

HL2036: Virgins and Vixens of Enlightenment England
****What Women Want in the (very long) Eighteenth Century****
Spring 2016

****THIS IS A PROVISIONAL SYLLABUS: PLEASE REFER TO THE SYLLABUS ON
NTULEARN ONCE THE SEMESTER BEGINS****

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Time: TBA

Location: HSS Seminar Room TBA

Objectives

- To familiarize students with classical and popular texts of English literature and to discuss what is at stake in the process of canonization.
- To stimulate critical thinking about gender roles and the social conditions that challenge or reinforce them.
- To interpret contemporary literature in terms of the literary historical tradition developed over the course of the “long” eighteenth century (1660-1832). This will give students the necessary background to tackle questions of genre, form, intertextuality, and the framing of female desire.

Content

We will be examining the representation of women during the “long” eighteenth century (1660-1832), a period that encompasses the Enlightenment in England. How did women at this time—having few political rights, little financial independence, and existing as legal nonentities when married—respond to the new age of discovery? The title of the course is meant to indicate the binary opposition of “good” and “bad” women with which real, complex women had to work in order to survive in society. The course itself will problematize that opposition in an effort to understand how women in an uncertain but exciting age could form and articulate their voices—as images of God, as rational beings, as rejects and misfits, as companions, wives, mothers, lovers, and citizens—in an effort to contribute to the public and private spheres and establish their own dignity as members of society. We will conclude the semester by examining the relationships between contemporary “popular” fiction and “classic” prose fiction (particularly formal, thematic, and intertextual resonances) in order to better understand why some works of popular fiction (like *Pamela*) make the transition to classical status.

Course Outline

1 Here For Your Entertainment?: Women in the Eighteenth Century

Introduction to the module; historical and theoretical overview.

2 Like a Virgin?: Complicating Binaries

Assignment

Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress"; Dryden's "To the Pious Memory ... of Mrs. Anne Killigrew"; Rochester's "The Imperfect Enjoyment"; Behn's "The Disappointment" (NTULearn)

3 Bad Romance: The Restoration and the Libertine Tradition

Assignment

Aphra Behn's *The Rover* (NTULearn)

4 Miss Independent: Empowerment through Education

Assignment

Astell, selections from *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*; Egerton's "The Liberty" and "The Emulation" (NTULearn)

5 Do What You Want With My Body: Disguise and Performance

Assignment

Haywood's *Fantomina* (NTULearn)

****MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE ****

6 Bad Girls Do It Well: Prostitution and the Augustans

Assignment

Pope's epistle "To a Lady"; Swift's scatological poems and poems to Stella; Lady Mary Wortley Montague's responses to Swift and Pope (NTULearn)

7 Blank Space

NO CLASS

Make-up class: Watch *Twilight* OR a version of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (this may include *Trishna*) and write a one-paragraph response about its representation of the central female character.

****MIDTERM BREAK ****

8 She's My Cherry Pie: Virtue, Power, and Domesticity

Assignment

Richardson's *Pamela*

9 She's My (second slice of) Cherry Pie

Assignment

Richardson's *Pamela*

10 What's Love Got to Do With It?: Sex, Economics, Privilege

Assignment

Johnson's "Misella" letters (NTULearn); Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (NOT *Mary*)

11 I'm Every Woman?: Women Disagreeing about "Woman"

Assignment

Anna Letitia Barbauld's poems; Wollstonecraft, Chapter 2 of *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (NTU Learn); Phyllis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," "To Maecenas," and "A Letter to the Reverend Samson Occom" (NTU Learn and <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2h19t.html>)

12 Love Me Harder: Intertextuality, Agency, and Contemporary Fiction

Assignment

*Fifty Shades of Grey** [OPTIONAL] OR *Twilight* OR *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

*Please note that while reading *Fifty Shades of Grey* is optional we will be discussing it in class in order to talk about the intertextual framing of women's desire, education, and agency in contemporary popular fiction. We will also be discussing *Twilight* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*—both are important intertexts of *Fifty Shades of Grey*.

13 Boys Only Want Love If It's Torture?: Intertextuality, Agency, and Contemporary Fiction, continued

Assignment

Fifty Shades of Grey [OPTIONAL] OR *Twilight* OR *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

FINAL ESSAYS DUE: TBA

Extensions will only be granted for documented cases of medical or family emergencies or for students with FYP projects confirmed by the Division of English (please contact me if you are an FYP student).

Learning Outcome

By the end of the semester students will have learned about the diverse representational options for (and limitations of) women in the period 1660-1832 alongside the economic, legal, political, and social issues that inform choosing among those options. Students will have a firm grounding in the historical and formal developments of English literature as they intersect with the representation of women in the period 1660-1832 and will have an opportunity to apply the analytical skills they have developed throughout the semester to contemporary texts.

Student Assessment

- In-class or online writing exercises/group work: 10%.
- Midterm Project (750-1000 words): 10%. Choose one primary text (a text on the syllabus that was published *before* 1832 and that is *not* an excerpt). Select three works of scholarship (at least one of which must have been published in the last ten years) that focus on your primary text. Summarize the argument of each scholarly work (at least a paragraph for each source) and then briefly evaluate the "scholarly conversation" (You might address questions like: What are the main literary theories that have been used to evaluate your primary text? Have there been any particularly famous or notorious interpretations of the text offered? Who are or have been the main scholars of your primary text? What gaps are there in the conversation?). The assignment must include a Works Cited page and be formatted according to MLA conventions.

- Final Essay (2000-2500 words): 30%. Must be in MLA format, must focus on at least one full text (this may include *Fifty Shades of Grey*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, or *Twilight*) and must incorporate at least three secondary sources. You may choose the same primary text you used for your midterm if you wish. *Alternate assignment*: a creative rewriting of a section of your choice of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. The rewritten section must be at least 2000 words long. This alternate assignment must include a critical section (500 words) in which you use three secondary sources to explain the significance of your revisions.
- Final Essay Exam: 50%

Textbooks/References

Texts on NTULearn

*E.L. James, *50 Shades of Grey* (2011).

***THIS IS AN OPTIONAL TEXT**

ALTERNATE ASSIGNMENT: Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (2005) **OR** Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891).

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1740).

Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria* (1798).