

HL 2003: Introduction to Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature
 Growth and Decay in the British Atlantic World
 Semester 1, AY 2023-24

Instructor: Asst Prof. Li Qi Peh

Office Hours: By appointment. Please feel free to arrange a meeting to chat over anything—your drafts, concerns about the course, and so on. No question is too small.

Time: 9:30am to 12:20pm

Venue: The Hive, TR41

Course Description

During the eighteenth century, Britain emerged as a global superpower. This rise was built upon the cultivation and exploitation of its colonies in the Americas and the Caribbean, and shaped the forms and subjects of the many literary texts produced during this period. In this course, we will examine a selection of natural histories, poems, novels, short stories, and plays that engage—either directly or indirectly— with Britain’s global traffic of goods and people. Throughout, we will pay special attention to how different writers harnessed the rhetoric of growth and decay to frame particular bodies and spaces and spaces as more effective for the expansion of empire. By studying the political, ethical, and literary implications of such rhetoric, we will work to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts of modernity, race, death, and the human.

Course Readings

*I strongly recommend that you purchase the editions below for the excellent notes each edition provides for the primary text. However, if you wish to use other editions, whether in hard or soft copy, that is perfectly fine as well.

Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (Hackett Publishing Company, 2011)

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko, the Rover, and Other Works* (Penguin Classics, 2003)

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Penguin Classics, 2001)

John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera and Polly* (Oxford World’s Classics, 2013)

Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall* (Broadview Press, 1995)

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (Penguin Classics, 2003)

M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Wesleyan University Press, 2011)

Mode of Assessment

Participation – 10%

Students are expected to participate in class discussions and any activities conducted within the classroom.

Presentation – 10%

Students will present on a primary text in conversation with a contemporary example, reflecting on parallels and divergences.

Final essay– 30%

Students will write an essay between 2000-2500 words that makes an original scholarly argument about any primary text in the course.

Final essay exam – 50%

Students will respond to a series of short essay questions.

Use of AI tools

The use of AI tools (such as ChatGPT) is forbidden in this class.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1	The Global Eighteenth Century Introductions Course Overview
Week 2	Cultivating Empire Richard Ligon's <i>A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados</i> (1657)
Week 3	Death and Injury in the Plantation Zone Aphra Behn's <i>Oroonoko</i> (1696)
Week 4	Cultivating Property Daniel Defoe's <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719) Selections from John Locke's <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> (1689)
Week 5	Cultivating the 'Ideal' Body Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> (1719), continued
Week 6	Putrid Bodies Selected poems from Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, and John Gay
Week 7	Porous Bodies John Gay's <i>Polly</i> (1728)
MID-TERM BREAK	
Week 8	Disabled Bodies Sarah Scott's <i>Millenium Hall</i> (1762)
Week 9	Rethinking Personhood Selections from James Thomson's <i>The Seasons</i> (1730)

Week 10	Influences of the New Science Jonathan Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1726)
Week 11	Rethinking the Figure of the Human Jonathan Swift's <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> (1726), continued
Week 12	The Atlantic Slave Trade and Social Death M. NourbeSe Philip's <i>Zong!</i> (2008)
Week 13	Course Recap M. NourbeSe Philip's <i>Zong!</i> (2008), continued