

Carleton University
Winter 2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

ENGL 3500B: Literatures and Cultures 1700-1900

Prerequisite: third year standing or permission of the Department
Precludes additional credit for ENGL 3502 (no longer offered).

Instructor: Professor J. Murray
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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change. A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

Course Description:

This course offers students an introduction both to a range of British literary and cultural texts from 1700-1900, and to basic methodologies of literary study. Situating the literature we read in its historical, cultural, and political contexts, we will analyse in detail the language and forms in which our authors articulated and critiqued some of the key issues of their day. From the prehistory of #MeToo and Black Lives Matter, to the rise of the novel alongside the rise of empire, from rapidly expanding urban centres and colonial outposts to rapidly expanding reading audiences, we will examine these issues in detail. At the same time, we will pay close attention to conventions of genre and their transformations across the period, in order better to understand the ways in which the formal properties of texts shape both the expression of particular social-historical formations, and our interaction with those formations.

Learning Outcomes:

- you will learn to read a range of literary texts in Britain from the early 18th-century to the late 19th-century and establish a sense of the chronology of British literature.
- you will learn to situate literary texts in the context of their historical and cultural moments.
- you will develop a vocabulary of key critical terms that are commonly used in literary study.
- you will improve your writing skills. Students will work on their ability to construct engaging, concise, and persuasive arguments.

Required Texts:

Custom coursebook from Broadview Press (available from Carleton Campus Bookstore).
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (Broadview Press)
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Broadview Press)

Print editions of these books are available for purchase at the Carleton University Bookstore.

Course Requirements:

Quizzes – 20% (4 in total)
Midterm test – 30% (written in-person, in class)
Final exam – 40% (written in April examination period)
Participation/Attendance – 10% (includes attendance and participation in class discussion)