

Heather Anne Wozniak – Sample Syllabus

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH LITERATURE: WRITING THE HUMAN

Course Description

This course will introduce you to the literary and cultural developments that occurred in Britain during the long eighteenth century. In particular, we will pay attention to questions about the nature of humanity. How does the definition of the human, its ideals and capacities, change over time? How does the writer understand his or her role in shaping human experience? How do categories of identification such as gender, race, and class reflect and influence literary representation? Our texts will be drawn from the three major genres—poetry, prose, and drama—which in turn include a variety of subgenres, from satire to biography, tragedy to melodrama, political tract to gothic fiction. In analyzing how eighteenth-century Britons made sense of themselves, we shall come to understand the origins of—and some alternatives to—modern Anglo-American traditions and beliefs.

Course Requirements

1. **Participation** – Attentive listening and active participation is required. You must attend class in order to participate! (10%)
2. **Website Discussion** – You will be required to post a question or comment pertaining to the readings at least once per week on the course website. These comments may be used to guide in-class discussion, and you will find them useful in working out ideas for your papers. Further instructions on this requirement will be distributed in class. (10%)
3. **Quizzes** – There will be four unannounced in-class quizzes. These quizzes will allow you to practice the close reading and analytical skills needed for your papers and final exam. No make-ups for missed quizzes, but the lowest quiz score will be dropped. (10%)
4. **Papers** – Three papers, all requiring you to develop and express a critical argument. The first two will emphasize close reading of specific passages and the third will require you to respond to issues raised in essay prompts (using close reading to support your arguments). (10%, 10%, 20%)
5. **Final Exam** – Three sections will test your familiarity with the authors, texts, and themes covered in the course. Part 1 will ask you to define key terms, characters, and phrases. Part 2 will ask you to identify and explicate passages from the readings. And Part 3 will give you the opportunity to discuss how three writers address a given issue or problem. (30%)

Course Readings

John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, selections from *Of Dramatick Poesie*, Preface to the *Fables, All for Love*

Rochester, "Satyr [against Mankind]," "The Disabled Debauchee," "A Ramble in St. James' Park"

George Etherege, *Man of Mode*

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, "The Introduction," "The Spleen: A Pindarick Poem," "A Nocturnal Reverie"

Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, essays from *The Spectator*, Nos. 1 and 10, those on wit, possibly others

Alexander Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, *Essay on Man*, *The Rape of the Lock*, *Epistle "Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men," Epistle "Of the Character of Women"*

Eliza Haywood, *Love in Excess*

Jonathan Swift, Books 1 and 4 of *Gulliver's Travels*, *A Modest Proposal*, "The Lady's Dressing Room"

George Lillo, *The London Merchant*

Thomas Gray, "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College," "Ode on the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes," "Elegy Written in a Country Church-yard"

Samuel Johnson, "Vanity of Human Wishes," *Rasselas*, Preface to *Shakespeare*, selections from *Lives of the Poets*

Mary Wollstonecraft, selections from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Edmund Burke, selections from *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, selections from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Book of Urizen*, *America*

Charlotte Smith, "The Emigrants"

Ann Yearsley, "On the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade"

Olaudah Equiano, selections from *Interesting Narrative*

Ann Radcliffe, selections from *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

Matthew Lewis, *The Castle Spectre*

William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, "Tintern Abbey," "Expostulation and Reply," "Tables Turned"

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*