

Novel Forums: Women Writers and the Development of the Novel

"I do not think I ever opened a book in my life which had not something to say upon woman's inconstancy. Songs and proverbs, all talk of woman's fickleness. But perhaps you will say, these were all written by men."

"Perhaps I shall. Yes, yes, if you please, no reference to examples in books. Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove anything."

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*

Tutorial Overview

In Austen's *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot's objection to Captain Harville—that men have “had every advantage” in writing about men and women both—might also be applied to the early discourse of “the rise of the novel”, a discourse that, for decades, ignored most women writers except Austen. Scholarship over the last half century has not only given greater critical attention to these writers, but also, as the novel's origins have increasingly been linked with other forms—letters, essays, news, poetry, plays, etc.—so too has it called attention to women writers' contributions in these forms. Yet, on account of the historical prejudices of canon-making (not to mention present-day changes in reading practices), these contributions remain in a precarious place. This tutorial takes seriously eighteenth century women writers, the multifaceted history of the novel, and the relations between these two categories in light of the critical challenges of canon formation. As a deconstruction of the ordinary “rise of the novel” narrative, it is structured around three intertwining principles: 1) to read important novels by women writers through the long eighteenth century, of greater and lesser degrees of canonicity; 2) to investigate the cultural, literary, and historical contexts of those novels; 3) to understand these texts and contexts by reading them with respect to several different critical theories and methodologies.

Tutorial Objectives

Over the course of the tutorial, you will read and engage critically with the works of a number of women writers of the long eighteenth century (that is, the late-1600s through the early-1800s). At the same time, you will become familiar with several different critical theories and methods with which to investigate these works: theories of fiction, new historicism, cultural theory, postcolonial studies, and gender/sexuality studies. In other words, as you read the primary texts, as you come to understand their central themes and their places in literary history, you will also learn how to ask the kinds of critical, historical, and interpretive questions that lead to incisive close readings.

More broadly, you will learn how to engage with the discipline and practice of English literary studies at an upper-division level. The tutorial will culminate in the writing and revision of a 20-25-page research paper in preparation for an honors thesis. You will learn to come up with a research question, develop a critical bibliography around that question, put secondary criticism in conversation with your own ideas and with other criticism, and write with greater clarity and precision.

Attendance

Your attendance in tutorial is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole. So, too, is your attendance at the Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. Each student will be allowed a “free” tutorial absence to be used in case of sickness, travel, etc: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence

could result in failing the course. Please come to tutorial on time. If you have extenuating circumstances, please discuss with me so that we can work out a solution.

Expectations for Written Work

Papers are to be submitted on time, in hard copy: please double-space and print on both sides of the page. You are encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each others' work. In individual assignments, academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. From Harvard's Plagiarism policy: "All homework assignments, projects, lab reports, papers and examinations submitted to a course are expected to be the student's own work. Students should always take great care to distinguish their own ideas and knowledge from information derived from sources. The term "sources" includes not only published primary and secondary material, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people." For the full policy, and information on using sources, please visit: usingsources.fas.harvard.edu. When in doubt, ask!

Texts to be Purchased (all others will be provided in PDF)

Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour: A Tale*, ed. Lyndon Dominique. Broadview, 2007.

Behn, Aphra. *Oroonoko, the River, and Other Works*, ed. Janet Todd. Penguin, 1993.

Burney, Frances. *Evelina, or, The History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World*, ed. Edward Bloom. Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Edgeworth, Maria. *Castle Rackrent*. Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Lennox, Charlotte. *The Female Quixote: or, The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel. Oxford World's Classics, 2008.

Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley. *Selected Letters*. Penguin, 1997.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Penguin, 2004.

Assignments/Grading

(15%) Short Paper: Working with Secondary Sources. For many students, the junior tutorial is the first opportunity to write an essay that engages with one or more secondary sources—that is, other authors who have written about the same primary text you're interested in. For this assignment, you will be asked to locate one secondary reading on either Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* or Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and write a paper (5 pages double-spaced) that at once engages with that secondary reading while offering a different argument.

(60%) Critical Essay. The critical essay, 20-25 pages double-spaced, is the culmination of the tutorial.

It is due in several parts as the term progresses:

- **Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography** (week 6). A two-page prospectus introducing the topic of your research, along with a bibliography of 8-10 sources. Included in participation grade.
- **(20%) First Draft** (due 4/12).
- **Workshop** (week 11). Workshop letters for your peers' essays due in section. Included in participation grade.
- **(40%) Final Draft** (due 5/7)

(25%) Participation.

