

History and Literature 97: Sophomore Tutorial
Britain and America
Spring 2008
Thursdays, 2-5pm, Barker Center 118

The Anglophone Atlantic: Exploration & Captivity, Freedom & Unfreedom

George Blaustein
Barker Center #043
blaust@fas.harvard.edu
Office Hours: TBA

Melissa Jenkins
8 Prescott St, B2
mshields@fas.harvard.edu
704-517-8115
Office Hours: TBA

Course Description

The purpose of the sophomore tutorial is to introduce students to interdisciplinary methods in History and Literature, and to explore in depth certain themes in the Britain and America field. Methodologically, we will address broad questions at the heart of the concentration:

- What is history? What is literature? How do we know? What is the relation of *genre* to history?
- How do we identify our objects of study, and what techniques do we use to analyze historical and literary texts? What constitutes evidence and how is it used?
- How do we put texts into historical perspective and how do we use traditionally “literary” texts to inform historical interpretation without reducing literature to history?
- Since this is a comparative field, how do we understand history and literature comparatively? What is “British,” and what is “American”?

The tutorial is broken into two roughly chronological units, with texts drawn from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, and an interlude and postlude that glance ahead to relevant 20th-century material. The first unit addresses the themes of exploration and captivity in British and colonial American history. We will examine, among other topics, the rise of the English novel in relation to the expansion of the British empire, the trope of captivity, and the emergence of specifically “American” literary voices. We will hone the skills of close reading and develop critical approaches to secondary literature.

The second unit addresses the themes of slavery and freedom from the American Revolution through the end of the nineteenth century, drawing on texts from many genres. Topics include slave narratives and the slave trade (both across the Atlantic and within the United States), the emergence of Anglo-American abolitionism, and British perceptions of the United States. Additionally, we will address historiographical and epistemological questions more directly, zooming in on the historian’s use of sources and on one of the key debates in Anglo-American historiography (the relationship between capitalism and the rise of abolitionism). Finally, we will be concerned with how writers and artists translated into imaginative terms the major ideological debates of their times.

Course Requirements

This is the first course in your chosen concentration and is therefore your first priority. Since it is a small discussion-based class, preparation is essential. This means more than doing all of the reading: it means reading and reflecting, formulating arguments in advance of class, arriving ready to teach us what you have uncovered. The sophomore tutorial is NOT a synthetic introduction to the whole of British and American literature and history; rather, we will confront our broad themes and particular texts at a high level of interpretation. Therefore preparation also involves learning the basic historical context on your own. To that end, reliable synthetic overviews are suggested below, and more focused secondary scholarship is recommended week-by-week.

Grading

20%: Participation: Oral presentations and participation in draft workshops; active listening and speaking; attendance in class and at special History and Literature events throughout the semester; performance on the sophomore oral exam.

50%: Short Writing Assignments:

- 2-4 page paper on genre in Week 2
- 2-4 page close reading assignment in Week 5
- 2-4 page parody in Week 6
- 5 page source analysis in Week 8

30%: Sophomore Essay (10-12 pages) – due in reading period.

- Proposal and Annotated Bibliography due in Week 11
- Sophomore Essay Partial Draft (5 pages) due in Week 13

Papers: Be familiar with the *Handbook for Students* policies on plagiarism, double-submission, etc. All papers must be typed and double-spaced.

The Sophomore Exam

Each sophomore takes a 30-minute oral exam after the final week of tutorial, administered by the tutorial instructors. This examination tests your ability to analyze and to discuss texts orally and is designed to prepare you for the oral component of the junior and senior tutorials. The senior oral exam will organize texts around five themes; this mini-exam organizes six texts from our tutorial around one theme or binding category. You will submit your list to George and Melissa no later than two weeks before the week of the exam. The list must include different kinds of primary materials, both fiction and non-fiction. One or two of the six texts must be a secondary source from the syllabus. Extra-syllabus texts, including extra-syllabus texts used for the final essay in the class, are not allowed, but during the exam you can certainly address texts that are not on your list. You will need to speak broadly and to call on specific details from the texts in relation to your theme.

