

ENGL: 3150 Topics in Early Literature Gender, Sex, and Renaissance Bodies

*Professor Marina Leslie, Northeastern University
Dr. Sarah Connell, Women Writer's Project*

Archival Project Guidelines

DEADLINES: **Archival Proposal**, Thursday, September 25; **Archival Project**, Friday, October 24; **Anthology Contribution**, Friday, November 7. All deadlines are at 11:59 pm on the day specified.

Your Archival Project has several components and constitutes one of the major assignments for this course. It is designed with several pedagogical goals in mind:

- 1) To introduce you to the enormous range of documents that were printed and circulated in the 16th and 17th centuries.
- 2) To help you develop a useful vocabulary and a workable set of paradigms for thinking and talking about early modern sex, gender, and bodies, generally.
- 3) To give you the opportunity to bring your selected document out of obscurity and shine the light of critical analysis upon it, specifically.
- 4) To create a digital anthology of the class's collected works to share the fruit of your scholarship.
- 5) To consider individually and collectively how the conventions and apparatus of archival scholarship help to shape what we know about the past and how we know it.

There will be two different options for the Archival Project.

A) **The Early English Books Online (EEBO)** option will draw on the documents available through EEBO. You will produce a critical edition of your document with a scholarly introduction and analysis, supplying footnotes or vocabulary glosses for unfamiliar terms. Because we are producing an anthology of student projects, each student must work on a unique, pre-approved document.

or

B) **The Women Writers Project (WWP)** option. This option will allow interested students to delve into the theory and practice of textual coding with the support and assistance of WWP Project Manager, Dr. Sarah Connell. This project will have both individual and group components, but meeting as a group with Sarah will be necessary to

give you the training necessary to complete the assignment successfully. For this project, the texts will be selected from a set of options presented to you.

The guidelines below outline the expectations for each of these options.

Early English Books Online (EEBO) Project

This assignment is designed to introduce you to the great range of attitudes toward early modern gender, sexuality, and the body. You are not restricted to literary genres for this project. Your task is to find a document of interest to you written between 1500 and 1699 and determine its cultural significance through close reading and research.

Finding and Claiming an EEBO document:

The EEBO database can be found on the SNELL Library webpage under the “databases A-Z” link under the main search box on the home page, or at the following link:

<http://eebo.chadwyck.com.ezproxy.neu.edu/home>

You want to select a document that is manageable for inclusion in our anthology (under 20 pages, I would say, as a rule of thumb). If you fall in love with a longer document, be prepared to select an excerpt for anthologizing that would be self contained enough to be compelling on its own. I’m perfectly happy with one-page documents so long as you have lots of interesting things to say about them. In order to assure that your document is suitably obscure, **find texts that have NOT been reprinted in the last 200 years. The most important thing is that there should not be any editorial material already available on your text. Supplying that will be your job.** Googling your document and/or author (if known) offers a good first test, but please be sure to also submit it to a “ScholarOne” search through Snell Library’s webpage.

Tips for searching EEBO:

- Limit the dates between 1500-1699
- Use the keyword and subject search boxes and always try the “select from a list” option for more complete search results and a sense of the variant words to try.
- Save texts you want to revisit in the Marked List folder. The only way to download the complete PDF is from the Marked List documents folder.
- Be flexible about search terms. Some search terms you might find useful for the themes of the course: monster, friendship, scold, witch, anatomy, medicine, beautifying, cosmetics, etc.

Unfortunately, EEBO doesn’t use most search terms we would recognize for identifying issues of sexuality. The word homosexual doesn’t really exist in the early modern period, but terms like “friendship,” “sodomy,” “catamite,” “buggery,” might get you closer to some of the documents that treat same-sex desire in terms that range from the highest praise to criminalization.

As soon as you find a document you feel has something interesting to say about the themes of this course that you want to claim as your project, email me the Durable URL. To find this, look

for the link at the top of your document and test it before sending it to me. The other option is to download the entire document (not a page) from your “Marked” list as a PDF and send that. I can’t approve your document until I can see the whole thing from either the Durable URL link or a PDF. While there are thousands of documents, the most obvious searches often return the same results and it is not uncommon for students to find the same documents. Don’t invest a lot of time in a proposal before you get clearance you are the first and approved person to claim your document. If someone else wants the same document and gets me this information first, then they get the document.

Proposals

It is safest to make sure you have preapproval before submitting your proposal. Please fill out the proposal form available on Blackboard under “Assignments.” The proposal serves as an occasion and place for me to give you feedback and additional bibliography to help you with your journey through the unfamiliar territory of early modern print culture. The more you are able to develop your ideas, the more useful my feedback. As is noted on the proposal form, you will need to supply 3-5 scholarly (refereed published) sources for your preliminary bibliography or I will hand back your proposal without comment until such time as you can supply these.

Required Components for EEBO Project

Rather than produce a typical research paper on your archival document, this assignment asks you to produce a scholarly edition of your selected text. That means you will be producing the following:

- **Introduction.** The introduction will contain the information you think is necessary to contextualize your document. This will be part historical context and part close textual analysis (see expectations below)
- **Glossary and explanatory notes.** Endnotes should explain any words, concepts, or factual information you think will aid a modern reader’s comprehension of the document.
- **Works Cited Page in MLA format.** This will offer a bibliography of materials you drew upon for your intro or analysis.

