

George Herbert's Pastoral Poetics

Module: Literature

Term: Summer 2023

Dr. Anthony G. Cirilla, Instructor

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Course Description

This course will be a sustained examination of Herbert's masterpiece, *The Temple*, which he described as "a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed between God and my soul, before I could subject mine to the will of Jesus," in the light of *The Country Parson: His Character and Rule of Life*, his influential parson's manual which he regarded as a "mark to aim at" for himself as a pastor. In it he wrote, "A pastor is the deputy of Christ, for the reducing of man to the obedience of God," teaching "people by what they understand are best led to what they understand not." This Augustinian premise likewise informs Herbert's poetics in the Temple, where the familiar space of the church is used to lead the parishioner through the nourishing poetry by which "A verse may find him, who a sermon flies,/ And turn delight into a sacrifice."

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include: (1) understand George Herbert's literary methods and the place of each work within his corpus, particularly in reference to his pastoral thought, (2) understand the theological, historical, philosophical and literary background to Herbert's poetry, (3) articulate the legacy of Herbert for Christian literary history, and (4) consider and develop answers to major questions surrounding the texts in question, especially as regards Herbert's pastoral poetics.

Course Format

The format of the course will be predominantly one of mini-lectures followed by guided discussion. The instructor will lecture to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion, rather than in pure lectures. Thus, students will be expected to come having read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts and questions prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate (link to Zoom and recordings posted to Google Classroom). Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our **Google Classroom** discussion board (where assignments and materials will be posted) and on **Discord**.

Auditors are not required to attend class live or submit assignments, but may participate in Zoom meetings, Discord, Google Classroom, and access recordings. If the time does not work for you, you can switch to auditing or to another course. See the drop/switch policy on the Course Catalog or M.Litt. FAQ. Students are entitled to a full refund if the chosen time does not work for them. Please email Lynette Hughes at registrar@davenantinstitute.org with any changes, requests, or questions.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly readings (due before our meeting each week). ~35-40 pages of reading per week
2. Weekly interaction with fellow participants and the instructor in live class sessions.
3. Weekly writings in the Google Classroom discussion board, as pre-writing for integrated papers. Discord for further conversation.
4. For those taking the course for-credit but not for a degree: Composition of a 3k-5k argumentative essay that presents a thesis statement-driven position about Herbert's work or its influence. The paper should be 12-point Times New Romans font, with regular margins and standard citations (either MLA or Chicago Style). Auditors participate to level of interest. Those taking the course for-credit for a degree will instead have an oral exam at the end of the course.

Assessment and Weighting Policies

Class Participation 25%

Discussion Forum 25% (for-credit & degree seekers, 2.5-5k words total)

Essay 50% (for-credit non-degree seekers) *or*

Oral Exam 50% (degree seekers)

Late work: -5% penalty per day late, with agreed upon exceptions possible

Attendance: 1 unexcused absence per course; -3% penalty per missed period without approved absence. For-credit students who must miss a substantial number of courses may be asked to submit short written responses to recorded lectures.

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
|---|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|----|---|----|---|
| 9 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | |

Course Texts

Required: Herbert, George, ed. Ann Slater. George Herbert: The Complete English Works (Everyman's Library). ISBN: 978-0679443599

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/646877/the-complete-english-works-of-george-herbert-by-george-herbert-introduction-by-ann-pasternak-slater/>
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Course Schedule

| Week | Dates | Discussion Topics/Themes | Reading |
|------|----------|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1 | 7/3-9 | Introduction: Proverbs and Virtue | <i>Outlandish Proverbs</i> 257-287, <i>A Treatise of Temperance and Sobriety</i> 304-315 |
| 2 | 7/10-16 | Pastoral Vision | The Country Parson, His Character, and Rule of Holy Life 196-256 |
| 3 | 7/17-23 | Entering the Temple | "The Dedication" to "the Church Porch," 5-21 |
| 4 | 7/24-30 | The Collect | "Superliminare" to "Mattins" 22-60 |
| 5 | 7/31-8/6 | The Summary of the Law | "Sin" to "Prayer (2)" 61-100 |
| 6 | 8/7-13 | The Sermon | "Obedience" to "Complaining" 100-140 |
| 7 | 8/14-20 | Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer | "The Discharge" to "The Elixir" 141-180 |
| 8 | 8/21-27 | Benediction | "A Wreath" to "Love (3)", 181-184, "The Church Militant" and <i>L'Envoy</i> , 186-193 |