Eighteenth-Century Women Writers

Course Description

In this course we will focus on reading a selection of exciting and significant works by women writers from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen. Eighteenth-century literature is dynamic, social, and modern. It is the period in which many contemporary genres of literature, such as the novel and biography, and in which many popular forms, such as the Gothic and the sentimental, are invented. But it is also a period in which the woman writer comes into her own in English, in which a women’s tradition of writing is established, and in which issues that seem very contemporary to us today about the construction of gender, marriage, female consciousness, female experience, and women’s rights were first addressed in literature. For a long time after the end of the eighteenth century this fact was forgotten, and when feminist scholars began to recover the tradition of women’s writing, they often started with Austen and went from her to the Victorians in short order. But this course covers authors up to Austen and will show you, among other things, just how many foremothers that great author had.

NOTE: some of the eighteenth-century literature which we will be reading and discussing in this course deals with mature themes and explicit sexual content; if you wish to request an accommodation with respect to such material, please contact the instructor in the first week of classes.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

1. Have a sophisticated grasp of some key works by women writers from Aphra Behn to Jane Austen.

2. Understand some of the principal developments in the literary history of the period 1660-1800, especially with respect to gender and women’s writing.

3. Be familiar with a range of critical approaches to eighteenth-century women’s writing.

4. Practice constructing insightful, well-evidenced, and clearly-formed arguments about literary works in general, and women’s writing in particular.
5. Communicate verbally ideas and insights about gender and women’s writing clearly and effectively.

6. Develop advanced skills in literary research and analysis.

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**Logistics**

Office: Hagey Hall 267, ext. 33359  
Office hours: Monday 2:30-3:30 pm or by appointment  
Email: easton@uwaterloo.ca

**Required Texts**

Anne Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance* (Oxford World’s Classics)

**Assignments**

Attendance and active preparation for and participation in class discussions and group exercises (10%); in-class midterm essay or 15-minute group presentation (your choice = 20%); term paper (30%); and a final examination (40%).

Students will prepare course readings ahead of the relevant classes and will actively participate in class discussions and exercises. Class exercises may include short written or spoken responses to the texts we are studying. Group exercises will include short activities on men’s writing and on the Burney Papers. Group presentations, for those who choose to deliver one, will be scheduled for dates starting in February; they will take the form of an explication of a suitable work by an eighteenth-century woman writer that is not already on our syllabus (this can either be a work by a writer not on the syllabus or a work that is not on the syllabus by a writer who is).

For those who choose to write it, the midterm will be held on February 12. The term paper will be due at the start of class on March 25.

**Course Expectations**

Participation and Attendance:

Participation, attendance, and group work are required for this course. To receive full marks for attendance, you will need to come to class. If you must miss a class due to
illness or a family emergency, you will need to provide formal documentation from Health Services or Counselling Services.

To receive full marks for participation in this course, you will need to engage actively in class discussions and activities, as well as group exercises. Keep in mind that in most workplaces, as well as in academic contexts, it is commonplace to work in teams to craft communications or to speak to large or small groups on various matters--so these academic activities in class are relevant to your success right now on co-op terms as well as to your future working life. Nevertheless, if you feel anxiety about formal or informal public speaking, please meet with your instructor in the first week of class to discuss accommodations. Generally speaking, such accommodations may include weekly goals for increasing participation over the course of the term and alternative forms of participation. Failure to participate without having arranged for accommodations or without meeting the requirements of your arranged accommodation will result in deductions to your grade.

Electronic Devices

Use of electronic devices is not normally permitted at class meetings in this course. Phones and tablets must be turned off and stowed, and laptops must remain closed. Any accommodations for the regular use of electronic devices in this class must be requested in the first week of classes.

