

Department of English & Writing Studies

Personhood in Eighteenth Century Literature: Black Lives

English 3342G (001)

Winter 2021

Synchronous Online

Instructor: Mary Helen McMurrin
mmcmurr2@uwo.ca
Virtual Office Hours: Mondays 3:30-5:30 pm
and by appt.

Course Location: Virtual Format (Zoom),
Synchronous

Course Date/Time: M 1:30-3:20/W 1:30-2:20

TA: Kamila Redmond
Virtual Office Hrs: TBA

Prerequisites: At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Course Description

This course has been revised in light of events of 2020, BLM and widespread protests against racial inequality. The course now focuses on male and female Black writers' narratives and imaginative writing about the Black experience. Focusing on personhood, we will investigate the mechanisms of oppression on enslaved Africans and expressions of their resistance to white power in the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Background in notions of personhood from the Western philosophical tradition will be used to frame personhood, but with a view to its limitations.

NOTE: This course is required to be taught remotely, but will be as much like an in-person course as we can make it.

You will be required to come to Zoom class during all the scheduled class times; lectures and discussions will be live on Zoom. We may use breakout rooms in Zoom and interactive tools in OWL.

Also note that this course requires quite a good deal of reading and writing! You are expected to do all the reading in advance of the class for that day and come prepared to participate. Your essays are expected to be high quality work.

Objectives:

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to:

- Be able to speak and write critically
 - close textual analysis
 - interpreting the significance of narrative form and themes
 - writing complex thesis statements and reasoned arguments with a sophisticated use of evidence
- Gain familiarity with historical and literary context of Black writing in the 18th-century
- Become sensitive to and engage in civil discussions of racism, race, and racialization from a historical perspective
- Practice inclusiveness as a pedagogical model

Course Materials

You are required to purchase paperback books so that we can use them during our Zoom discussions. The books are all REQUIRED. They will be available for purchase at the Western Bookstore. If you will not be in London, the Bookstore will be able to mail the books to you and you can purchase them elsewhere.

Oludah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Oludah Equiano*
Broadview Press (Penguin edition is acceptable)

Ignatius Sancho, *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho, an African*
Broadview Press (other editions are acceptable)

Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. Sara Salih
Penguin Classics

Claire de Duras, *Ourika*, trans. John Fowles
MLA Texts and Translations

Other materials will be made available on OWL.

Methods of Evaluation

Two essays: 7-8 pages double-spaced each; 35% each, total of 70%

Primary Source Research project: 10% preliminary findings; 20% introduction and notes to primary text.

Assignment guidelines will be posted on OWL.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information, including Academic Consideration posted on the department website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

January 11 & 13

from Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (OWL)

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* chapters 1-3

January 18 & 20

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, chapters 4-8

January 25 & 27

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, chapters 9-11

February 1 & 3

Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative*, chapter 12
essay preparation

Essay 1 Due February 5th 11:55 p.m. Upload to OWL assignment box.

February 8 & 10

John Marrant, *A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings* (OWL)

Reading Week

February 22 & 24

Ignatius Sancho, selected letters

March 1 & 3

The History of Mary Prince, Preface and pp 7-29

March 8 & 10

The History of Mary Prince, pp 30-65

March 15 & 17

The History of Mary Prince, John Marrant, and Ignatius Sancho comparative studies
Essay Prep

Essay 2 Due March 20th 11:55 p.m. Upload to OWL assignment box

March 22 & 24

Selected poems: from Equiano, from Marrant, Jupiter Hammon, Lucy Terry, Benjamin Banneker (OWL)

Database research

March 29 & 31

Claire de Duras, *Ourika* read all

Database research

Preliminary Findings Due April 2nd 11:55 p.m. Upload to OWL assignment box

April 5 & 7

Read scholarly introductions to Equiano, Mary Prince and Ourika (vii-xxi)

Database project

April 12 no class

Primary Text Edition Due by April 15th 11:55 p.m. Upload to OWL assignment box

Notes on Written Work

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's work and is one of the most serious academic offences, since it involves fraud and misrepresentation. In plagiarizing, one is in effect claiming another person's words or ideas or data as one's own work, and thus misrepresenting material subject to academic evaluation. It is necessary, therefore, that plagiarism carry appropriate penalties. These are within the discretion of the instructor in consultation with the Chair of English Undergraduate Studies, but may include failure of a course or a grade of zero on an assignment, without the privilege of resubmitting it.

Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Writing Process:

We will discuss and practice ways to achieve: 1. a complex, arguable thesis; 2. a structured argument using reasons for the thesis; 3. the use and analysis of evidence to support your points; 4. engaging introductions and conclusions. These sessions on the writing process take place throughout the course and will require some group work and individual in-class writing to help you learn how to build and evaluate the components of great essays from the ground up. None of the in-class writing will be graded, but you will be required to hand in three formal essays. In addition, there will be a creative writing exercise which will not be graded. It is designed to help you appreciate Austen style from the inside out.

Late work is unacceptable and will be penalized 5% per 24 hours it is late. All essays will be submitted electronically to our OWL site. You will also be required to upload your essay to turnitin.com.

Presentation of Written Work:

- Written work should be submitted double-spaced (including inset quotations), in 12-point font.
- Use 1-inch margins for all four edges of the paper. Do not use justification on the right margin

- Each page should be numbered consecutively in the top-right hand corner of the page next to your surname.

- Use italics for the titles of works.

- Use a "Works Cited" list ONLY if you have consulted secondary sources, i.e., anything other than the Austen novels we are reading for the course.

*Use MLA style first-page header with your name, etc.

General Marking Criteria:

80-100: An exceptional analysis of an issue or problem in one or more literary texts. The exceptional essay contains a complex main idea along with supporting evidence, i.e., it is not just an observation about the text. Its main idea uses some concept (agency, individuality, sensibility, etc.), which the student defines in his/her own terms, and then analyses. The exceptional essay breaks down its complex main idea into several parts in order to organize the paper. Each part includes some use of the text as evidence, but also forwards the main argument. It goes beyond merely giving evidence, and it goes beyond merely quoting the texts. Rather, the exceptional essay takes apart the quotations to reveal shades of meaning or ambiguities. An A essay must be very well written and show logic and coherence. It will not have awkward word usage or awkward sentence structures. It will follow MLA format perfectly.

70-80: A well-written, coherent essay with a main idea and evidence, but not exceptional. It may have too much plot summary for example, or not enough time and effort was spent in articulating a main idea. Or, it may not use the text well, missing the good quotations, or quoting without analyzing. It might have some awkwardness or lapses in logic, poor grammar, spelling errors, etc.

60-70 A response, but not very deeply considered or well written, or contains errors of comprehension.

50-60: No real main idea; not logically or smoothly written.

Additional Information

Attendance:

If you miss more than three classes (2-hour or 1-hour) your final mark will be adversely affected. I will take attendance at each Zoom session.

Time budget:

4 hours + per week of reading and taking notes on the reading
6-10 hours on weeks with writing assignments

Accommodation

COVID-19 related absence:

If you are ill, the first thing I would ask you to do is to alert the university. This is being done so that the university and the local health authorities can gather data.

https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/academic_considerations/ you will find a blue "Student Illness Report Tool" you can click on to submit the necessary information.

If you are ill and cannot submit an assignment by the due date, please email me. If you require short-term academic consideration or accommodation, please do likewise. I will do my best to work with you to find a reasonable solution. **I am also counting on each of you to exercise your best judgement: it is crucial that you only request academic consideration if you really need it.**

If your accommodation is longer term and might require an INC or if you have other concerns about your academics, please contact the academic counsellors from your home Faculty.

Regular Accommodation Policy

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see [Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:
<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.