

# ENG 2883 Women Writers: Early English Feminism

ENGL 2883 Sec. 01 | Spring 2019  
MW 11 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.  
Bldg. 24, Rm. 107  
Office Hours: MW noon to 2 p.m.

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## Course Information

Prerequisites. Completion of GE Area A2.

Course Description. Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft is often credited as the “start” of the feminist movement in the Anglo-American world. But what about the women writers who came before? This class explores these figures, beginning with medieval woman and ending with Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. All the authors we read in this class identify as women and claim authority to speak, but their methods, genre, and subject matter vary widely. By reading a broad spectrum of literature that push at assumptions about femininity, we will get a clearer picture of the intricate and complex ways women claim authority through writing. In addition to exploring authority-seeking women’s writing, we will uncover how some writers are elevated to canonical status, or that which is considered essential and highly valuable. This class will blend feminist theory with queer theory, historical research, and paratextual studies; students will be introduced to these discourses through lecture and supplemental readings. The course will require close reading, analytical writing, and a creative project that applies ideas from the class to a wider public audience.

Student Learning Outcomes: During this course, students will:

1. Discover the literary history of women writers in England by characterizing how they viewed themselves and their work in relation to changing cultural norms and beliefs about gender and sexuality;
2. Eschew assumptions about what is feminist; instead, define what *authority* means for individual writers and trace how they claim it through seemingly paradoxical means such as spirituality, sexuality, education, domesticity, and politics;
3. Track narratives, myths, and beliefs about women’s writing that have emerged in twentieth-century literary criticism and its feminist critiques;
4. Improve reading comprehension and analytical abilities through close reading, theoretical approaches, and analysis of paratext, materiality, and historical documents;
5. Develop communication skills through oral presentation, class discussion, and written reports for an academic and general audience.

## Course Materials

### Required Texts

1. Astell, Mary. *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*. Edited by Patricia Springborg. Broadview, 2002. ISBN: 9781551113067.
2. Behn, Aphra. *The Rover*. Edited by Anne Russell. Broadview, 1999. ISBN: 9781551112145.
3. de France, Marie. *Marie de France: Poetry*. Edited and translated by Dorothy Gilbert. W.W. Norton and Co., 2015. ISBN: 9780393932683.
4. Fielding, Sarah. *The Governess, or, The Little Female Academy*. Edited by Candace Ward. Broadview, 2005. ISBN: 9781551114125.
5. Haywood, Eliza. *Fantomina and Other Works*. Edited by Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Croskery, and Anna C. Patchias. Broadview, 2004. ISBN: 9781551115245.
6. Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Penguin Classics, 2002. ISBN: 0140432515.
7. Norwich, Julian of. *Revelations of Divine Love*. Translated by Barry Windeatt. Oxford World Classics, 2015. ISBN: 9780199641185.
8. Pizan, Christine. *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Edited by Rosalind Brown-Grant. Penguin Classics, 2000. ISBN: 0140446893.
9. Russ, Joanna. *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. University of Texas Press. Second (Reprint) Edition. ISBN: 1477316256. (First edition ok as well)
10. Scott, Sarah. *A Description of Millennium Hall*. Edited by Gary Kelly. Broadview Press, 1995. ISBN: 1551110156.

There are a lot of required texts for this class, but most are affordable editions. If you cannot afford to get them all, come talk to me about substitutes quickly. You should do your best to get the listed editions of these books so you can follow the reading schedule and have editorial help; many texts will be difficult to understand without footnotes. Additional readings will be provided on Blackboard: [www.blackboard.cpp.edu](http://www.blackboard.cpp.edu).

### Recommended Texts

A version of these texts will be provided as a digital PDF on Blackboard, but if you want to have a paper copy or additional editorial information like an introduction and footnotes, you can get these editions (which I will be using). The paper copies are generally superior to the digital copies.

1. Wheatley, Phyllis. *Complete Writings*. Penguin Classics, 2001. ISBN: 9780140424300.
2. Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Edited by Janet Todd. Oxford World Classics, 2009. ISBN: 019955546X.
3. Woolf, Virginia, *A Room of One's Own*. Edited by Mark Hussey and Susan Gubar. Mariner Books, 2005. ISBN: 0156030411.

