

# ENG 329-6: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION NOVELS AND ANTI-NOVELS: OR, REALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Professor Bryan Mangano  
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BLOCK 6 February 13-March 8  
M-F 12:15-3:00pm  
Location: CH 313  
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The authors on our reading list made profound contributions to the evolution of fictional forms and the novel as a genre. The selected texts will offer you a diverse range of literary experiments to explore as you develop an understanding of the period and its relevance for modern readers and writers. You will be asked to consider historical developments in authorship and the culture of reading to understand what motivated authors to explore new techniques for narration and approaches to characterization. You will also be asked to consider how authors engage with the historical and political contexts of class, gender, sexuality, and race through their stories, thereby developing a broader understanding of eighteenth-century culture.

More precisely, you will develop an understanding of the way “realism” in British fiction emerges as a literary value. You will consider debates around realism, how realism fits into a larger literary and media landscape, how it engages audiences in diverse ways, and how some authors (like Swift, Sterne, and, yes, even Austen) push back against it.

## Warning:

Eighteenth-century novels are long, particularly the novel which serves as a centerpiece for this course, Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*. You will need to make time for considerable amounts of reading and you will need to bring a curious mindset to the study of texts that do not always on the surface conform to some of our modern expectations for narrative entertainment. There is a *great* deal of absurd humor and psychosexual drama in these novels, but accessing what is most fascinating about these books will require imaginative effort on your part.

## REQUIRED READING

Behn’s *Oroonoko* (Penguin Edition)  
Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (Broadview Edition)  
Richardson’s *Clarissa* (Abridged Riverside Edition)  
Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, \*selected volumes (Moodle /Online )  
Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (Penguin Classic)

## **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Participation / In-Class Group Work 20%

Commonplace Book Wiki Project 25%

Adaptation of Clarissa 20%

Comparative Analysis Paper 35%

## **PARTICIPATION / IN-CLASS GROUP WORK**

Your participation includes your involvement in full class discussion, engagement with peers and ability to stay on task in group work and projects, and seeking help at office hours. You should come to class prepared to explore ideas with your peers. Every day I will expect you to have read carefully, taken notes, and given some thought to the material in advance. You should never hesitate to raise any question or offer an observation for discussion. At the same time, you should work to make productive connections with your classmates by building on or politely questioning their assertions and speculations.

During class discussion and group work, I have an expectation that cell phones will be kept out of sight and laptops will remain closed, unless they are part of a learning accommodation (I expect you to notify me if this is needed). I expect you to always have the book we are discussing out of your bag and open to any particular passage we are examining and I expect you to always have a writing tool and notebook ready.

## **COMMONPLACE WIKI PROJECT**

Commonplace books derive from the classical idea of the commonplace, a term of rhetoric for standard topics of argumentation; readers and authors from the early modern period onward used commonplace books to express their literate identities in response to an fast expanding print culture, collecting quotations, tables, and other pieces of knowledge in one “common” place as a display of their taste and record of their learning, and also to create a handy reference tool for quotations and to use as a source of inspiration for topics to write about. These books might contain a list of quotations on the same subject, for instance, containing a kind of virtual conversation among great authors. As print culture developed, such books also might include snippets of poetry, recipes, prayers, proverbs, drawings, prints, newspaper clippings, etc. The practice of keeping a commonplace, which was employed by many eighteenth-century writers and readers, will serve as inspiration for our creation of an online “common” place or class wiki space, where you will post key quotations from the texts, offer brief analysis, and “link” together your quotations with those selected by your peers, grouping them under a common heading as one would in a commonplace book. The advantage of a “virtual” or wiki commonplace is that you can group the same passage and analysis under multiple headings. You will become familiar with editing pages in MediaWiki (the template used for Wikipedia. It is very user-friendly and I will explain everything and offer support for any troubleshooting).

In addition to **1)** regularly selecting quotations and offering analysis and questions, your job will also be to **2)** generate topic headings and a list of searchable “index” terms, and **3)** include 5 “embellishment” artifacts, which might include relevant visual culture from

the period, relevant quotations from texts that you have read elsewhere from whatever time period, relevant bible quotations, sketches inspired by your reading, etc; You can use your imagination here, but it needs to be something *relevant* that deepens our reflection on these novels in some way.

We will work together in class to generate ideas about topic headings and I will create the overarching framework based on your input: you will be expected to contribute to the overall configuration by sorting the pages that you have created within this framework. \*Due dates for regular postings are listed on the course schedule as **CB**.

