Can we learn from works of fiction? How? What do they teach us? These central questions of not only literary studies but the humanities more generally were at the core of how Renaissance writers, thinkers, and educators imagined their intellectual moment. Indeed, pedagogical reform was crucial to artistic, literary, scientific, and technological innovations the period is more famous for today. In this module, we’ll explore the relationship between Renaissance theories of education and works of Renaissance literature that represent forms of instruction. We’ll thus ask not only how, and if, literature seems capable of teaching us something, but what literature can teach us about teaching itself. Reading pedagogical treatises, handbooks, and works of philosophy alongside Renaissance works of literature (Francois Rabelais, Thomas More, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare), we’ll discuss how the classroom is both theorized and fictionally imagined. We’ll consider both how literature depicts the processes and procedures of education and whether it enacts those processes itself. We’ll necessarily ask too how pedagogical discussions inflect questions of politics, religious belief, gender, sexuality, and nationhood. Finally, we will reflect on our own status as students of literature and as indirect products of this pedagogical system. What can Renaissance humanism tell us about the Humanities today?

AIMS AND OUTCOMES

This module aims to introduce students to the centrality of educational theory and pedagogical practice in the early modern period, as well as to familiarize students with how literary texts were taught, read, imitated, and disseminated. Methodologically, it looks to expose students to the benefits of reading cross-disciplinarily and comparatively, both between literary and non-literary texts and between English and Continental contexts. Interdisciplinary analysis is increasingly a key skill for students at the MA level to develop.

By the end of this module, the student should be able:
- to demonstrate a broad knowledge of educational and pedagogical theories and practices from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries
- to ask and answer literary and historical questions by drawing upon archival, manuscript, and rare book resources (and to know how to find and acquire such resources in special collections and online)
- to produce confident and clear written and oral accounts of early modern education and the study of literature in the period, making sophisticated and substantial use of secondary criticism

**WEEK-BY-WEEK OUTLINE**

*The best advance preparation students can do is begin reading some of the major texts in the seminar that they may not already be familiar with. I’ve indicated those texts in bold on the seminar schedule below. Most of them will be available online via EEBO (available online through the university’s library) though students may find it easier to purchase copies of texts we will be reading significant portions of (I’ve listed good scholarly editions below). All readings will be available to students online via the VLE or in photocopy in advance of the term.

**Week 2: Ancient Education and The Dangers of Poetry**

**Primary Readings**
- On the Instruction of the Young, St. Basil 4th C, trans. By Bruni in 1402/3
- Plato, *Republic* (2.376c-3.402a)
- Plutarch, “How a Young Man Should Read Poetry”
- Lucian, *A True History, The Dream*

**Week 3: Utopian Schoolrooms**

**Primary Readings**
- Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster* (selections)
- Thomas More, *Utopia*

**Week 4: Bodies that Learn**

**Primary Readings**
- Erasmus, *De Copia* (Chapters 1-2, 33), *On the Education of Children, De Ratione Studii* (selectics); selected colloquies
- François Rabelais, *Gargantua* 1-22

**Week 5: Rhetoric and Allegory**

**Primary Readings**
- Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Preface and Book 1)
- Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene* (Book 1)

**Week 6: Reading Week**

**Week 7: Education, Accommodation, Salvation**

**Primary Readings**
- John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Book 1, lines 1-44; Book 5; Book 9)
Week 8: Imitation as Reading [Visit to York Minster Library]
Primary Readings
Aristotle, Poetics (1.1447a-1452a)
Miguel de Cervantes, Don Quijote (1.1-3, 1.6, 1.23-26, 1.47-50)

Week 9: Learning From History: Exemplarity
Primary Readings
Phillip Sidney, Defense of Poesy (lines 1-599)
William Shakespeare, Rape of Lucrece

Week 10: Persuasion and the Problem of Advice
Primary Readings
Nicolò Machiavelli, The Prince (selections)
William Shakespeare, Othello

SEMINAR TEXTS:

FURTHER READING:
1. Early Modern Education
Lynn Enterline, Shakespeare’s Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion
Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: education and the liberal arts in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe*

Jeff Dolven, *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance*

Rebecca Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*

Walter Ong, “Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite” in *Studies in Philology* (1959)

Peter Mack, “The Classics in Humanism, Education, and Scholarship” in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*

_____ *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice*

2. **Humanism, Reading, and the Reception of the Classics**

Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*

Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past*

Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*

Walter Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*

T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*


Anthony Grafton, Glenn Most, and Salvatore Settis, eds., *The Classical Tradition*

Anthony Grafton, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800*

Anthony Grafton, *Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers*

James Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*


Jill Kraye, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*

Ronald Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*

Daniel Javitch, *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England*

Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*

Nancy S. Strueter, *Theory as Practice: Ethical Inquiry in the Renaissance*

Joel Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama*

James Simpson, *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents*

Thomas Greene, *Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*

J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*

Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*

Mary Thomas Crane, *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England*

Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation: English Renaissance Culture and the Genealogy of Capital*

Patrick Cheney and Philip Hardie, eds., *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*

3. **Book History and Textual Transmission**

Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*

William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England*


John Considine, *Dictionaries in Early Modern Europe: Lexicography and the Making of Heritage*

Starnes DeWitt, *Classical Myth and Legend in Renaissance Dictionaries*

John Bernard and D. F. McKenzie, eds., *The History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4
Online Resources:

English Short Title Catalog (estc.bl.uk): Searchable Catalogue of all works printed in English from 1473-1800 offering basic information about their location in special collections worldwide.
Oxford Bibliographies Online (oxfordbibliographies.com): A useful (though by no means exhaustive) collection of bibliographies on various subjects and historical periods that often function as a useful introduction to the critical discussion surrounding a particular field/person/topic. This is a good starting point for your research papers.