## Course Philosophy

My obligations. This course employs an active-learning approach. Our learning objectives will be pursued through a variety of instructional means, such as lectures to frame our discussion, small- and large-group work, and individual engagement with reading material. As the instructor, I am obligated to facilitate your exposure to the conceptual and methodological frameworks that we will use to examine the knowledge that is the focus of this class. I am also obligated to try to create and sustain an environment in which we can all engage the course materials intelligently, critically, and respectfully. We will read challenging texts that intersect with complicated histories of race, gender, and sexuality. I will help you interact with these materials productively and in a way that maintains an environment where students of all identities feel safe to learn, to be wrong, to fail, and to keep trying.

Your obligations. You are obligated first and foremost to show up—physically and intellectually—for class and to be prepared when you do. Class preparation does not only entail reading your assignments, it also involves thinking critically about what you have read and coming to class ready to engage the materials and raise questions. Like anything else, you will get out of this course what you put in. This is an intellectual enterprise designed to foster critical thinking based on historical and theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence, not unsubstantiated opinions and views. You are strongly encouraged to raise questions/concerns, state positions, and make arguments, but all must be based on a critical engagement with scholarship or logic drawn from the course materials and other academic knowledge. You are also expected to struggle with/through the reading and select dimensions from it that you understand and bring up in class what you do not understand.

Accessibility. We may all need some form of accommodation in this class, because we all learn differently, and we are all subject to emergencies of various kinds and degrees. Your ability to engage and participate fully in this course is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your ability to meet requirements as assigned in the course and/or if you have specific accommodations approved by the [Disability Resource Center](#), please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Whether or not you have a documented disability, resources exist on campus to support your learning; please let me know how I can help direct you to them.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy. Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with me during office hours early in the semester to discuss your Disability Resource Center–authorized accommodation needs for this course. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Resource Center or visit <http://www.cpp.edu/~drc/>.

## Course Policies

Academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated on this campus or in this course. **Academic dishonesty will result in a zero on the assignment with possible further repercussions** including failing the course and reporting the incident to Judicial Affairs.

Attendance. In-class discussion is essential for successful completion of this course. Timely attendance is required. I will take attendance every day at the beginning of the period; being more than five minutes late counts as an absence. You are given three absences that you can use for any reason, no questions asked. **Any absences past three will result in losing one grade level on your final average per absence.** For example, dropping from a B to a B- is one level. You cannot pass the class with more than nine absences, for excused or unexcused reasons.

Missing class. If you miss class, you are responsible for your information and for completing your reading and other assignments. It is up to you to meet with your classmates for notes or send me an email if you are unclear about something you missed. However, I will never re-teach a lecture or repeat class discussion because of an absence, and I will only schedule make-up assignments or quizzes for an excused absence, defined below.

Excused absences. These are when I will schedule, if possible, makeup assignments or offer an extension. They include: family emergencies (funerals, childcare issues,\* etc.), serious illness of you or a dependent, military duty, legal proceedings, interviews that cannot be rescheduled, and religious holidays. Excusing an absence is at my discretion, and while I respect and support those of you who are employed, work is not a valid reason to miss class. If you need to reschedule a major assignment or quiz, I will respectfully request documentation for the absence out of fairness to the rest of the class.

\*If bringing a child or other dependent to class would allow you to attend where you would otherwise miss, please do so. We will work out an accommodation.

Late work. The late work policy will be explained on each assignment prompt. In general, very few assignments in this class will be accepted late. Quizzes cannot be made up.

Assignment submission problems. Technological issues are not appropriate reasons for not turning in your work. If Blackboard experiences a technological problem, you should send your assignment to me in an email attachment *before* the assignment is due and explain the issue. When the issue is resolved, submit the identical file in Blackboard as soon as possible for grading.

Technology. Cellphones are never allowed. If you have an emergency and need to take a call or send a text, quietly step into the hall. Laptop and tablet usage should be minimal. If you choose to access course material electronically, you should leave your laptops or tablets off until it is necessary and refrain from using the devices for other purposes.

## Assignments and Grades

Course breakdown. The course will be broken down into the following sections

Assignment	Weight
Keyword Project – Scholarly Audience	15%
Keyword Project – General Audience	15%
Assignments, Quizzes, Activities	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Grading scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62; F: 59 and below

Keyword Project – Scholarly Audience. Using analyses from close reading activities, you will write a 500-word blog post for an academic audience, to be potentially posted on the *Society for the Study of Early Modern Women* website. This project will address what you think “authority” means for one or more authors.

Keyword Project – General Audience. You will create a project that introduces your author and their ideas to a general audience. You will be encouraged to use new media, such as writing a podcast, starting a social media account, or writing a listicle. In addition to the public-facing project, you will write a report about what choices you made and why that includes a rhetorical analysis of your chosen media.

