Changing the Subject:

The Literature of the Middle and Later Eighteenth Century

In this course we will read a selection of exciting and significant works of eighteenth-century literature and explore how they contribute to the creation of new literary modes and to the formation of modern notions of personal identity.

Some of these developments are pretty well known. The eighteenth century is often viewed as the period of the "rise of the novel," in Ian Watt's phrase. Such a view may be debated, but the period certainly is a time of tremendous experimentation in the literary techniques known as "formal realism," and in narrative techniques more generally. Many of the literary devices commonly associated with modernist writers such as Joyce and Woolf were in fact pioneered in the eighteenth century. Other eighteenth-century literary developments have been rediscovered over the last decade or so. For example, this is the first period in which English women writers produce a "literature of their own," especially in fiction, culminating with the outstanding achievement of Jane Austen. Thus after 1740 we can say that the subject of literature changes in a double sense: on the one hand, new notions of the individual are elaborated in literature (especially in fiction); while, on the other hand, members of socially subordinated groups (such as women, labourers, and African slaves) start to exercise--and create--new forms of literary expression. These two trends come together in the literary modes of biography and autobiography, genres that were practised not only by elite male writers such as James Boswell, but by a host of "scribblers" that included plebeian women and former slaves. Politically, these "techniques of the self," to borrow Michel Foucault's phrase, can be said to have been manifested in the two revolutionary moments of the period: the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789.

Rather than approach our readings through a chronological survey, I have grouped the material we will be studying under three headings--technologies of the novel; parodies of print; and subaltern subjects. In each case we will be sampling both venerable classics and some upstart contenders to the canon, and considering how common questions and devices serve to organize each of these three textual fields.

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Office: Hagey Hall 257, ext. 2416
Office hours: 2:00-3:00 Wednesday and 1:30-2:30 Thursday, or by appointment

Required Texts:
  Robert DeMaria, Jr., British Literature, 1640-1789: An Anthology (Blackwell)
Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (Penguin)
Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility* (Oxford)

**Recommended Texts:**

**Assignments:** Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class (5%); 2 quizzes (5% each = 10%); mid-term or 20-minute presentation on a longer work (or set of shorter works) on the syllabus (your choice = 20%); 7 or 8-page paper (25%); and a final examination (40%).

As a matter of courtesy to the instructor and other students, it is important that all students make an effort to have course readings completed, when possible, in advance of class discussions. The first quiz will be held in class on February 6; the second on March 13. For those who choose to write it, the mid-term will be held in class on February 15. Presentation slots (for groups of two) will be limited; a sign-up sheet for presentations will circulate starting in the second week of classes. The paper is due in class on March 20. Papers must be typed and double-spaced; if using a word-processor, please laser print, and do not use right justification. A page is 250 words. Papers must follow the format for citation and quotation laid out in the *MLA Handbook*. Papers late without prior permission may be penalized 2% per day. Uncompleted assignments will be graded F-.

**NOTE:** Please keep a photocopy of any paper you submit, and never hand a paper in by sliding it under (or sticking it to) my office door.
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SYLLABUS

January 4: Introduction

I. Technologies of the Novel

Samuel Johnson, *Rambler*, No. 4 (H = Handout)
Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (pp. 43-148 + pp. 221-278 supplementary)

Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*

January 25, 30; February 1: Ideas of the “Novel” Part 3: Free Indirect Discourse:
Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*

II. Parodies of Print

February 6, 8 & 13: Printing Madness:
Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub* (in DeMaria): please read as much of
this work as you are able, but concentrate on: (1) the prefatory
material (pp. 578-89); (2) sections 5, 7, and 9; and (3) the
conclusion

February 15: Midterm

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February 27; March 1: Grub Street’s Anti-Epic:
Alexander Pope, *The Dunciad Variorum* (1729 version only—selections
in DeMaria)
March 6, 8 & 13: Bedlam's Anti-Encyclopaedia:
    Christopher Smart, *Jubilate Agno* (Reserve): verses A1-20; B1-100;
    B475-768 + C1-162 supplementary

III. Subaltern Subjects

March 15 & 20: Literary Contests:
    Stephen Duck, "The Thresher's Labour" (selections in DeMaria)
    Mary Collier, "The Woman's Labour" (in DeMaria)
    Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village" (in DeMaria)
    George Crabbe, "The Village" (selections in DeMaria)

March 22: Foreign Agents:
    Phillis Wheatley, selected poems (H)
    William Blake, "The Little Black Boy" and "The Chimney Sweeper"
        (both versions) (in DeMaria)
    Ignatius Sancho, excerpt from *The Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, An African* (H)

March 27 & 29: Literacy and Liberation:
    Samuel Johnson, *Rambler*, No. 60 (H)
    Frances Burney, *Journals* (selections in DeMaria)
    Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (chapters 1-5 + 10-12 supplementary)

April 3: Conclusion and Review