Texts Available at the Coop

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Penguin Classics) – ISBN:0141439823

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the life of Olaudah Equiano* (Penguin Classics) – ISBN:0142437166

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (Norton Critical Edition) – ISBN: 0393957241

Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (Anchor Books) – ISBN: 0385721463

J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Penguin) – ISBN: 014009623X

Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Toby Press) – ISBN:1592640486 (or any edition with Daniel Beard's original illustrations)

Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: The Slaves, the British, and the American Revolution* (Harper Perennial) – ISBN: 0060539178

Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (Penguin Classics) – ISBN: 0142437778

Charles Johnson, *Oxherding Tale* (Scribner) – ISBN: 0743264495

All other texts will be made available as handouts.

Useful synthetic overviews

British History

- David Armitage, *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800* (2006)
- Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*
- Simon Schama, *A History of Britain (3 Vol)*
- Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain from 1750 to the Present Day*
- Jeremy Gregory, *The Routledge Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1820*

American History

- Thomas Bender, *Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History* (2006).
- Alan Taylor, *American Colonies*
- Philip Jenkins, *A History of the United States*
- Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom*

Comparative

- Marcus Cunliffe, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Transatlantic Mythologies and the Novel*
- Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg, *Slavery, Freedom, and the Law in the Atlantic World: A Brief History with Documents*
- Edward Davies, *The United States in World History*

SCHEDULE

Prelude

Week 1. Thursday, January 31: What is History? What is Literature?

John Smith, excerpts from *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New-England, and the Summer Isles* (Book III, Chapter 2: Smith as captive at the court of Powhatan in 1608 and Book IV: Pocahontas's introduction to the British court in 1616)

Variations on a theme: Inkle and Yarico: From *The Spectator* (Steele, 1711), and from the *London Magazine* (1734). (reprinted in *An Anthology of Interracial Literature*, ed. Werner Sollors)

Felicia Hemans, "The American Forest Girl," from *Records of Woman* (1828)

Edward Hallett Carr, "The Historian and his Facts" from *What is History* (1961)

Terry Eagleton, "Introduction: What is Literature?" from *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983).

UNIT I: Explorers and Captives

Week 2. February 7: What is Literature? What is Genre?

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Optional Background Reading:

N. A. M. Rodger, "Sea-Power and Empire 1688-1793," from Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume II: The Eighteenth Century*

Ian Watt, chapter on Crusoe from *Rise of the Novel*.

Assignment: Understanding Genre (2-4 pages).

What is a novel? This assignment gives you a chance to understand why this is not a straightforward question, but rather a question that has intrigued critics and readers from Chaucer to Toni Morrison.

This assignment has two parts:

1. Analyze an influential definition of the Novel (handout). Sources for such a definition include:

- * The Oxford English Dictionary (available on Harvard E-resources)
- * Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*
- * Deidre Lynch and William Beatty Warner's *Cultural Institutions of the Novel*
- * Mikhail Bakhtin's "Epic and Novel" from *The Dialogic Imagination*
- * Clifford Siskin, "Novels and Systems."
- * Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*.

2. Assess the definition using Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Based on this definition, is *Crusoe* the first novel? How does the novel fulfill the criteria, and how does the novel stretch or complicate the definition?

Week 3. February 14: Identifying Objects of Study

Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (2002), parts I and II (p. 1-240).

Week 4. February 21

Mary Rowlandson, *The sovereignty and goodness of god, together, with the faithfulness of his promises displayed: being a narrative of the captivity and restauration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson...* (1682)

Penelope Aubin, *The Strange Adventures of the Count de Vinevil and his Family* (1721)

Elizabeth Marsh, *The Female Captive* (1769), selections.

Jill Lepore, *In the Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (1998), chapter 5, "Come Go Along with Us."

Suggested Secondary:

Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, "The American Origins of the English Novel," *American Literary History* 4 no. 3 (1992)

Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, Anxious Patriarchs*, ch1, "Gender and English Identity on the Eve of Colonial Settlement," and ch2, "The Anglo-Indian Gender Frontier," and ch3 "Gender and Social Order..."

Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682-1861* (1997), chapter 2.

