

English L626/History H699: Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Studies
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Mondays, 3:35-5:30

Rebecca Spang and Richard Nash

From the Age of Johnson to the era of the transatlantic slave trade, from the Age of Reason to the cult of sensibility: the eighteenth century has been many different things to many different scholars. Since the founding of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in 1967 (and of the International Society, more than a decade later), the long eighteenth century (1688-1815) has also been institutionalized as one of the most established sites of self-proclaimed inter- and multi-disciplinary conversation within the academy. This course aims to introduce students to some of those discussions. Our focus will be on key eighteenth-century texts and recent interpretative debates but we will also be attentive to the history of the field itself. How, we will ask, have our chronologies and geographies of the eighteenth century changed over the past fifty years, and why? How has the field responded to (and perhaps shaped) broader shifts in the study of literature, history, and the arts? All required readings will be in English but students with relevant expertise are encouraged to write on non-English materials.

Requirements and Assessment: We will meet in weekly seminars and regular, engaged participation is expected. More than one absence may result in a failing grade for the course (regardless of grades on written work). Final grades will be determined by participation (25%) and three short-ish assignments (roughly 3-4 single-spaced pages each; 25% each). You must do three of the following (for more details, see the website):

- review of reviews—based on at least three reviews of a single book in eighteenth-century studies (published 1950-present) describe and (more important) account for the differences and similarities between reviews;
- reception history—pick one eighteenth-century text we read for discussion and write a short account of at least three moments in its reception;
- “this day in history”—pick today’s date for one eighteenth-century year. On the basis of at least three primary sources for that date, write a short account of the day. You may want to emphasize what contemporaries considered newsworthy and/or you may want to focus on how you (as historian-critic) can use the many details that are mentioned but not treated as “news.”
- chronology exercise—write a timeline useful for interpreting one eighteenth-century text. (For instance, if your text were *Sorrows of Young Werther*, you would probably include the year of Goethe’s birth. What else?)
- “Pop! goes the eighteenth century”—this panel title from last year’s ASECS meeting reminds us that the eighteenth century is of vital interest to many communities outside the academy (from Revolutionary War re-enactors to Janeites). Compare and contrast one such version of the eighteenth century to that you find in recent scholarship.

Schedule of Classes

Aug. 25: Introductions—What does the eighteenth century mean to you?
Sept. 1: no class (Labor Day)

What was eighteenth-century studies? (c. 1950s-1980)

Sept. 8: Classics
Sept. 15: Enlightenment

Classics and Enlightenment under pressure

Sept. 22: Ancients and Moderns
Sept. 29: Critical Theory, Politics, and History

What did eighteenth-century studies become? (c. 1985-2010)

Oct. 6: Public Sphere and Private Life
Oct. 13: Persons and Property
Oct. 20: Nations and Revolutions
Oct. 27: The Global, Imperial, Colonial, Post-Colonial, and/or Atlantic Turn(s)
Nov. 3: New Worlds

And what might it be?

Nov. 10: Catastrophes and Improvement
Nov. 17: Networks, Materiality, and Non-Human Agents
Nov. 24: no class (Thanksgiving Break)
Dec. 1: Eighteenth-century Studies without the History
Dec. 8: In which the end of the semester arrives and everything is concluded.

Required Reading (for further bibliographical suggestions, links, etc., see the website).

These readings are all either linked from the website, quickly found in digital form via the Library website, or easily acquired in paperback. Many, of course, can also be borrowed in hard copy from the Wells Library or consulted in their eighteenth-century format at the Lilly. Titles marked * you probably want to buy in some form.

What was Eighteenth-Century Studies?

Classics

Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler* nos. 1-5, 18, and 39 (1750);
* Voltaire, *Candide* (1759)—the Norton Critical edition is good but not essential;
W. Jackson Bate, *Samuel Johnson* (1977), selections;
Northrop Frye, "Toward Defining an Age of Sensibility," *ELH* 23 (1956), 144-152;
Robert Hopkins and Arthur McGuinness, "Editorial," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1(1967);
Eighteenth-Century Studies 4:4, 500-506 and 5:1, 201-208 (summer-fall 1971), Report on the Second Annual Meeting of ASECS;
Lester Crocker, "Professor Wolper's Interpretation of *Candide*," *ECS* 5:1 (1971), 145-56.