Due Dates & Late Grades

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late, except for the final paper, which must be turned in before the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

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Course Schedule

Blue: Matters of Schedule

Red: Assignment Deadlines

Week 0 (1/28): Reading Prefatory material: Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*; Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*; Eliza Haywood, *The Fortunate Foundlings*; Sarah + Henry Fielding, *The Adventures of David Simple*

- Theory: T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”

Fri, 2/1: Course Registration Deadline

PART 1: SATIRE AND DESIRE

Week 1 (2/4): Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, vol. 1; Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, pp. 3-50 [“Dedication”, “Introduction”, chs. I+II]

- Theory/Criticism: Catherine Gallagher, “The Rise of Fictionality”; Ros Ballaster, from *Seductive Forms*, pp. 31-66 [“Observing the Forms: Amatory Fiction and the Construction of a Female Reader”]

Week 2 (2/11): Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, concluded; Elizabeth Tipper, “A Satyr” (1698); Jonathan Swift, “The Lady’s Dressing Room”; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, “The Reasons that Induced Dr. S. to Write a Poem Call’d the Lady’s Dressing Room”; Pope, “Impromptu”; Anne Finch, “The Answer”, “The Spleen”, “On Myself”

- Theory: Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”

Junior Tutorial General Meeting #1

PART 2: JOURNALISM

Week 3 (2/18): Addison and Steele, *The Tatler*, “no. 1”; *The Spectator*, “no. 15” [Elegance as a way of life], “no. 66” [The education of women]; Eliza Haywood, from *The Female Spectator* (ed. Spacks), “Introduction”, “From Book I”, “From Book III”, “From Book X”; Wollstonecraft, *Vindication*, pp. 51-98 [chs. III+IV]

- Theory: J. Paul Hunter, from *Before Novels*, pp. 167-194 [“Journalism: The Commitment to Contemporaneity”]

Friday, 2/22, 5pm: Short Paper Due

Week 4 (2/25): Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

- Theory/Criticism: Lennard Davis, from *Factual Fictions*, pp. 102-122 [“Theories of Fiction in Early English Novels”]; Ruth Yeazell, from *Fictions of Modesty*, pp. 3-11; 33-50 [“The Language of Modesty”; “The Matter of Courtship”]

In section: Library/Research Session
Junior Tutorial General Meeting #2

PART 3: TRAVEL NARRATIVE

Week 5 (3/4): Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour*

- Theory/Criticism: Edward Said, from *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 3-31 [“Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories”]; Saaidya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts”

Week 6 (3/11): *The Woman of Colour*, concluded; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, from *The Turkish Letters*, letters 100-114; Wollstonecraft, “Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark”

- Theory: from *The Literary Channel*, eds. Margaret Cohen + Carolyn Denver, pp. 1-34 [“Introduction”]

Junior Tutorial General Meeting #3
Due in section: Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography

Week 7 (3/18): No class: spring break.

PART 4: LETTERS

Week 8 (3/25): Frances Burney, *Evelina*, vol. 1; Samuel Richardson, from *Letters Written To and For Particular Friends*, letters 53-55, 62-63, 66-70; Eliza Haywood, from *Epistles for the Ladies*, epistles I-II

- Theory/Criticism: Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble*, pp. 175-193 [“Bodily inscriptions, performative subversions”]; Vivien Jones, “Burney and gender”

Week 9 (4/1): *Evelina*, concluded; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, letters 12-21 [“Marriage Market”]; Hester Chapone, from *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, letters IX + X

PART 5: HISTORY + THE HISTORICAL NOVEL

Week 10 (4/8): Helen Maria Williams, from *Letters Written in France*; Charlotte Smith, “Beachy Head”; William Wordsworth, “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey”; Anna Laetitia Barbauld, “Eighteen Hundred and Eleven”

Friday, 4/12, 5pm: Draft of Research Paper

Week 11 (4/15): Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*

- Theory/Criticism: Barbauld, “On the Uses of History”; Mary Mullen, “Anachronistic Aesthetics: Maria Edgeworth and the ‘Uses’ of History”

In Section: Workshop Research Paper Drafts, including workshop letters

PART 6: DRAMA + DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

Week 12 (4/22): Eliza Haywood, *Fantomina*; Joanna Baillie, from *Plays on the Passions*, “Introductory Discourse”; William Wordsworth, from *Lyrical Ballads*, “Preface”

Week 13 (4/28): Eliza Haywood, *The British Recluse*; Felicia Hemans, from *Records of Woman*, “Arabella Stuart”, “Gertrude, Or Fidelity Till Death”, “The American Forest Girl”, “The Memorial Pillar”, “The Grave of a Poetess”

Thursday 5/2 to Tuesday 5/7: Reading Period; Final Paper DUE Tuesday, 5/7, 5 pm
Junior Tutorial Meeting #4: Presentation on your research

Recommended Secondary Texts

- Gallagher, Catherine. *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace*. U. of California Press, 1994.
- Cheryl Nixon, ed., *Novel Definitions: An Anthology of Commentary on the Novel, 1688-1815*. Broadview, 2009.
- Clarke, Norma. *The Rise and Fall of the Woman of Letters*. Pimlico, 2004.
- Ezell, Margaret J.M., *Writing Women's Literary History*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1993.
- Gilbert, Sandra, and Gubar, Susan, *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Yale UP, 1979.
- Lynch, Deidre. *The Economy of Character*. U of Chicago Press, 1998.
- McDowell, Paula. *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace*. Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Perry, Ruth. *Women, Letters, and the Novel*. AMS Press, 1980.
- Schellenberg, Betty A. *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. Cambridge UP, 2005.
- Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*. Yale UP, 2006.
- Staves, Susan. *A Literary History of Women's Writing in Britain, 1660-1789*. Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Todd, Janet. *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing, and Fiction 1660-1800*. Virago, 1989.
- Turner, Cheryl. *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century*. Routledge, 1992.