Assignments, quizzes, activities. You will be required to participate in fishbowls, in-class activities, and general group work and discussion. Some assignments will be prewriting to prepare you for your keyword projects. Quizzes and other assessment of course reading be given frequently. All grades are weighted equally.

Exams. You will have two exams that cover the content of the reading and allow you to showcase your analytical abilities. The midterm will be take-home.

## Other Important Info

Discussion of drafts. I will not read full drafts and return them by email, but I will answer any questions you have (and you are encouraged to ask). I will happily read full drafts with you in posted office hours or by appointment.

Discussion of grades. Grades are not negotiable. If you need further explanation about a grade, see me during office hours or make an appointment. Due to privacy concerns, I cannot discuss specifics about grades through email.

Format. Unless otherwise indicated, all work in this class should follow MLA 8 format for paper style: 12 pt., clear, serif font; 1 in. margins; double spaced; a correct heading; and page numbers. You may use Chicago 17 or MLA 8 for citations.

## **Schedule of Reading Assignments**

Items on the schedule are subject to change, which will be announced in class or through email. Listed resources should be brought to class in print or electronic format (no cell phones; tablets or eReaders only). Lecture and discussion will be based on assigned reading, which must be done in advance of the class period. All readings listed as on “Blackboard” will be located in the readings folder on your Blackboard course page. All other readings are in individual books, indicated by the author and title.

### **Week 1**

Mon., Jan. 21 – No Class, MLK Day

Wed., Jan. 23 – Intro to course

Friday, Jan. 25 – Marie de France

- de France, “Prologue,” pg. 3–5, “Guigemar,” pg. 5–26, and “Yonec” pg. 90–120

### **Week 2**

Monday, Jan. 28 – Julian of Norwich

- Norwich, *Revelation of Divine Love*, short text, pg. 1–36

Wednesday, Jan. 30 – Margery Kempe

- Blackboard: Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* pgs. 31–52 (to ch. 6); 76–81 (ch. 18); 102–109 (ch. 28 and 29); 122–127 (ch. 35 and 36)

Friday, Feb. 1 – Christine de Pizan

- Pizan, *City of Ladies* pg. 1–20 (sections 1-8); 38–39 (section 17); 52–53 (section 22); 60–61 (section 30)
- Prewriting Assignment 1 due in class

### **Week 3**

Monday, Feb. 4 – Elizabeth Cary

- Blackboard: Cary, *Tragedy of Mariam*, to Act IV

Wednesday, Feb. 6 – Elizabeth Cary

- Blackboard: Cary, *Tragedy of Mariam*, Act IV and V
- Group 1 Fishbowl

Friday, Feb. 8 – Carleton

- Blackboard: Carleton, *The Case of Madam Mary Carleton*

#### **Week 4**

Monday, Feb. 11 – Margaret Fell

- Blackboard: Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*

Wednesday, Feb. 13 – Margaret Cavendish

- Blackboard: Cavendish, *Convent of Pleasure*; prologue to *Blazing World*

Friday, Feb. 15 – Bathsua Makin

- Blackboard: Makin, from *Ancient Education of Gentlewomen*
- Prewriting Assignment 2 due in class

#### **Week 5**

Monday, Feb. 18 – Aphra Behn

- Behn, *The Rover*, Prologue to Act III

Wednesday, Feb. 20 – Aphra Behn

- Behn, *The Rover*, Act III-IV

Friday, Feb. 22 – Aphra Behn

- Behn, *The Rover*, Act V and epilogue
- Group 2 Fishbowl

#### **Week 6**

Monday, Feb. 25 – Mary Astell

- Astell, *Serious Proposal*, pg. 49–80

Wednesday, Feb. 27 – Mary Astell

- Astell, *Serious Proposal*, pg. 80–103

Friday, March 1 – Mary Astell

- Astell, *Serious Proposal*, pg. 104–112; dedication, intro to part II, pg. 113–126
- Prewriting Assignment 3 due in class

#### **Week 7: Midterm Week**

Monday, March 4 – Midterm Review

- Exam will be passed out at the end of class

Students will not meet in class Wednesday or Friday. Your midterm is due to my office, building 24 room 209, by Sunday night. I will pick them up Monday morning, and I will accept no late submissions. Office hours will be Monday only.

