

English 035: The Rise of the Novel

- instructor: Rachel Sagner Buurma
- semester: Fall 2023
- time: MWF 10:30-11:20
- location: LPAC 301
- office: LPAC 302
- office hours: W 3-6 in LPAC 302
- TA: Nora Greer, office hours Friday 1:30-3:30 location tba
- email: rbuurma1@swarthmore.edu
- eligible for GSST and INTP credit; fulfills the 18th/19th c distribution OR the 20th/21st distribution in the English major and minor; is a W(riting) class.

Why do we read novels? Why did people in the past read novels? How has the history of novel-reading shaped the way we think about ourselves, about other people, and about the world? In order to answer these questions, this course covers the long history of the novel in English considered as an aesthetic form, a record of social life, and a scaffolding on which we build our experience of the world.

We will examine the development of the novel from its origin in a multiplicity of different literary genres in the eighteenth century to its Victorian incarnation as a “realist” and middle-class form. We will then go on to examine the appropriation of the novel as high art by Modernist writers and its subsequent return to its multi-genre roots later in the twentieth century. All along, we will watch as novels shift - and sometimes expand - what kinds of characters' identities they include and center. We will trace changes in the novel's treatment of themes such as publicity and privacy, the role of gender and sexuality in social life, the representation of race and class, the significance of monetary exchange, and the proper relation between the author and his or her text. We will pay close attention to questions of realism and fantasy, spend a lot of time discussion fictionality, and will think about how the novel's form and content work together to create literary meaning.

We will do all this through a close attention to careful reading of landmark canonical novels and authors, a survey of the main critical and theoretical approaches to the novel, and an investigation of printing and publication history. At the same time, we will question the existing "canon" of novels and ask how we might choose the novels on our syllabus differently.

In addition to reading canonical novels and watching the core concepts of the genre unfold over the course of three centuries, we will play with early editions of old books in digital and physical form and explore text analysis techniques for the "[distant reading](#)" of [large corpuses of novels](#) in order to question all kinds of accounts of [the novel's "rise."](#) We will also ask how the novel's production, circulation, reception, and materiality – how it was composed, printed, published, bought, sold, borrowed, and read - might offer us a counter-narrative to more conventional interpretations of the novel and its origins.

In addition to reading novels and criticism about novels, we will write in genres inspired by them as well as write about them; our writing assignments will move from tutorials and adventures inspired by *Robinson Crusoe* to close readings performed in collaboration with classmates and large language models. Connecting the lost art of letter writing and the new technology of the chatbot and the (relatively) longstanding practice of text-mining with the newer phenomenon of generative AI, we will see how humans and machines decompose texts in order to recompose them in new ways, and learn to decompose and recompose texts ourselves.

By the end of the semester you will be able to close read a novel (and explain why, given the history of close reading and novels, this is a strange thing to do); tell multiple stories about the history of prose fiction in English and construct your own; understand the place of literary criticism in literary history; construct a corpus and perform basic text analysis on it; have some ideas about what generative AI can and can't do; think about probability in the context of both fiction and AI text generation; and interpret material form as aspect of literary meaning.

This class is suggested for current and future readers, writers, critics, and reviewers of fiction, fans of experimental-genre literary criticism, aspiring librarians and information scientists, and students interested in dipping a toe into some humanities applications of computational techniques.

Week 1: *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

September 6

- welcome and introduction
- the rise of the novel in title pages (presentation)
- "Rise"? "Novel"? Survey course? Genre course?
- canon and archive: How does what we are reading in this course [compare](#) with other similar courses taught elsewhere?
- Writing Assignment #1 assigned

September 8

- *Robinson Crusoe*, 3-56
- George Lukacs, paragraph from *The Theory of the Novel* (handed out in class)

Week 2: *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

September 11

- *Robinson Crusoe*, all
- republication history of *Robinson Crusoe*
- close reading the novel (handout and discussion in class)
- Writing Assignment #1 due; Writing Assignment #2 assigned
- Text Exercise #1 assigned

September 13

- *Robinson Crusoe*, continued
- selection from Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*
- strategies for reading criticism (handout and discussion)
- sentences
- <http://www.harkavagrant.com/index.php?id=286>