Enlightenment

Robert Hooke, "Preface" to *Micrographia* (1665);
Isaac Newton, "Rules of Reasoning" from *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*), or "the *Principia*" (1687);
Diderot, art. "Encyclopedia" and Du Marsais art. "Philosopher" in Diderot and D'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie* (1751-1772);
Johnson, "Preface" to *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755);
Voltaire, "Philosophe" and "Philosophy" in his *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764);
Immanuel Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" (1780);
Peter Gay, "The Little Flock of Philosophes", pp. 3-19 of *The Rise of Modern Paganism* (1966) (volume one of his *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*);
Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967), chap. 2.

Classics and Enlightenment Under Pressure

Ancients and Moderns

Charles Perrault, "The Century of Louis the Great" (1687);
Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, *Digression on the Ancients and the Moderns* (1688);
Jonathan Swift, "The Battle of the Books" in his *A Tale of a Tub* (1704);
Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (1748) selections;
Denis Hollier, ed., *A New History of French Literature* (1999), articles on Perrault (1687 and 1700);
Joseph Levine, "Pope's *Illiad*," in his *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (1991).

Critical Theory, Politics, and History

- Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" and "The Panopticon" in Paul Rabinowitz, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (1984) and online;
- Max Horkheimer, "Reason Against Itself: Some Remarks on Enlightenment" *Theory, Culture, and Society* 10:2 (1993), 79-88;
- W. Jackson Bate, "The Crisis in English Studies," *Harvard Magazine* (Sept.-Oct. 1982), 46-54; Stanley Fish, "Profession Despise Thyself: Fear and Loathing in Literary Studies," *Critical Inquiry* 10:2 (Dec. 1983), 349-364 and then Bate's reply in the same issue;
- Laura Brown and Felicity Nussbaum, eds., *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature* (1987), introduction;
- at least one of the following:
- Robert Darnton, "High Enlightenment and Low Life of Literature" in his *Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982), available as an e-book via IUCAT;
- John Bender, "Fielding and the Juridical Novel" in his *Imagining the Penitentiary* (1987);
- J. Paul Hunter, "Novels and History and Northrop Frye," in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 24: 2 (1990-1991), 225-241;
- Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Jane Austen and the Masturbating Girl," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 818-838;
- and, if you have time, William Epstein, "Counter-Intelligence: Cold-War Criticism and Eighteenth-century Studies," *ELH* 57:1 (1990), 63-99.

What did eighteenth-century studies become? (c. 1985-2010)

Public Sphere and Private Life

- Addison and Steele: *The Tatler* no. 1 ("On Coffeehouses") and no. 155 ("The Political Upholsterer"); *The Spectator* no. 1 (introducing Mr. Spectator), 10 ("Popularity of the Papers"), 367 ("Benefits of the Paper"), 435 ("Popular Taste for News"), and 568 ("Political Misreading of *The Spectator*);
- The Female Tatler* (1709-1710) by "A Lady That Knows Everything," selections;
- Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962; 1989) chapter two;
- Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987), chapter 2—available as an e-book via IUCAT;
- Keith Michael Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention" in his *Inventing the French Revolution* (1989);
- Michael Warner, "The *Res publica* of letters" in his *The Letters of the Republic* (1990);
- Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (1993), Introduction and chapter six.

Persons and Property

John Locke, *Second Treatise on Civil Government* (1690), Introduction-Chapter Six;
Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776),
Book One, Chapters 1-3 (at least);
Raymond Williams, “Individual,” in his *Keywords* (1976);
Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of
Wealth and Society* (1998), chapter 4—available as an e-book via IUCAT;
Julian Hoppit, “Compulsion, Compensation and Property Rights in Britain, 1688–1833,”
Past & Present 210 (2011), 93-128;
Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery and the Philosophy of
History* (2005), 3-18, 94-112.
reviews of Baucom in “Romantic Circles,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, and H-
HistGeog

Nations and Revolutions

Sieyès, “What is the Third Estate?” (1789);
Simón Bolívar, “The Letter from Jamaica” (1815);
Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of
Nationalism* (1983), pp. 5-45—available as an e-book via IUCAT;
Lynn Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution,” *Representations*
2 (1983), 95-117;
Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Thomas Jefferson, Natural Language, and the
Culture of Performance* (1993), pp. 1-28—available as an e-book IUCAT;
Christopher Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (2004), chapter 3.

