This course looks at two pivotal writers at a watershed moment in British literary history, 1650-1700: John Dryden, and Aphra Behn. Through the works of these wonderful literary artists, we will consider five key themes: the crisis of civil war and questions of monarchy and rule; the Catholic-Protestant divisions of Britain with their ideological, cultural, and ethnic implications; the new empirical science against the backdrop of world exploration and colonization; the emergence of mercantile capitalism; and changing conceptions of sexuality and gender, particularly as women took up literary expression. We will examine poetry, drama, and prose in the context of a rich and waning baroque sensibility that was giving way to a more ‘modern’ world.


UGRAD. WORK: Midterm (25%); Take-Home Final (25%); In-Class Essays (25%); Presented Scene (25%)

GRAD.WORK: Midterm (30%); 19 In-Class Essays & Part. (30%); Final Project (40%)

WK 1 (4/1): ‘Early Modern’: Looking Forward, Looking Back; Royalist & Puritan; Gender & Heroism

M: Introduction: Books; the Course; 17th-Century Britain—Civil War, Restoration, & a transforming World

Dryden, Venus’s Song, “Fairest isle &c.” (*Poetry & Prose*, p.450; also read intro. pp.ix-xxx)

W: Baroque Poetry: Behn, “Love Armed” (*Oroonoko, the Rover, &c.*, p.329; also read intro. 1-22); Dryden, *All for Love* (Act I)

Terms: Periods of English Literature—Commonwealth Period, Restoration, Augustan Age (Abrams), lyric

WK 2 (4/8): Dryden—Classical & Mythic Patterns, Gendered Spheres, & the Personal as Tragedy

M: *All for Love* (Acts I-II)

W: *All for Love* (Acts II-III)

Terms: Neoclassical Period, tragedy, blank verse, poetic diction

WK 3 (4/15): Dryden & Behn—Classical & Mythic Patterns, Gendered Spheres, & the Personal Voice


W: Dryden, *All for Love* (Acts IV-V); Behn, “Paraphrase on Ovid” (BBoard)

Terms: three unities, heroic drama, character, plot, soliloquy

WK 4 (4/22): Behn—Classical & Mythic Patterns, Gendered Spheres, the Personal & the Satirical

M: Behn, “Paraphrase on Ovid” (BBoard); Dryden, “Macflecknoe” (*P&P*, 185)

W: <***MIDTERM EXAM***>

Terms: heroic couplet, apostrophe, allusion, figurative language, rhetorical figures, rhetorical question, satire
WK 5 (4/29): The Satirical Sensibility—John Dryden & Aphra Behn

M: Dryden, “Macflecknoe” (142-47); Aphra Behn, “To My Lady Morland…&c.,” (BBoard)

W: Aphra Behn, “The Disappointment,” “To the Fair Clarinda,” (Oroonoko &c., 223, 262)

Terms: burlesque wit, burlesque, conceit, mock epic/epic, epic simile, pastoral, irony

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WK 6 (5/6): Heroism, Love, & Gender in Satire and Comic Drama

M: Aphra Behn, The Rover (Acts I-II)

W: Behn, The Rover (Acts II-IV)

Terms: comedy, tragicomedy, prose, meter, stock characters, stock situations, wit—repartee

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WK 7 (5/13): Comparing & Contrasting Comic & Satiric Sensibilities—Behn & Dryden

M: Behn, The Rover (Acts III-V)

W: Behn, The Rover (Act V); Dryden, Marriage-à-la-Mode (Act I-II)

Terms: comedy of manners, tragicomedy, stock characters, stock situations, wit—repartee

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WK 8 (5/22): Comparing & Contrasting Comic & Satiric Sensibilities—Behn & Dryden

M: Dryden, Marriage-à-la-Mode (Acts II-IV)

W: Dryden, Marriage-à-la-Mode (Act IV-V)

Terms: pastoral, prose, meter, stock characters, stock situations, wit—repartee

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WK 9 (5/29): Gender, Spirituality, & Idealized Realms of Art & Nature

M: ****HOLIDAY**** John Dryden, “To…Anne Killigrew” (320) & “Song for St. Cecilia’s Day” (418)

W: Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (Oroonoko &c., 75-103)

Terms: ode, irony, paradox, figurative language, platonic love, pastoral; prose, narrative, novel

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

WK 10 (6/3): Fictional & Non-fictional Prose—Narratives & Analysis & the Private Vantage

M: Aphra Behn, Oroonoko (Oroonoko &c., 75-141)

W: John Dryden, “Preface” to Fables Ancient & Modern (P&P, 513ff.) ***Final Essay Due***

Terms: point of view, plot, suspense; criticism, essay