September 15

- *Robinson Crusoe* continued (possibly also begin reading *Pamela*)
- Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," pp. 336-349, 361
- excerpt from Ted Underwood, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee "The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction" (in class)

Week 3: *Pamela* (1740)

September 18

- *Pamela*, 11-131; 187-212; 230-238
- Writing Assignment #2 due

September 20

- *Pamela* chapter summary (pdf)
- *Pamela* 476-503
- paragraphs
- Text Exercise #1 due; Text Exercise #2 assigned

September 22

- Nancy Armstrong, from *Desire and Domestic Fiction*

Week 4: *Pamela and Shamela* (1741)

September 25 - NO CLASS (Yom Kippur)

September 27

- *Shamela*, all; bring *Pamela* text back to class as well
- paragraphs
- Writing Assignment #2 revision due; Writing Assignment #3 assigned
- Text Exercise #2 due; Text Exercise #3 assigned

September 29 - no class (Professor Buurma has jury duty)

Week 5: *Evelina* (1778)

October 2

- finish discussion of *Shamela*
- *Evelina*, 1-200
- McKeon, "Generic Transformation and Social Change"
- Writing Assignment #3 due

October 4

- *Evelina*, 200-250
- talk about *Tristram Shandy* (in class)
- Text Exercise #3 due; Text Exercise #4 assigned
- Generative AI, GPT-4 and large language models

October 6

- *Evelina*, 250-300
- Dorrit Cohn + free indirect discourse handout
- Ignatious Sancho letters, short excerpt
- [Ignatious Sancho digital map and brief biography](#)

Week 6: *Evelina* (1778) continued

October 9

- *Evelina*, 300-450
- Writing Assignment #3 revision due; Writing Assignment #4 assigned
- Tim Lee and Sean Trott, [Large language models, explained with a minimum of math and jargon](#)
- Optional but recommended: [Stephen Wolfram, What is CHATGPT Doing...and Why Does It Work](#)

October 11

- Evelina, continued
- transitions
- Text Exercise #4 due; Text Exercise #5 assigned

October 13

- Evelina, 300-450
- Jurgen Habermas, from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Week 7: October Holiday

Note: read *Northanger Abbey* and *A Woman of Color* (selections).

Week 8: *Northanger Abbey* (1778) and *The Woman of Colour* (1808)

October 23

- *Northanger Abbey*, 36-240 (all)
- *The Woman of Color*, pages 53-107, 188-189; optional but useful: skim Introduction
- Patricia Matthew, [review of Dominique edition of *The Woman of Colour*](#)
- mid-semester: review of where we have been and where we are going
- background (in class): Peter Fryer, from *Staying Power: the History of Black People in Britain*; G. Carter Woodson, from "Some Attitudes in English Literature"
- Writing Assignment #4 due

October 25

- *Northanger Abbey* and *The Woman of Color*, continued
- Benedict Anderson, from *Imagined Communities*
- reminder of Dorrit Cohn handout on narrated monologue and free indirect discourse

October 27 - Professor Buurma away at MSA conference

- Text Exercise #5 due

Week 9: *The Moonstone*

October 30

- *The Moonstone*, first half
- Writing Assignment #4 revision due; Writing Assignment #5 assigned

November 1

- *The Moonstone*, continued
- titles
- Michel Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228 (can skim first chapter included on pdf if you want to)
- D.A. Miller, from *The Novel and the Police* (chapter 2, 41-45, 52-57)

November 3

- *The Moonstone*, continued

Week 10: *The Moonstone*, second half

November 6

- *The Moonstone*, second half
- Writing Assignment #5 due

November 8

- *The Moonstone*, continued
- Edward Said, from *Orientalism*
- Gretchen Gerzina, from *Black Victorians*, *Black Victoriana* (in class)

November 11

- *The Moonstone*, continued
- Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect"

Week 11: Henry James, *Daisy Miller*

November 13

- *Daisy Miller*, all
- Writing Assignment #5 revision due; Writing Assignment #6 assigned

November 15

- *Daisy Miller*, continued
- Kate Crawford, from *Atlas of AI*

November 17

- *Daisy Miller*, continued
- Jameson, "The Realist Floor-plan"

