

Eighteenth-Century Black Lives, 1688-1838

English 450 | Spring 2018

Professor: Kathleen Lubey

Office: SJH B40-3

This course studies representations of black life and experience in literature published during the age of the British slave trade and abolition. Encompassing texts by former black slaves and their white English counterparts, this body of literature will present a range of attitudes and beliefs about the status of black life in British culture. How did black authors imagine their relationship to foundational structures of English life—Christianity, polite culture, urban sophistication, global commerce? On what grounds—and how obviously—did they call for abolition? Could white writers authentically represent an abolitionist position? What are the politics of white sympathy with the violations of the slave trade? What are the viable forms of black life in England in the age of abolition? These and many more questions will emerge as we read prose, poetry, fiction, treatises, and modern scholarship that puts blackness and its associations with slavery at the center of the eighteenth century. In some ways we'll find what we expect—cultural imperialism, Anglocentrism, Protestant ideology, white apologism. But, I hope, in some respects we'll be surprised by writers' attempts to represent the social influence of people of color, to imagine black solidarity, to question racial distinctions, and even to argue against the British colonial project.

Required Texts: Available at campus bookstore. Please use these editions and have hard copies in class. They appear in the order you'll need them.

- Ignatius Sancho, *Letters*, ed. Vincent Carretta (Broadview)
- Phillis Wheatley, *Complete Writings*, ed. Vincent Carretta (Penguin)
- Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*, ed. Catharine Gallagher (Bedford St. Martin's)
- Ottobah Cugoana, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery*, ed. Vincent Carretta (Penguin)
- Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour*, ed. Lyndon Dominique (Broadview)
- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. Sarah Salih (Penguin)

Recommended Resources:

- *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED): for historically specific vocabulary
- *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: for brief scholarly biographies on British historical figures
- *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* and *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*: for definitions of specialized terms. Accessible through the resources *Oxford Reference Online* in alphabetized list
- EEBO (Early English Books Online), ECCO and NCCO (Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Collections Online): for digitized sources published in the long eighteenth century

- MLA International Bibliography and Project Muse: for locating secondary literary-critical and historical sources

Course Requirements:

- Writing: 4-page paper, due March 5; a 15-20 page seminar paper, due week of May 7
- Completion of all reading assignments, regular punctuality and attendance (miss one class at most)
- Active participation, open-minded curiosity, respectful conversation, flexibility of thought, intelligent querying
- Careful primary and secondary research using scholarly resources and databases

Seminar Procedure: Each meeting will center on lively conversation to which everyone will contribute. We will begin on time and stay for the full two hours without a break. (Take a short one yourself if you need it.) Class should be guided by your ideas, questions, and textual observations, requiring that you come to class prepared to take a leadership position. Ready yourself for active participation by marking your text and preparing notes and questions. Unlike an undergrad course, this one will ask *you* to direct our conversations and will rely on you to ask about what seems opaque or confusing. I recommend an organized system of note-taking from the start: the clearer your notes, the more confidently you can pose questions during seminar and the more easily you can locate evidence that you may want to use in papers. Please also work against the “intimidation factor” of a graduate seminar. We run the gamut from undergrads to doctoral students; some of us have taken several courses in eighteenth-century studies, some of us none. We’ll all have fresh perspectives to share and to learn.

Short Paper: On March 5, you’ll hand in a short paper of 4-5 pages that engages with one article from a recent special issue on “Color” of the journal *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. You’ll discuss the article collaboratively in small groups; and using the insights gained there, you’ll write a short essay that explains those insights and tests them against a primary eighteenth-century source of your own choosing. (We’ll go over the assignment in detail in a few weeks.) The point of the assignment is to sharpen your skills of reading, comprehending, and engaging criticism and to immerse yourself, experimentally, in the vast archive of texts now available to researchers in our field; it also will acquaint me with how you write, and you with what kinds of questions I ask of graduate-level writing. Ideally, it also will directly or indirectly get you started on preliminary thinking for your seminar paper.

Seminar Paper: Due a week after the last class meeting, the seminar paper will be 15-20 pages in length and contain a bibliography of at least ten entries, some chosen from our syllabus and some generated by your own research, including at least one scholarly monograph (book-length study). I encourage you to devise topics that are genuinely interesting and relevant to you, so long as they emerge from the diverse set of readings we’re doing in this course. You should see me by early April at the latest to discuss ideas, and you have the option of turning in a 3-page prospectus on April 9. The prospectus should float a working hypothesis or coherent critical question you want to pursue in a seminar paper, and “test” that question against at least one reading we’ve done by that point.

Research and Integrity: Integrity in graduate-level work has two main branches: of research and of collegiality. By collegiality I mean techniques of speaking and listening that recognize the various and diverse subject positions of our classroom and of the authors, characters, and populations about which we read. Our conversations should be guided by respect and curiosity (not judgment) about the views of others. I expect, in terms of research, that every member of a graduate seminar has an expert understanding of the ethics of advanced research and the seriousness of plagiarism and its

consequences. Any breach of academic integrity will result in an F for the course. Please consult with me and use library resources to obtain historical and literary-analytical materials for your papers (as opposed to information you'd find on popular websites). Specific research requirements for the seminar paper will be discussed by mid-semester. If you have questions about graduate-level research practices and/or plagiarism—and I expect this is likely to be the case for some of you early in graduate coursework—speak with me early in the term.