**Week 8**

Monday, March 11 – Anne Finch

- Blackboard: Finch, “Introduction,” “Unequal Fetters,” and “Cautious Lovers”

Wednesday, March 13 – Eliza Haywood

- Haywood, *Fantomina*, pg. 41–57

Friday, March 15 – Eliza Haywood

- Haywood, *Fantomina*, pg. 58–71
- Prewriting Assignment 4 due in class

**Week 9**

Monday, March 18 – Sarah Fielding

- Fielding, *The Governess*, dedication, preface, and to “Wednesday,” pg. 92

Wednesday, March 20 – Sarah Fielding

- Fielding, *The Governess*, from “Wednesday” to “Fairy Tale *continued*,” pg. 137

Friday, March 22 – Sarah Fielding

- Fielding, *The Governess*, from “Fairy Tale *continued*” to end, pg. 176
- Group 3 Fishbowl

**Week 10**

Monday, March 25 – Sarah Scott

- Scott, *Millennium Hall*, first section pg. 51–77

Wednesday, March 27 – Sarah Scott

- Scott, *Millennium Hall*, History of Lady Mary Jones, pg. 172–198

Friday, March 29 – Sarah Scott

- Scott, *Millennium Hall*, History Mrs. Trentham, pg. 224–249
- Keyword Project – Scholarly Audience due at 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard

**Spring Break April 1-5 – No Class****Week 11**

Monday, April 8 – Phyllis Wheatley

- Blackboard: Wheatley, introductory material (pg. 1–8), “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “Hymn to the Morning,” and “Hymn to the Evening”

Wednesday, April 10 – Mary Wollstonecraft

- Blackboard: Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, dedication, introduction, and ch. 1 and 4

Friday, April 12 – Mary Wollstonecraft

- Blackboard: Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, ch. 6–9
- Group 4 Fishbowl
- Prewriting Assignment 5 due in class

### Week 12

Monday, April 15 – Virginia Woolf

- Blackboard: Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ch. 1–3

Wednesday, April 17 – Virginia Woolf

- Blackboard: Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, ch. 4–5

Friday, April 19 – Virginia Woolf

- Blackboard: Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* ch. 6
- Group 5 Fishbowl

### Week 13

Monday, April 22 – Joanna Russ

All students should read the prologue to Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Then, each group will read their assigned article:

- Group 1: Ch. 1, Prohibitions
- Group 2: Ch. 2 and 3, Bad Faith and Denial of Agency
- Group 3: Ch. 4, Pollution of Agency
- Group 4: Ch. 5, The Double Standard of Content
- Group 5: Ch. 6, False Categorizing

Wednesday, April 24 – Joanna Russ

All students should read the epilogue to Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing*. Then, each group will read their assigned article:

- Group 1: Ch. 7, Isolation
- Group 2: Ch. 8, Anomalousness
- Group 3: Ch. 9, Lack of Models
- Group 4: Ch. 10, Responses
- Group 5: Ch. 11, Aesthetics

Friday, April 26 – Discussion

- Open Fishbowl – all students can participate
- We will discuss Woolf and Russ and talk about narrative building
- Keyword Project – General Audience due at 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard

### Week 14

Monday, April 29 – Early Feminist Literary Recovery

All readings are posted on Blackboard. Each group will their assigned article:

- Group 1: Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own* intro (1977)
- Group 2: Gilbert & Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic* intro (1979)
- Group 3: Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* intro (1987)

- Group 4: Todd, *Feminist Literary History* intro (1988)
- Group 5: Castle, *Apparitional Lesbian* intro (1993)

Wednesday, May 1 – Repositioning Feminist Literary Recovery

- Blackboard: Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* intro (1993)

Friday, May 3 – Feminist Literary Recovery Now

All readings are posted on Blackboard. Each group will read their assigned article:

- Group 1: Marsden, "Beyond Recovery" (2001)
- Group 2: Schellenberg, *Professionalization of Women Writers* intro (2005)
- Group 3: Ezell, "Myth of Judith Shakespeare" (2008)
- Group 4: Binhammer, "Lesbianism and the History of Sexuality" (2010)
- Group 5: Mandell, "Gendering Digital Literary History" (2016)

### Week 15

Monday, May 6 – Coffeehouse

- Students will determine the topic for the day's discussion

Wednesday, May 8 – Coffeehouse

- Students will determine the topic for the day's discussion

Friday, May 10 – Exam Review

- We will use class time to discuss and prepare for the final exam
- We will complete course evaluations

Note: Office hours are different from week 15 forward; check the posted schedule on Blackboard for finals office hours

**Final Exam: Wednesday, May 15 from 11 a.m. to 12:50 p.m.**