Week 12: Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse* (1927)

November 20

- *To The Lighthouse*, 3-125
- Writing Assignment #6 due; Writing Assignment #7 (final paper) assigned

November 22

- *To The Lighthouse*, continued
- Ted Underwood, "Mapping the Latent Space of Culture"

November 24 - THANKSGIVING - no class

Week 13: *To The Lighthouse*, finish

November 27

- *To The Lighthouse*, 125-209
- Erich Auerbach, "The Brown Stocking" from *Mimesis*
- Discuss criticism exam

November 29

- *Winter in the Blood*, x-xx

December 1

- *Winter in the Blood*, xx-xxx including Louise Erdrich's introduction.

Week 14: James Welch, *Winter in the Blood* (1974)

December 4

- *Winter in the Blood*, finish
- one last very short LLM reading TBA

December 6

- *Winter in the Blood*, continued
- Writing Assignment #6 revision due

December 8

- *Winter in the Blood*, continued
- N. Scott Momaday and Tom King, "Literature and the Native Writer"
- Sterling HolyWhiteMountain, "On Culture Shock," *New Yorker* interview (2021)

Final paper/project proposal meetings this week

Week 15: *Winter in the Blood*

December 11

- In-class criticism exam

December 13

- *Winter in the Blood*
- Conclusions

Final papers/projects due by midnight, Dec 23

Texts and Assignments

Course texts: novels and short stories

- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 9780199553976
- Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0199536498

- Eliza Haywood and Henry Fielding, *Anti-Pamela and Shamela*. Toronto: Broadview Press, 2004. ISBN: 155111383X
- Frances Burney, *Evelina*. London: Penguin. ISBN:978-0140433470
- Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour*. Edited by Lyndon J. Dominique. Broadview. ISBN: 978-1551111766
- Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0141439792
- Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*. Penguin. ISBN: 0140434089.
- Henry James, *Daisy Miller and Other Tales*. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0141389776
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* Harvest Books ISBN: 0156907399
- James Welch, *Winter in the Blood* Penguin. ISBN: 978-0143105220

These books, unless otherwise noted, are available at the Swarthmore bookstore. You are also welcome to buy these books online or at a different store. Be aware that you need to have your own copy of the specific edition of each of the books listed above. Sadly, ebook readers are not yet robust enough for the lightening-fast page-turning and passage-navigating we will be doing in the class, so they are not an alternative to printing pdfs or buying books, unless of course you are using an e-reader or other technology because of a documented accessibility requirement.

Course texts: criticism

- Georg Lukacs, from *The Theory of the Novel* (1916)
- Ian Watt, from *The Rise of the Novel* (1957)
- Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality" (2006)
- Jürgen Habermas, from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962; English translation 1989)
- Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" (1968)
- Benedict Anderson, from *Imagined Communities* (1983)
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, from *Decolonizing the Mind*
- N. Scott Momaday, "The Morality of Indian Hating" (1964)
- Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish* (1975; English translation 1977)
- Dorrit Cohn, from *Transparent Minds* (1978)
- Michael McKeon, "Generic Transformation and Social Change: Rethinking the Rise of the Novel" (1985)
- Fredric Jameson, "The Realist Floor-plan" (1985)
- Frances Ferguson, from "Rape and the Rise of the Novel" (1987)
- Nancy Armstrong, from *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987)
- D.A. Miller, from *The Novel and the Police* (1988)
- Erich Auerbach, from *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946; English translation ?)
- Edward Said, from *Orientalism* (1978)
- Sterling HolyWhiteMountain, "On Culture Shock," *New Yorker* interview (2021)

All of the critical readings will be available in our Dropbox. I will be inviting you to the Dropbox shortly; if you prefer to use an email addresses other than your Swarthmore one, make sure you let me know.

Please be sure to print out the critical texts and bring them to class with you on the relevant days.