The global, imperial, and/or Atlantic turn

Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), selection.
Ken Pomeranz, “Political Economy and Ecology on the Eve of Industrialization: Europe,
China, and the Global Conjecture.” *American Historical Review* 107.2 (April
2002): 425-46;
Felicity Nussbaum, ed., *The Global Eighteenth Century* (2003), introduction;
Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (2011);
introduction and chapter 5 (“Experiences of Empire”) —available as an e-book
via IUCAT;
Kathleen Wilson, “Rowe’s *Fair Penitent* as Global History: or, a diversionary voyage to
New South Wales,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41:2 (2008) 231-251;
* Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or
Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789); the Penguin edition is recommended but
there are many others.

New Worlds

* Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); you might want the Norton edition of this.
* Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), Part III; many desirable editions (including
Norton, Bedford, Riverside).

and at least one of the following

- John Richetti, "Defoe: Mapping Social Totality," in his *The English Novel in History, 1700-1870* (1999);
- Wolfram Schmidgen, "Robinson Crusoe, Enumeration, and the Mercantile Fetish," *ECS* 35:1 (2001), 19-39;
- Hans Turley, "Protestant Evangelicalism, British imperialism, and Crusoian Identity," in Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, and Modernity in Britain and the Empire* (2004);
- Jayne Lewis, "The Atmospheres of *Robinson Crusoe*" in her *Air's Appearance: Literary Atmosphere in British Fiction* (2012).

What might eighteenth-century studies become?

Catastrophes and Improvement

- Voltaire, "Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake" (1756);
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Letter to Voltaire Regarding the Poem on the Lisbon Earthquake, Aug. 18, 1756";
- David Marshall, "The Problem of the Picturesque" *ECS* 35:3 (2002);
- Ivonne del Valle, "From José de Acosta to the Enlightenment: Barbarians, Climate Change, and (Colonial) Technology as the End of History" *ECTI* 54:4 (2013);
- Greg Garrard, "Pastoral" and "Dwelling" in his *Ecocriticism* (2012);
- Fabien Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, "Modernity's Frail Climate: A Climate History of Environmental Reflexivity" *Critical Inquiry* 38.3 (Spring 2012): 579-598.

Networks, Materiality, and Non-Human Agents

- Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man" (1734), selections;
- William Somerville, "The Chase" (1735), selections;
- Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), 1-22;
- Richard Nash, "A Pygmy in London," in his *Wild Enlightenment* (2003);
- Barbara Benedict, "The Spirit of Things," in Mark Blackwell, ed., *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (2007)—e-book via Library;
- J.R. McNeill, "Atlantic Empires and Caribbean Ecology," chapter 2 of his *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean* (2010)—e-book;
- Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Qui Parle* 19:2 (2011), 121-158.

Eighteenth-century Studies without the History

- Marjorie Levinson, "Reflections on the New Historicism," *European Romantic Review* 23:3 (June 2012), 355-362;
- Rita Felski, "Context Stinks!" *New Literary History* 42:4 (Autumn 2011), 573-591;
- Michel Chaouli, "Criticism and Style," *New Literary History* 44 (2013), 323-344;
- [further readings to be added].

In which the end of the semester arrives and everything is concluded

Paula Backsheider, “The Futures of Eighteenth-Century Studies”; and

Sarah McCleave, “Teaching the Eighteenth Century: Historical Study Through Performance”; and

Marie-Pascale Pieretti, “When Wikipedists Meet Encyclopedists...” all in *Digital Defoe: Studies in Defoe and his Contemporaries* 3:1 (Fall 2011);

Rob Hardy, “Ancients and Moderns and the Public Use of Learning,” *Digital Defoe: Studies in Defoe and his Contemporaries* 5:1 (Fall 2013);

[further readings to be added].