Course Text

The required texts for this course are mandated for all readings and assignments and you must use these exact editions so that all students have a reliable text, can follow specific passages, and can cite from common sources for the term paper. In particular, Robert DeMaria’s *British Literature 1640-1789*, 4th ed. is an outstanding one-volume collection of eighteenth-century literature’s “greatest hits,” including women’s texts, and comes with excellent introductions to each writer and solid explanatory notes. We’ll be using DeMaria’s anthology as our main text (apart from the two novels) because of its excellence, of course, but also because we need to have a set anthology in order to have reliable course texts and uniform translations, uniform selections, and uniform page references for all of our readings.

Late Policy

Barring a serious medical reason that is formally documented from Health or Counselling Services, all late assignments will be penalized 5 points for the first day, and 2 points for every day thereafter, including weekend days and holidays, and uncompleted or missed assignments will be graded 0 points. In cases where a midterm or final examination is rescheduled based on formal documentation from Health Services or Counselling Services, the reset midterm or final examination may include an oral component.
Paper Format

Papers must follow MLA format, be typed, double-spaced, printed out on one side of the page, and fastened with a staple (DO NOT use plastic report folders or other fasteners or covers); please do not use right justification. Papers must follow the format for paper presentation, quotations, and references set out in the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed.

Note: Please keep a copy of every assignment you submit to me, and NEVER hand a paper or any other assignment in by sliding it under (or sticking it to) my office door.

Plagiarism

Students must follow at all times both University and Faculty regulations on plagiarism (see especially Policy 71). Note, in particular, that all must be your own, and the words and ideas of others must appear within your work inside quotation marks and with complete references. Demonstrated instances of plagiarism in your work for this course will be subject to academic penalties. (See below for more information on academic integrity.)

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Additional Information

Academic Integrity and Discipline

*Academic Integrity:* In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Check the [Office of Academic Integrity webpage](#) for more information.

*Discipline:* A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check the Office of Academic Integrity](#) for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline](#). For typical penalties, check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties](#).

Grievances and Appeals
**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department’s administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71, Student Discipline may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72, Student Appeals.

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

*Note for students with disabilities:* AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

**Mental Health Support**

All of us need a support system. The faculty and staff in Arts encourage students to seek out mental health support if they are needed.

**On Campus**

- Counselling Services: counselling.services@uwaterloo.ca / 519-888-4567 ext. 32655
- **MATES:** one-to-one peer support program offered by Federation of Students (FEDS) and Counselling Services
- Health Services Emergency service: located across the creek form Student Life Centre

**Off campus, 24/7**

- **Good2Talk:** Free confidential help line for post-secondary students. Phone: 1-866-925-5454
- Grand River Hospital: Emergency care for mental health crisis. Phone: 519-749-4300 ext. 6880
- **Here 24/7:** Mental Health and Crisis Service Team. Phone: 1-844-437-3247
- **OK2BME:** set of support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning teens in Waterloo. Phone: 519-884-0000 extension 213

Full details can be found online on the Faculty of Arts website
Download [UWaterloo and regional mental health resources (PDF)](#)
Download the [WatSafe app](#) to your phone to quickly access mental health support information

**Territorial Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that we are living and working on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (also known as Neutral), Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations that includes ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River.

For more information about the purpose of territorial acknowledgements, please see the [CAUT Guide to Acknowledging Traditional Territory (PDF)](#).

**Academic freedom at the University of Waterloo**

[Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour](#) states, as one of its general principles (Section 1), “The University supports academic freedom for all members of the University community. Academic freedom carries with it the duty to use that freedom in a manner consistent with the scholarly obligation to base teaching and research on an honest and ethical quest for knowledge. In the context of this policy, ‘academic freedom’ refers to academic activities, including teaching and scholarship, as is articulated in the principles set out in the Memorandum of Agreement between the FAUW and the University of Waterloo, 1998 (Article 6). The academic environment which fosters free debate may from time to time include the presentation or discussion of unpopular opinions or controversial material. Such material shall be dealt with as openly, respectfully and sensitively as possible.” This definition is repeated in Policies 70 and 71, and in the Memorandum of Agreement, Section 6.