Reading assignments

Because novels are, almost by definition, long, some of our reading assignments will necessary be lengthy. Weekly reading assignments will generally be between 150 and (much less often) 250 pages of novel (between about 25,000 and 100,000 words) and between 5 and 20 pages of secondary reading. We all read different texts in different ways at different rates; on average, a college student will probably read 30-40 pages of novel an hour and 10-20 pages of criticism an hour; this estimated average reading pace includes note-taking and some time for pausing, reflection, and rereading. So for example in our second week - an example of a longer assignment than usual - you will read 200 pages of novel and about 20 pages of criticism, and so you should plan on setting aside 6-8 hours of reading. (All assignments for this class should more or less fit within the guideline of three hours of out of class work for every fifty minutes of in-class work; on average, a class that meets for three hours a week will require 9-10 hours of work outside the classroom.)

I recommend that you look at the syllabus and plan to start reading longer assignments ahead of time. There may be reading quizzes – covering both novels and critical/theoretical readings - as necessary. I'm also happy to create reading lab hour in LPAC if some of you want quiet, distraction-free time together. Readings that are not in the bookstore are available on Dropbox.

Writing Assignments

This writing-intensive class includes a focus on revision and the writing process. Our series of short (between 1-2 page and 4-5 page) writing assignments will build on writing skills introduced in class to give you experience writing in a variety of genres with connections to our novels and criticism. You will workshop your first drafts of Writing Assignments #2-#6 alongside peers with my guidance or the guidance of Rise TA Nora Greer. Later assignments will also include experiments in collaborative writing with classmates and with the assistance of large language models like GPT-4.

Final paper or project

Assignment #7 will incorporate secondary sources and some independent research (specifics of the assignment to be discussed further in class). It can take many different forms. You may choose to write a more traditional research paper; you may write a paper in the form of a longer book review; you may draft your own theory of the novel; you may create your own annotated syllabus for a "Rise of the Novel" course; you may build on our text analysis exercises to complete a project based in part or in whole on text analysis of a corpus; you may do something else. You will write a paper/project plan and have the chance to discuss it with me.

Text Exercises

During the first half of the semester, you will complete 5 short exercises designed to introduce you to some aspects of text analysis and text generation using computational methods. No previous experience is required. They are graded as complete/incomplete, but cumulative excellent and creative work on them will be noticed and rewarded in your overall participation grade. They are all available on <https://github.com/rbuurma/rise-2023> in the "Assignments" folder; responses should be posted to a Text Exercise Google Doc named [YourNameTextExercises] within your Writing Portfolio Drive folder. Rise TA Nora Greer will have open lab hours Friday afternoons 1:30-3:30 and can answer questions and troubleshoot; you are free to come work on the assignment during lab hours.

Criticism exam

This short exam tests your knowledge of the critical and theoretical readings. It will take place during exam period, but it is worth only 10% of your final grade. We will devote a day to reviewing for it at the end of the semester. I will be very clear about the exam's format and content; there will be no tricks. (Note: The average grade on this exam in years past has been an A-, an average usually composed of a number of perfect or near-perfect grades and a few low grades. The message is that, though many students find the idea being tested on literary criticism intimidating, if you do the work for this aspect of the class you are very likely to get a high grade.)

Informal writing and platforms: Google Docs and Dropbox

We will use **Google Docs** for turning in writing assignments and **Dropbox** for sharing pdfs of readings. I will give you detailed instructions for setting up your writing portfolio folder and naming your documents in class and on the written assignments.

Tools: OpenAI Account, Draftback

Each of you will receive an email with a link to set up your Swarthmore OpenAI account, which we will use in specific ways for some of our writing projects later this semester. If you use any OpenAI resources or any other AI-assisted writing tools to produce any of your writing for this class, please make sure to document what portions of text are AI-generated as you would document and cite any other text you include within a piece of writing you turn in. (If you use such writing tools for brainstorming, outlining, or revision strategies, I would like to know what and how you used them because I'm curious.) We will talk more about GPT and other AI text-generation tools in class.

Please also install [Draftback](#) in Chrome, along with the Chrome browser if you do not already have it. We will want to be able to use Draftback to let us watch our writing composition process in some of the essays you will write, especially the collaborative-authored ones.

