does Cavendish introduce her writing in her prefatory poems? OR how does “Hunting of the Hare” represent hunting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did we learn about Cavendish from the Peacock and Wright essays (before spring break)? • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries. • Prof. Kolkovich will introduce the final project.
Week 11, class 2: Thursday, March 20 Cavendish’s atomic theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, “A World Made by Atoms,” “The Four Principle Figured Atoms,” and “Of Many Worlds in This World.” • WATCH Blake, “How a 17th-Century Woman Writer Can Revitalize the History of the Book.” • No journal due today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Zoom meeting; asynchronous day. • Contribute two annotations on Carmen.
Week 12, class 1: Tuesday, March 25 Cavendish: gender at war, part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, <i>Bell in Campo</i>, First Part, Scenes 1-13 (pp. 107-126). • JOURNAL: What is your favorite quotation from today’s reading, and why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss atomic poetry from Thursday. • Discuss the beginning of <i>Bell in Campo</i>.

<p>Week 12, class 2: Thursday, March 27</p> <p>Cavendish: gender at war, part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, <i>Bell in Campo</i>, First Part, Scenes 14-25 and Second Part, Scenes 1-7 (pp. 127-150). • READ Cavendish, “To All Valiant Soldiers.” • JOURNAL: What is one theme you see developing in <i>Bell in Campo</i>? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries.
<p>Week 13, class 1: Tuesday, April 1</p> <p>Cavendish: gender at war, part 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, <i>Bell in Campo</i>, Second Part, Scenes 8-22 (pp. 150-169). • READ Cavendish, “An Elegy on My Brother.” • JOURNAL: How might <i>Bell in Campo</i> speak to audiences today? To what current events or concerns might it relate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries.
<p>Week 13, class 2: Thursday, April 3</p> <p>Cavendish: gender and community, part 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, <i>Convent of Pleasure</i>, Acts 1-3. • JOURNAL: What are the characteristics of Lady Happy’s convent, and what criticism does it imply about English society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries.
<p>Week 14, class 1: Tuesday, April 8</p> <p>Cavendish: gender and community, part 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, <i>Convent of Pleasure</i>, Acts 4-5. • JOURNAL: What happens at the play’s end, and what does this ending mean for our understanding of the play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries.

Date and topic	Bring to class (homework)	In-class activities
<p>Week 14, class 2: Thursday, April 10</p> <p>Cavendish on bodies and mortality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Cavendish, “Nature’s Cook,” “Of Fairies in the Brain,” “Nature’s Cabinet,” and “A Tart.” • JOURNAL: Today’s poems use metaphors to describe parts and conditions of the human body. Which metaphor most interests you, and what are the implications? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s reading and journal entries. • Check in: what are your initial ideas for the final project?
<p>Week 15, class 1: Tuesday, April 15</p> <p>Writing for the public</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • READ Braganza, “The Secret Codes of Lady Wroth”; Ziegler, “Buds, Bugs, and Birds in the Manuscripts of Esther Inglis”; Looser, “Five Myths about Jane Austen.” • JOURNAL: Choose one essay. How does the author make her topic clear and interesting for readers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss today’s essays. What can we learn from these examples for our final projects? • Crash course on other early women writers! Read and discuss new poems in breakout rooms.
<p>Week 15, class 2: Thursday, April 17</p> <p>Writing for the public, continued</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRING what you need to work on your final project, any questions for me. • No journal entry due. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write-on-site day: check in on Zoom and use class time to work on your final project.

Take-home final exam due on Thursday, April 24 at 11:59 p.m. to Carmen Assignments. (Early submissions welcome; no late submissions accepted.)