### **ADAPTATION OF CLARISSA**

In the spirit with which Jane Austen once undertook the task of adapting Richardson's massive novel *Sir Charles Grandison* into a drawing room play, we will undertake the task of adapting Richardson's slightly more massive *Clarissa* into a three act play with interposed monologues. I will provide some scene options, but you are free to choose moments that you think are the most visual or stage-able in the book. Your task is to adapt the text into a ten to fifteen minute performance. You may arrange the room, design costumes, or incorporate props as much as you wish in order to enact the scene. You will perform a "dress rehearsal" on your group's assigned day during our reading of the novel, and then revise and recreate your performances as a whole class on our last meeting day (perhaps in a public setting with an audience, if we can arrange this). For this final performance, each group will also be assigned the light task of composing a very short and engaging plot summary to fill in the gaps between each scene. I am not grading your acting ability here, but, rather, your creative use of the source material, staging ideas, and your general level of effort in collaborating with peers.

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ESSAY**

In line with the theme of our common place project, your essay should explore a connection between two authors by comparing and contrasting how they engage with the same topic, historical controversy, or literary technique. Your essay should display close textual analysis, attention to relevant historical contexts, and consideration of genre and literary form. The connection may be derived and expanded from one that you've explored on the course wiki, though you are free to invent an entirely new topic for comparison. In comparing and contrasting authors, you need to do more than simply present a list of similarities and differences between authors. Your essay needs to have a thesis that organizing your comparison and contrast in a meaningful way, addressing the way you think these authors contribute to the novel genre or how they fit into a larger set of tensions in literary history.

Your rhetorical task early in the essay is to establish the reason for placing these two authors in dialogue. Rather than picking any two authors out of a hat, you need to provide a rationale for the selection, so that your reader isn't left asking "so what? what does this connection say about literary history?" I will provide some examples of professional essays that undertake this task. You are free but not required to incorporate secondary sources to set up your argument. If you do, though, you should keep the focus on your original argument. **1700-1900 words**

## **ATTENDANCE**

Absences in excess of **two** sessions will result in a third of a letter grade deduction from your final grade at semester's end. If you are incapable of attending class due to illness and can provide a detailed note signed by a medical professional, I will offer you make-up work for the missed days up to a point. If you miss more than three days on account of a documented health issue, I will recommend that you look into pursuing a health withdrawal. If you miss a class session, it is your responsibility to contact me (by email or office hours) about any upcoming assignment instructions you may have missed. If you want a more detailed sense of what was covered, stop by my office hours. You are also strongly encouraged to get notes from a classmate.

*If you arrive late* (after I check attendance), make sure to check with me after class to ensure I have you marked in attendance. Late arrivals in excess of two will be considered one full absence. All late arrivals more than 10 minutes into the class will count as absences.

\*Note: In accordance with college policy, I will consider signing 15<sup>th</sup> day drop forms only for students who have attended 90% of the class sessions and who have turned in all assignments.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

"Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

## **ACCOMODATIONS**

"Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>"

## SCHEDULE

All classes meet from **12:15pm-3:00pm**. We will typically have a break from 1:30-1:45.

### Week 1

- M 2/13 Introductions, Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* nos. 4 and 96 (in class)
- T 2/14 Behn *Oroonoko*, Mediawiki Project Discussed, **Short Response**
- W 2/15 McKeon, Critical Essay (Moodle), Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, BK 1, 63-128
- TH 2/16 Gulliver, BK 2, 131-199 **CB**
- F 2/17 Gulliver, BK 4, 277-353END **CB**

### Week 2

- M 2/20 Richardson's *Clarissa*, 1-135 (I have broken up the pages at even intervals, but you should stop at the end of whatever particular letter is nearest the end of the specified page range). **CB**
- T 2/21 *Clarissa*, 135-200 **Group 1 Dress Rehearsal**
- W 2/22 Discussion of Wiki, *Clarissa*, 200-265 **CB**
- TH 2/23 *Clarissa*, 265-330 **Group 2 Dress Rehearsal**
- F 2/24 *Clarissa*, 330-395 **CB**

### Week 3

- M 2/27 *Clarissa* 395-515 END! **Group 3 Dress Rehearsal**
- T 2/28 Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Volume 1 (moodle) **CB**
- W 3/1 *Tristram Shandy*, Volumes 6 (moodle) **CB**
- TH 3/2 Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, 1-78
- F 3/3 Discussion of Wiki; *Northanger Abbey*, 78-119 **CB**

### Week 4

- M 3/6 *Northanger Abbey* 123-235 **CB (All changes to Wiki Pages Due)**.
- T 3/7 **Revised Performances of Clarissa (TIME TBA)**
- W 3/8 No Class; **Final Paper Due by 5pm.**