Weekly class format

Though this will certainly vary as needed, in general our Mondays will be dedicated to some overview of major questions and issues related to the week's novel along with contextualization and background, sometimes partially in the form of lecture but including discussion. Wednesdays we will tend to delve into particular passages in more depth and often introduce a writing skill. Fridays we will discuss critical readings together (sometimes in smaller groups at first) before coming to a modicum of closure via those critical readings and briefly setting up for the following week. At the end of each class we will aim to briefly remind ourselves what we've learned, connect it back to previous concepts and texts, and record the results in some form.

Policies and Advice

Grading

- 20% in-class participation
- 10% exercises and quizzes
- 5% Writing Assignment #2, 10% writing assignments #3-#6
- 10% criticism exam
- 15% final paper or project

Laptops and phones

This policy is constantly in flux for me across courses and semesters, but this year in this class I am going to ask that you do not use a laptop, tablet, or phone for note-taking during class time unless we specifically need one for our class activities. We may change this policy over the course of the semester. If you are a hardcore computer note-taker come discuss your strategy for preventing your computer from distracting you and I may make an exception. I'll also ask that you silence and put away your mobile phone for the duration of class. Disability accommodations requiring the use of a computer or other device are of course an exception.

Attendance and due dates

Because this is a discussion-oriented class, attendance is essential. Missing more than three class sessions will result in a lowered grade (1/3 of a grade per additional unexcused absence) unless you have a valid excuse confirmed by your advisor or class dean. If you have symptoms of COVID or any other contagious illness, please DO NOT come to class and follow the College's COVID protocols! Late papers work the same way. Each of you has two single-use three-day-late passes for final/revised writing assignments; note that you have used it on the paper or assignment when you turn it in; no need to contact me about it. After that and on other assignments, you will incur a penalty (1/3 of a grade per three days late) unless you have a similarly valid excuse. So if a paper is due on Friday midnight and you don't turn it in until the following Thursday evening, that's 2/3 of a grade late, making an actual B+ paper, for example, into a recorded B-. First drafts must be on time because in general they will be due Monday and workshopped Wednesday-Friday.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. It includes both the direct copying of the words of another person without crediting him or her and paraphrasing the ideas of another person without giving credit. See the English department's guidelines on how to properly cite sources here:

<https://www.swarthmore.edu/english-literature/citing-your-work>

Distribution requirement

This course fulfills the 18th/19th c distribution in the English major and minor. It is eligible for GSST and INPT credit. It also fulfills the College-wide Writing requirement.

Accommodations

I want to work to make sure that everyone in this class has the access to the materials, resources, and support they need in order to learn most effectively. You are always free to talk to me about your own situation. A key Swarthmore resource in this area is the Office of Student Disability Services. Their accommodations policy is here:

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services via email at studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Services website. You are also welcome to contact me privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services.

Dean's Discretionary Fund and Dean's Office resources for basic needs

If, after exhausting the TAP resources, purchasing your textbooks or other materials for this or any other class present a serious financial difficulty for you, you should be aware of the [Dean's Discretionary Fund](#) and other resources such as the Course Book Collection in Underhill Library in Lang Music.

The Dean's Office describes the fund this way:

The spirit of this funding is primarily to support emergency circumstances and priority is given to students in the highest financial need tiers. Funding is usually limited to under \$500 and most grants are under \$300. Please note the Dean's Office may not be able to fulfill all requests.

Examples of eligible non-academic requests include, but are not limited to, expenses associated with emergency medical, dental, vision procedures, unanticipated trips home due to a family emergency, and various fees related to postgraduate opportunities.

The Student Life office at Swarthmore is very committed to making sure that all students having living situations that support their ability to work and live here successfully. If you find that you are having sustained difficulties with your food or housing situation and believe that this may affect your course performance, you should contact your class dean; you are also free to contact me if you wish so that I can help you find the support you need.

If you have trouble accessing the Discretionary Fund or other resources in the Dean's Office, please feel free to come speak with me so that I can help.

Syllabus acknowledgements

The first version of this course was inspired by [Sanjay Krishnan's](#) syllabus for his Rise of the Novel class. Some of the other syllabi I have read while constructing this one are listed [on my Pinboard](#).

The archival version of our syllabus will be deposited in our Dropbox folder. The most up-to-date copy of our syllabus and exercises will be available on github: <https://github.com/rbuurma/rise-2023>

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.