Because this is a literature class, I am most interested in your ability to assess early modern attitudes through close textual *analysis* of your documents. While getting the facts right about your document is important, it will also be necessary to decide what can be relied upon as fact vs what the document *asserts* as fact that might best be understood as part of the document’s rhetorical claims or its cultural assumptions.

Your integrated introduction and analysis of the text should touch upon the following:

- the self-representation of the author
- the assumptions being made about the desired or likely audience
- the genre or genres of the document
- the tone or style of the document and how that shapes readers’ expectations.
- the representation of characters or persons mentioned in the text.

- the text's argument or claims about sex, gender, or the body and how it supports those claims

In examining these elements, the primary goal here is to investigate the claims or ideas your document is demonstrating and *how* it communicates its representation of gender, sexuality, or the body.

Creating our Anthology

The final incarnation of the Archival Project will be to produce an anthology of everyone's projects. As a class, we will decide how we want to organize our Anthology and the authors of those documents grouped together will meet to discuss the composition of a Headnote to introduce their section. Other jobs will be available for those who might be interested in creating cover art or serving as an editor to assemble our text and impose consistency. My hope is we'll have an anthology that represents the individual and collective labors of the class in a lovely and useful form.

Evaluation

Your work on this assignment will be evaluated according to the following criteria: (Please note that the percentages indicated below show the portion of your final grade for the course, not this assignment alone.)

- The proposal, bibliography and notes (10%). (See guidelines above for expectations)
- The body of introduction and analysis (20%). (See guidelines above for expectations)
- Anthology contribution (15%). This will include your contributions to class discussion on organization of the anthology; the success of your group's headnote and/or any other contributions to the success of the Anthology.

Women's Writers Project (WWP) Text-Encoding Option

For the WWP project, you will each encode a (very) short text, selected from a set of options we will provide you; if you find a text on your own that you would like to use instead, just clear it with Sarah first. You will encode your texts individually **but** you'll do so following a set of standards that you'll create as a group. That is, much as we identified descriptors of bodies and developed them into a set of categories that we applied to *Poor Robin's True Character of a Scold*, your group will first meet and establish a shared set of standards—what we will call a Renaissance body paradigm—for encoding your texts and you will then encode your own texts following those standards.

The goal of this assignment is to give you a chance to explore text encoding and archival materials while developing your own understanding of how markup can facilitate different kinds of analysis. It's also an opportunity for you to get some hands-on experience with text encoding and the digital humanities. You'll have the chance to extend the conversations we had in class regarding the analysis and representation of archival materials while contributing your own ideas on questions of gender, sex, and the body as they appear in early modern texts.

This assignment involves both group and individual components so it's important that you are prepared to meet with your group several times over the course of the project. You will have Sarah's assistance in planning your project and working in TEI text encoding, so don't worry that you'll have to master markup on your own.

Your responsibilities for this assignment break down as follows:

As a group:

- Meet for a training session with Sarah to gain familiarity with TEI text encoding
- Decide how you will be marking your texts up. How do you want to capture the details of how each text appears? What kinds of analysis and interpretation are you interested in? How will you capture the names of persons, places, organizations, &c.? How will you encode gendered or embodied terms and concepts? How will you represent images? And so on. Sarah will be on hand to help you think through these decisions and explain some of the solutions that the TEI already has in place for textual representation.
- Record the decisions you make in a shared Google Document; this is your project's documentation. You will probably need to revise and refine your documentation after you begin encoding, so plan to meet as a group at least once for that purpose. You will hand in your documentation at the end of this assignment and part of your grade will depend on the thoughtfulness of your work here.
- After your texts are encoded, meet with Sarah to decide how you want to publish your work. What aspects of your encoding do you want to highlight for your viewers? How do you want your texts to look when they are viewed online? How can the online versions of your texts highlight those aspects of the encoding you consider to be most significant?
- Prepare a brief presentation to the class, outlining the choices you made in your project, showcasing each individual text, and explaining how your work has influenced your

understandings of early modern textuality, particularly in relationship to early modern theories of the body.

On your own

- Following the documentation established by your group, encode a short text. Be particularly attentive to any tensions you note between the framework established by your project's standards and the specifics of your own text.
- Use the "comment" function very liberally to explain the choices you make as you encode your text, to note complexities as described above, and to point out any information or analysis that you are not able to capture through markup alone. The comments are your best opportunity to demonstrate the thought that you put into encoding your text (and to make it clear that any potentially challenging aspects of your encoding are the result of deliberation), so please be as detailed as possible in commenting on the work that you do.
- Write a brief introduction to your encoded text (400 to 600 words should be sufficient). In this introduction, you can discuss the decisions you made in encoding your text, reflect on any interesting aspects of the text you noticed as part of the encoding process (especially those that weren't evident just on reading your text), and talk about any challenges you faced or any things you weren't able to represent through encoding. You will likely have addressed many of these issues directly in the comments of your encoded file, but this is your chance to unpack them in some greater detail and to offer more synthesized description of your encoded edition.

Evaluation

Your work on this assignment will be evaluated according to the following criteria: (Please note that the percentages indicated below show the portion of your final grade for the course, not this assignment alone.)

- Careful and insightful documentation of your project's standards; efficacy of those standards in capturing information on renaissance ideas of gender and the body (15%)
- Equally careful and insightful application of those standards to your individual texts, as demonstrated in your markup and your TEI-encoded comments (15%)
- Effective presentation of your individual and group insights to the rest of the class (10%)
- Group contribution to framing and publishing your texts in the class anthology (5%)

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