

Carleton University
Fall 2019
Department of English

ENGL 4976A/ENGL 5402F: Issues in Postcolonial Literature

Topic: Transatlantic Fictions

Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing or permission of the department.

Monday, 8:35 a.m. – 11:25 a.m.

Location: 1816 Dunton Tower

Instructor: Dr. Patricia Whiting

Office: 1810 Dunton Tower

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email: Patricia_Whiting@carleton.ca

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

NB: Minor adjustments may be made to evaluation and assignments in response to course enrollment. The final version of the course outline will be posted to CULearn by August 29.

DESCRIPTION:

For English readers during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth-century, the United States of America was no such thing, but one of several exotic colonies of a burgeoning British Empire. For the last quarter, it was an upstart, independent country. The British public, most of whom never left England, learned about America through books and periodicals, many of which were written by people who likewise never crossed the Atlantic. Nevertheless, the range and diversity of texts that dealt with the American colonies is surprisingly wide. Some, such as Defoe's *Colonel Jack* and Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, advocate for political action in England. *The Female American*, Edward Kimber's *Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson*, and Charlotte Lennox's *Euphemia* consider relations between the English and Native Americans. Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* and Samuel Jackson Pratt's *Emma Corbett* transplant the English novel of sensibility onto American soil, and, in the Revolutionary Decade, Robert Bage and George Walker use America in their respective satirical novels to heap scorn on their respective political enemies in England.

The course will focus on British literature that is set in both England and America and will consider historical matters of slavery, indigenous peoples, emigration, piracy, shipwrecks, kidnapping, indentured servitude, and revolution, examining the novels' representation of historical and postcolonial issues and the diverse ways that authors portray a realistic, if often politically inflected, America. We will also examine purely instrumental representations that had little to do with America and everything to do with contemporary England. Insofar as the eighteenth-century novel formed a crucial aspect of the project to establish the hegemony of the emergent middling classes, we will consider how transatlantic fictions worked to promote this aim through condemnation of a decadent aristocracy and the triumph of virtuous upward mobility, as well as the role of both of these groups in the settlement of America. We will also examine specific ways that these texts conformed to readers' demands that their reading matter not only interest and entertain them but also instruct them in improving ways.

Required texts:

Bage, Robert. *Hermesprong* (Broadview)

Defoe, Daniel. *Colonel Jack* (Broadview)

Equiano, Olaudah. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Broadview)

Kimber, Edward. *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson* (Broadview)

Lennox, Charlotte. *Euphemia* (Broadview)

Pratt, Samuel Jackson. *Emma Corbett* (Broadview)

Rowson, Susanna. *Charlotte Temple* (Oxford)

Walker, George. *The Vagabond* (Broadview)

Winkfield, Unca Eliza. *The Female American* (Broadview)

These texts are available at Octopus Books, 116 Third Avenue. The Broadview editions will be shrink-wrapped in

sets of four and offered at a discounted price.

Grade distribution (subject to adjustment):

Seminar presentation (25-30 minutes) 20%

Background presentation (10 - 15 minutes) 15%

Roundtable discussion #1 5%

Roundtable discussion #2 5%

Written work (choice of nine insight reports (450 words for fourth-year students; 550 words for graduate students) **or** a formal essay (16-18 pages for fourth-year students; 18-20 pages for graduate students) 45%

Attendance and participation 10%

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

1. **Attendance:** Class attendance is mandatory. Excused absences must be medically documented. Absences for work reasons will not be excused. Students who attend only part of a class will lose attendance points for that class. Students with more than one unexcused absence will lose all ten attendance points from the final grade.

All students are expected to contribute productively to every class and on every novel. Students will receive a penalty for each class in which they do not substantively participate. The participation mark will be based on demonstration of knowledge of the texts being discussed and the relevance and contribution value of comments.

PLEASE NOTE: Unless a student has a documented accommodation, the use of laptops or other electronic devices is not permitted in this seminar.

2. **Presentations:** Each student will make two presentations: A) a 15-minute background presentation on a predetermined topic relevant to the novel being discussed, and B) a 25-30-minute individual seminar that makes a focused argument regarding an aspect of the novel.

NB: Students may not give their background presentation and individual seminar on the same novel.