Linda Colley, *The Ordeal of Elizabeth Marsh: A Woman in World History* (2007)

Week 5. February 28

Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

Assignment: Close Reading (2-4 pages).

In this assignment, your goal is to identify a pattern in *Gulliver's Travels* and to trace it (across one journey or across the whole text). This could be a motif (an image or theme that recurs in a literary work), a stylistic tic, a particular historical reference, or a single word. Your goal will be not to list every reference to the particular pattern you're tracing, but rather, after having looked at all of the references you collected, to discover the patterns within the pattern, and to share your critical assessment of how this pattern works within the novel. Are there one or two identifiable ways in which your word or idea appear, and if so, what are they? How does noticing this pattern illuminate larger issues within the work that would be invisible otherwise?

Depending on what you are tracing, you may find it helpful to use a searchable electronic version of the novel (through Literature Online or another e-text resource).

Interlude

Week 6. March 6

Elizabeth Bishop, "Crusoe in England"
J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (1986). 160 pages.

Assignment: Parody (2-4 pages):

Path One: Construct a parody of any one text from Unit One, in either verse or prose. Your parody may focus on theme (relating an issue in the Unit One text to an issue in current events, or in showing another side of said issue), on style (highlighting what is unusual or striking about an author's style through attempting to imitate it), or both. After your parody, provide a paragraph or two of "debriefing," explaining your approach.

Path Two: Analyze either Elizabeth Bishop's "Crusoe in England" or Coetzee's *Foe* as parody. Describe, based on your reading of the poem or novel, how the author approached the retelling of the Crusoe story, and how that retelling invites us to see Defoe's work differently.

UNIT II: Forms of Unfreedom in the Atlantic World

Week 7. March 13

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789)

Week 8. March 20: Historiography and Epistemology

David Brion Davis, Thomas Haskell, and John Ashworth, *The Anti-Slavery Debates: Capitalism and Abolitionism as a Problem in Historical Interpretation*, ed. Thomas Bender (1992) pp. 1-260.

SPRING BREAK: March 22-March 30

Come back from Spring Break with a field in mind for your sophomore essay

Week 9. April 3

Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (2006), pp. 1-255.

Assignment: Source Analysis (5 p.):

Path 1: Choose a moment in *Rough Crossings* that struck you as outlandish, excellent, implausible, mysterious, uncertain, or otherwise remarkable, and follow Schama's footnote to the original source. What does Schama do with the source? Does he take a line out of context, or jerry-rig the source in a particular way? With what does he juxtapose that bit of evidence, and is that juxtaposition justifiable? Could one imagine a counter-narrative based on the document?

Path 2: Explore online sources for other sorts of evidence that Schama may or may not have used. (One might search for "Vassa AND Granville Sharp," or "Dunmore AND Slaves," etc.) Ask whether that particular document does or does not fit into Schama's narrative.

Week 10. April 10

Herman Melville, "Benito Cereno"

Frederick Douglass, selected speeches delivered in England and Ireland;

Dickens, from *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842);

Excerpts from Thackeray's and Elizabeth Gaskell's commentary about slavery (letters);

Walter Johnson, *Soul By Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (1999), selections

Suggested Secondary:

Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37.1 (2003) 113-124 (online:

http://muse.jhu.edu.ezp1.harvard.edu/journals/journal_of_social_history/v037/37.1johnson.html)

R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (2001).

Week 11. April 17

Mark Twain, *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889)

Writing Workshop: Sophomore Essay Proposals and Annotated Bibliography.

Week 12. April 24

Harriet E. Wilson, *Our Nig, or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*. 80 pages

Poetry:

John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Hashish";

William Cullen Bryant, "Abraham Lincoln" and "The African Chief";

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point."

Suggested additional reading:

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Master's Pieces: On Canon Formation and the African American Tradition," *South Atlantic Quarterly* (1990)

Postlude

Week 13. May 1

Charles Johnson, *Oxherding Tale* (1982)

Writing Workshop: Partial Drafts of Sophomore Essay (5 pages)

Reading Period: May 3-May 14: Sophomore Oral Exams scheduled
Sophomore Essay (10-12 pages) due.