This course will examine works written by English, Scottish, and Irish women writers in the late-eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. The central topic of this course is the political engagement demonstrated by these women across a range of subjects and genres. These authors address such issues as slavery and abolition, education, poverty, the French Revolution, labor laws, Anglo-Irish relations, and the expansion of the British Empire. While some authors, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, employ the form of the political treatise to voice their opinions, most choose more subtle forms, from fictional letters to the novel to poetry, as conduits for their political messages. Our objective is to understand the historical, cultural and literary contexts in which these authors produced their works and the multiple ways in which women situated themselves as political activists. The authors we will read represent both radical and conservative ideologies. These writings by women will challenge our notions of the relationship between gender, society, and power.

This course could possibly fulfill either of the two following distributions:
One course in any literature, pre-1800 or One course in any literature, 1800-the present

Potential Primary Readings (this is a sampler; we will not read everything below):
Anna Laetitia Barbauld. Selected Poetry and Prose.
Catherine Cappe. Account of Two Charity Schools for the Education of Girls (1800).
Maria Edgeworth. Castle Rackrent (1800).
- - -. Ennui (1809).
- - -. selected tales and stories.
Maria Callcott Graham. Journal of a Residence in Chile (1824).
Elizabeth Hamilton. Letters of a Hindoo Rajah (1796).
- - -. Memoirs of Modern Philosophers (1800).
Mary Hays. Female Biography (1803).
Mary Leadbeater. Cottage Dialogues among the Irish Peasantry (1811).
Lady Mary Whortley Montagu. Embassy to Constantinople: The Travels of Lady Mary Whortley Montagu (letters originally pub. 1763).
Sydney Owenson. The Wild Irish Girl (1806).
- - -. Florence Macarthy (1818).
- - -. Woman and Her Master (1840).
Mary Prince. The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave (1831)
Anna Seward. “Colebrookdale” (c. 1790)
Charlotte Tonna. Helen Fleetwood: A Tale of the Factories (1843)
- - -. Selections from the Christian Lady’s Magazine (1836-1846)
Helen Maria Williams. Letters Written in France (1790)
Mary Wollstonecraft. Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796).
- - -. The Wrongs of Woman; or, Maria (1798).
- - -. A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792).
Anne Yearsley. A Poem on the Inhumanity of the Slave Trade (1788).