- A) **Background Presentation:** Because students will have had different levels of exposure to 18th-century and post-colonial literature and history, these 15-minute presentations will provide background important to reading individual novels, such as the Sensibility Movement, the captivity narrative, the French and Indian Wars, and indentured servitude. Although research needn't be exhaustive, the presentation serves as a lesson for other members of the class and should reflect an appropriate amount of preparation and research.
- B) **Individual seminar:** Each student will present a 25-30 minute individual seminar that makes a focused argument regarding an aspect of the novel being discussed. On the night before the presentation, the presenter will e-mail an abstract of the presentation to each member of the class and to me. On the day of the presentation, the presenter will hand in a legible hard copy of seminar notes (may be informal) and a proper Works Cited page containing a minimum of three relevant secondary sources.

A note about seminar presentations:

- 1. Don't take on too much. Your argument should be informed, straightforward, and intelligible.
- 2. Practice aloud for clarity, coherence, and timing.
- 3. Complex theoretical ideas that work well in an essay are difficult to follow in an oral presentation. Make sure that your ideas are clearly understood by the class.
- 4. Make eye contact and speak clearly, audibly, and at an appropriate pace. People unused to giving presentations often intuitively speak much faster than they normally do.
- 5. Use up but do not exceed your allotted time.
- 6. You may read your presentation or speak more informally from notes, whichever is more comfortable for

you.

A note about PowerPoint presentations:

1. In general, use keywords and phrases rather than complete sentences on slides.
2. Do not read from your slides.
3. Show quotations only if you are going to discuss or explicate them.
4. Vary your slides by using images when appropriate.
5. Don't substituted visual cleverness for intellectual substance.

Remember that PowerPoint can add to or detract from a seminar presentation.

3. Roundtable discussions: In the last 40 minutes or so of each class, a roundtable discussion will be led by groups of students. Each student will participate in two roundtable discussion groups. Three days or so before the class, each group should request the general topic from the seminar presenters to avoid duplication and should take note of the background subjects for that day. The roundtable discussion questions should also deal in part with the themes and aims of the course. Half of the mark of each roundtable discussion will be peer-determined.

Students may not lead roundtable discussions on the novels on which they present their individual seminar, but they may lead one roundtable discussion on the novel on which they present their background seminar.

Students will sign up for a background presentation, an individual seminar, and two roundtable discussions on the first day of class.

4. Written Work: On September 23, students will commit to one of the following additional methods of evaluation:

Option 1. Nine double-spaced insight reports to be submitted *before* the beginning of class on the day each novel will be discussed. The insight reports are intended to stimulate sustained and thoughtful reflection on the novels themselves. Each report is worth 5% of the final grade. Rather than being formal, academic papers, these reports should reflect genuine critical engagement with the texts and will be marked on thoughtfulness, originality, quality of analysis, and quality of written expression. Note that insight reports are not reader response papers; the best way to avoid this is not to refer to the reader at all. In addition, insight reports must show evidence of students having read the entire text. Insight reports that focus on the opening chapters only will be penalized. **Failure to submit all nine insight reports will result in a loss of 45% in the final grade.**

Option 2. A formal research essay to be submitted at the end of the term. This paper should give evidence of substantial research (a minimum of three secondary sources), should present a compelling and convincing argument, and should be beautifully written. The paper should concern at least three texts from the course. The research paper is due on December 2.

Late assignments will not be accepted without a valid doctor's certificate.

5. Collaboration: Although you are encouraged to talk with each other about assignments and to review each other's work, all assignments written for evaluation are to be the original work of individual students.

6. Plagiarism: The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;

- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>

VII. Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website:

carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Religious obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website:

carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. carleton.ca/pmc

Survivors of Sexual Violence

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support

Accommodation for Student Activities

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

SYLLABUS

September 9 – Introductions

September 16 – Laying the groundwork

September 23 – *Colonel Jack*

September 30 – *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Anderson*

October 7 – *The Female American*

October 14 – THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS

October 21 – READING WEEK

October 28 – *Emma Corbett*

November 4 – *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*

November 11 – *Euphemia*

November 18 – *Charlotte Temple*

November 25 – *Hernsprong*

December 2 – *The Vagabond*

December 6 – Make-up Class