

**Carleton University
Department of English
Fall 2009**

ENGL 5402: Subscription Lists in the Eighteenth Century and Their Meaning

**Time: Wednesdays 10:05 – 12:55
Location: 1816DT**

**Instructor: Hugh Reid
Office: 1915DT
Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext 2318
Email: hugh_reid@carleton.ca**

Subscription Lists in the Eighteenth Century and Their Meaning

This course aims to provide students with the context and nature of subscription lists and give students the opportunity for original research in this field. Initially students will be given a theoretical background to subscription lists as we read selections from Roger Chartier, Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Dodex to Computer and The Order of Books. Readers, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries; John Brewer's The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century, as well as Robert Darnton's article, 'What is the History of Books?'. Then to get a practical understanding of the nature of subscription lists we will read P. J. Wallis's "Book Subscription Lists" and selections from Philip Gaskell's, A New Introduction to Bibliography. After that, I shall give some lessons on how the 18th century book trade worked: how was paper made, how was type set, how were books printed and bound, what was the role of bookseller, of publishing congers, etc. The hope is that they will then have an understanding of the trade sufficient to deal with book subscriptions. Then each shall pick a subscription list to work on. This kind of work could not have been done at Carleton in the past because the library's holdings in antiquarian books was inadequate. Now, however, we can access almost all the books published in the 18th century by subscription (some 3,000). Students may choose any list. For example, if they are interested in female poets they might chose Mary Leapor whose work was published posthumously by subscription. In the seminar, they will report on what they have learned and what has evaded them. As each student reports we will discuss how each may progress. There are so many things which we can learn from subscription lists and very little has been done in this field in the past. Some of the topics which may be examined might include the number of female subscribers, the number of people from the mercantile class, the number of members of the aristocracy, or from academia, or the clergy, or other sub groups. How did this subscription list fit into the publishing industry in the eighteenth century?

By the end of the course, the hope is that each student will have done sufficient research (and learned how to do it) to produce a paper worthy of presentation at a conference or as an article in a journal.