Early Modern British Literature

There are three lists for this track; students should select one list as a focal point for their reading.

- **List A** covers the period c. 1485-c.1603, and is designed to answer to the needs of students wishing to specialize in the earlier part of the period. This option covers the years from roughly 1485--when Henry VII, the first Tudor, took the throne--through the violent struggles of the Reformation in the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I to the tense religious settlement and national consolidation under the last Tudor monarch, Elizabeth I, who died in 1603.

- **List B** covers the period c.1603-c.1688, and is designed for students who wish to specialize in the later part of the period. This option runs from James VI and I's accession, and encompasses the political upheavals of the seventeenth century, the personal rule of Charles I, the Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, the Restoration of Charles II, and the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688.

- **List C** is a selection from lists A and B, and is designed to cater to students who wish to study a wider panorama of early modern British literature. List C offers a broader prospectus of the period.

*Whichever list you choose*, you might consider the other two lists as possible sources for the additional twenty texts that you may nominate. But we would stress that these additional texts are still very much *your* choice, and should reflect *your* interests.

The literary history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries can easily be presented as a colorful pageant of glamorous or notorious monarchs and major, usually male English authors. But the period - as its writers are the first to tell us - thwarts such sustained narratives even as it evokes them. It sees royal absolutism elaborated and challenged, unprecedented transformations in religious doctrine, massive shifts in the bases of scientific knowledge, changes in women's status as both authors and cultural protagonists, and troubled national and global self-imaginings. Its writing, accordingly, has always offered various kinds of excitement; it is full of familiar names, but it also tests new ways of reading and urges the ceaseless redefinition of whatever we might call "modernity." It is no accident that every term even in the above heading has a debate behind it. Why "early modern" and not "Renaissance"? What is "Britain" in this period? How far can "literature" usefully be distinguished from other cultural forms?
The following reading lists aim to give you a grounding in the literature of a period whose established canons persistently turn into open questions. They include the standard authors and works that, as an early modernist, you'll be expected to know in detail and to be able to teach. They are also intended, however, to acquaint you with a range of writings, enabling you to set different works in dialogue with one another and to approach critical debates about the period in an informed and authoritative way as you go about formulating your dissertation topic.

You are encouraged to pursue connections across the lists, exploring the perspectives you find most interesting. Points of focus might include:

- forms and genres (lyric, epic, dramatic).
- institutions and spaces (sovereignty and court, the theatre, authorship, the city of London).
- the changing roles of women, shown in debates over women's rule (Mary Tudor, Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots) or the increasing prominence of woman writers (Lady Mary Wroth, Margaret Cavendish, Aphra Behn).
- intellectual and doctrinal movements (Reformation and pre- and counter-Reformation theology, the history of science, political philosophy, Christian humanism).
- material histories, including the history of the book itself and of scribal or print technologies.
- political events (Tudor crises, the British and Irish wars of the mid-seventeenth century).
- encounters with classical and vernacular pasts (in medieval writing, Ovidian and Virgilian afterlives, official and alternative national histories).

It must be stressed that these are no more than suggested paths through the readings, sketched to help you with initial organization. You are the intending doctoral candidate and future scholar in the field, and it is from you that a sense of the connections and differences among these texts, and an awareness of their historical and cultural contexts, must come. These lists will, given your active engagement with them, guide you towards the final shape of your main project.

In cases where we are recommending selections from an author's works, we have indicated a suggested modern edition. In these cases, you should choose which selections from the author's oeuvre to make in consultation with the Chair of your exam committee. The dates given below are, in most instances, the dates of first publication, or the dates at which particular texts first appeared to be widely circulated, or (for plays and masques) were first performed. For introductions and notes, students should use recent editions prepared to high scholarly standards and published by university presses or major trade publishers. For the original presentation of major works, please consult the
editions in Early English Books Online (EEBO), which is available on the Pius Library website.

LIST A

2. Gavin Douglas (trans.), Aeneid (1513).
4. Sir Thomas More, Utopia (1516), The History of King Richard III (c.1513-18).
8. Sir Thomas Elyot, The Book called the Governor (1531).
10. John Bale, King John (c. 1538), The Vocacyon of John Bale (c. 1553).
12. John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558), selections from The Historie of the Reformation within the Realms of Scotland (1586-87).
19. Isabella Whitney, selections from The Copy of a Letter... to her Unconstant Lover (1566-7), A Sweet Nosegay (1573).
20. William Baldwin, Beware the Cat (1553).
21. Thomas Cranmer, John Jewel et al., selections from *Certain Sermons or Homilies* (1571).
26. William Shakespeare: of the 37 plays, select 5 comedies, 5 histories, 5 tragedies (as designated in the 1623 First Folio); study the structure (including paratexts) of the 1623 Folio and be aware of special problems involving variant quarto editions.
32. Robert Southwell, selections from *Saint Peter’s Complaint* and other poems (1595) (suggested edition Davidson and Sweeney, 2007).

**LIST B**

1. William Shakespeare: of the 37 plays, select 5 comedies, 5 histories, 5 tragedies (as designated in the 1623 First Folio); study the structure (including paratexts) of the 1623 Folio and be aware of special problems involving variant quarto editions.
15. William Harvey, *De Motu Cordis* (1628) (English translation).
16. John Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* (1633).
17. George Herbert, selections from *The Temple* (1633).
20. Richard Crashaw, selections from *Steps to the Temple* (1646).
22. An Agreement of the People (1647-9).
23. Robert Herrick, selections from *Hesperides* (1648).
27. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), Parts I and II.

**LIST C**

13. Isabella Whitney, selections from *The Copy of a Letter... to her Unconstant Lover* (1566-7), *A Sweet Nosegay* (1573).
28. William Shakespeare: of the 37 plays, select 5 comedies, 5 histories, 5 tragedies (as designated in the 1623 First Folio); study the structure (including paratexts) of the 1623 Folio and be aware of special problems involving variant quarto editions.
37. George Herbert, selections from *The Temple* (1633).
40. Richard Crashaw, selections from *Steps to the Temple* (1646).
42. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651) Parts I and II.
44. Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (1666).
47. John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (1678).
49. John Dryden, Absalom and Achitophel (1681).
50. Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (1688).