Reading Schedule:

- Reading is to be completed on the date next to which it is listed.
- Readings marked * are available on eReserve.
- Readings marked † are available through St. John's Libraries' subscriptions to MLA International Bibliography or Project Muse; please locate, download, and print them on your own.
- If you choose digital formats for in-class work with texts, please consider disabling wireless!

Jan 22 Introduction: The Long Eighteenth Century, Empire, the Slave Trade, Blackness in Britain

Oludah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative* (1789)

Jane Austen, from *Mansfield Park* (1814)

Laurence Sterne, from *Tristram Shandy* (1768)

Trans-Atlantic Black Life and Labor

Jan 29 Phillis Wheatley, “To the University of Cambridge,” “To the King’s Most Excellent Majesty,” “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “To S.M. A Young African Painter,” “A Farewell to America,” and letters 141-142, 144-147, 152-153, 158-160

Ignatius Sancho, *Letters* (1782): Carretta’s introduction through 21, Jekyll’s introduction (49-52), and (for reference) Appendix B, biographies of correspondents

Vol 1 Letters XIII, XXV, XXVI, XXVIII, XXXV, XL, XLI, XLIII, XLIV, LVII

Vol 2 Letters I, XIII, XXXVIII, XLV, LX, LXVII-LXXI, LXXX, Appendix D no. 2

* Gretchen Gerzina, Ch. 1 “Paupers and Princes” from *Black London* (1995)

Feb 5 Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (1688), 34-100 and Gallagher’s introduction, 3-25

* John Locke, “On Slavery” from *An Essay Concerning... Civil Government* (1690)

† Ramesh Mallipeddi, “‘A Fixed Melancholy’: Migration, Memory, and the Middle Passage,” *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 55 (2014)

Feb 12 * James Grainger, Preface and Book IV of *The Sugar Cane* (1765), pgs. 89-90 and 145-163

Primary readings from *Oroonoko* edition:

William Snelgrave, from *A New Account of Guinea, and the Slave Trade* (1734), 253-259

John Gabriel Stedman, from *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition against the Revolted Negroes*, 377-390

Richard Ligon, from *A True and Exact History of Barbados* (1657), 355-365

Edward Littleton, from *The Groans of the Plantations* (1689), 375-377, 423-427

optional: Daniel Defoe, from *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), 199-207

Scholarly Perspectives

Feb 28 [no class meeting]

Small-Group Meetings on †*Eighteenth-Century Studies* 51 (2017), Special Issue on “Color”

Individual Primary Research using ECCO

Mar 5 [ongoing research/writing toward short paper due March 12]

* Paul Gilroy, Ch. 1 “Black Atlantic as Counterculture to Modernity” from *The Black Atlantic* (1993)

† Simon Gikandi, “Rethinking the Archive of Enslavement,” *Early American Literature* 50 (2015)

* Felicity Nussbaum, Ch. 5 “Racial Femininity” from *The Limits of the Human* (2003)

British Abolitionism (and Anti-Abolitionism)

Mar 12 **Short Paper due** (on *Eighteenth-Century Studies* selection and primary research)

Ottobah Cugoana, *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evils of Slavery* (1787), 9-111

* John Wesley, *Thoughts on Slavery* (1774)

* George Boulukos, Ch. 5 “Gratitude in the Black Atlantic,” *The Grateful Slave* (2008)

Mar 19 * Anna Barbauld, “Epistle to William Wilberforce” (1792) [*Poetry of Slavery* packet]

* Thomas Paine, from *Rights of Man* (1791)

* Bryan Edwards, from *The History of the West Indies* (1798)

* James Boswell, from *The Life of Johnson* (1791)

* Boswell, “No Abolition of Slavery” (1791) [*Poetry of Slavery* packet]

Mar 26 * Hannah More, *Slavery: A Poem* (1788) [*Poetry of Slavery* packet]

* William Cowper, “The Negro’s Complaint” (1788) [*Poetry of Slavery* packet]

* William Blake, “The Little Black Boy” (1789) [*Poetry of Slavery* packet]

* Lynn Festa, Ch. 4 “Making Humans Human” from *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (2009), 153-171, 187-204

Intersections: Colonialism, Slavery, and Sex

Apr 9 **Optional Prospectus due**

* Maria Edgeworth, “The Grateful Negro” (1804)

Thomas Day, from *The Dying Negro* (1774) [in *Oroonoko* edition]

Apr 16 Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour* (1808), including editor’s introduction

Apr 23 Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince* (1838)

† Wendy Warren, “‘The Cause of Her Grief’: The Rape of a Slave in Early New England,” *Journal of American History* 93 (2007)

Apr 30 Paper Discussions

May 7 **Seminar Paper due by 1 pm**