English 618—Readings in Eighteenth-Century British Literature

ENGL 618—Readings in Eighteenth-Century British Literature. Wide reading in British literature of the 18th Century; introduction of major figures, genres, and issues in the period; introduction to current critical conversations in 18th Century literary studies, including historical and social contexts.

This course will examine works written by British subjects during the eighteenth century. The emphasis of the course will be on how these texts relate to each other and to their sociopolitical contexts. Our objective is to understand the historical, cultural and literary contexts in which these authors produced their works. The works we will be reading represent several genres—poetry, drama, novel, periodical, political treatise, travel writing—and we’ll be discussing the particular innovations in these genres during the eighteenth century. We will study visual and imperial culture during the period, attending to the ways that these writers and artists represented English and Continental cultures, as well as cultures of the Near East and the New World. We’ll think about the circulation of objects and people and the practices of collecting in the eighteenth century.

We will also attend to developments in contemporary (to us) scholarship concerned with the writings of the eighteenth century. Students should be able to analyze primary texts, incorporate secondary texts into research, produce well-argued analysis with awareness of the historical context for the works.

Readings could include:
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*
Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or virtue Rewarded*
Lady Mary Whortley Montagu, *Letters from Constantinople*
Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*
Olaudah Equiano. *The Interesting Life of Olaudah Equiano*
Frances Burney, *Evelina*
Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley, *Mary, Maria and Matilda*
William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*

Writings of Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, Anna Seward, Thomas Paine, Helen Maria Williams, Charlotte Smith, William Blake, Sir Joseph Banks (naturalist), Thomas Clarkson, and Maria Edgeworth.

**We won’t make it to all of these readings, but this will give you a sense of the texts.**