

Veranstalter	Prof. Dr. Peter Hühn
Thema	The History of the Sonnet: From Shakespeare to Paul Muldoon [AA-V3a/b, ENG-12, AA-MA3, AA-MA4, AA10, LAA9, LAA12, AA-W, AA-WB]
Art der Veranstaltung	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer	53-549
Zeit	Blockseminar 20.-25. Juli 2015
Raum	
Beginn	

Course description:

The sonnet is an exceptional phenomenon in the history of poetry: one of the oldest verse-forms and still widely practised today. The sonnet was invented in 13th-century Italy and subsequently introduced into all major European literatures. It first came to England in the early 16th century, at the court of Henry VIII. One reason for its continuing popularity seems to be that the structure of the sonnet suggests and supports a particular intellectual attitude and poetic practice: an inclination towards rational analysis and reflection, antithetical or dialectical argumentation, concise description of perceptions, feelings and insights and, ultimately, self-observation and self-consciousness. On account of its bipartite subdivision (by the so-called *volta*) the sonnet possesses an inherent dynamic force which typically produces a surprising decisive turn. From the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period, sonnets were thematically concerned with erotic love, primarily in the manner made popular by the Italian poet Petrarca (Petrarchism), a concept of love which influenced and shaped the form of sensuality prevalent in early modern Europe and England. From the 17th century onwards, however, the thematic range of sonnets widened to include religion, personal and private experience, art and politics.

After a brief overview of the early stages of the history of the sonnet in Italy and esp. in England, the seminar will discuss in some detail Shakespeare's *Sonnets* of 1609, which mark the transition from a traditional to a more modern approach, the beginnings of individuality and self-reflexivity. Since almost all major English poets in the course of the following centuries wrote sonnets, the close analysis of selected significant examples will provide an illuminating concrete introduction to the styles, techniques, themes and cultural contexts of the main historical periods of English poetry up to the present: the 17th century (J. Donne, G. Herbert, J. Milton), Romanticism (J. Keats, P. B. Shelley, W. Wordsworth), the Victorian era (E. B. Browning, G. Meredith, D. G. Rossetti, Chr. Rossetti, G. M. Hopkins) und 20th modernism and after (W. Owen, W. H. Auden, D. Thomas, P. Muldoon, T. Harrison).

To facilitate the preparation of these texts a reading list and the collection of sonnets selected for analysis in class will be made available on *Agorá* at the beginning of the summer term.

Select Reading:

The Penguin Book of the Sonnet, ed. Phillis Levin (New York: Penguin, 2001).

Cousins, A. D. & Peter Howarth, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Michael R. G. Spiller. *The Development of the Sonnet: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1992).