

ENGL2561J: SATIRE AND IRONY I '14

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Office hours: Tues. 10:30-12:30

How easie is it to call Rogue and Villain . . . But how hard to make a Man appear a Fool, a Blockhead, or a Knave without using any of those opprobrious terms! . . . there is still a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a Man, and the fineness of a stroak that separates the Head from the Body, and leaves it standing in its place.
John Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning Satire* (1693)

There are two ends that men propose in writing satire, one of them less novel than the other, as regarding nothing further than personal satisfaction, and pleasure of the writer, but without any view towards personal malice; the other is a public spirit, prompting men of genius and personal malice, to mend the world as far as they are able.
Jonathan Swift, "A Vindication of Mr. Gay and *The Beggar's Opera*, 1728)

[Satire] is a kind of knight errant that goes upon adventures to relieve the distressed damsel Virtue.
Samuel Butler, *Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections on Various Subjects* (d. 1680; pub. 1908)

Satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own.
Jonathan Swift, *The Battel of the Books* (1705)

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers eagerly consumed works of satire and irony in pamphlets, periodicals, manuscripts, broadsides, poems, plays, narrative fiction, and essays. These works addressed topics ranging from politics, economics, and religion to sex, fashion, and bad writing. Jurgen Habermas imagines such consumers assembled in coffeehouses where timely issues were debated, and he argues that this phenomenon was crucial to the development of modern society. The proliferation of texts as a result of print culture might be called the first "information age." For post-modern consumers of the digital "information age" — who regularly watch *The Daily Show*, *SNL*, *The Simpsons*, who read DeLillo, or who check on-line for the latest *Onion*— this taste for the ironic and satirical will not seem very remote.

What is satire—a genre, a mode, a discourse, a method, an attitude, or a rhetorical practice? Idealism and cynicism, laughter and aggression, morality and scatology, reform and despair, intimacy and pain, 'high' and 'popular' culture coexist

in the 'mixture' suggested by the etymological root, *satura* [Lat.]. This seminar will investigate the history, theory, and practice of satire. Much of the reading is drawn from the period 1650 and 1750 (the great age of satire and irony), but we also will be looking before and after the crucial era of Rochester, Dryden, Swift, and Pope. Terms and concepts such as parody, burlesque, mock-heroic, imitation, and lampoon will be clarified. Important theoretical and critical discussions of satire will form a part of our reading. Some revision of the syllabus is possible, in light of specific student interests.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Byron, Lord. *Major Works* (Oxford)
Collier, Jane. *The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (Oxford)
Gay, John. *The Beggar's Opera* (Penguin)
Dryden, John. *Major Works* (Oxford)
Pope, Alexander. *Major Works* (Oxford)
Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49* (Bantam)
Swift, Jonathan. *Essential Writing* (Norton)
Additional readings will be available on-line, on Canvas, and on reserve in the Rock.

SCHEDULE OF SEMINAR MEETINGS:

Sept. 3 Introduction

Sept. 10 What is satire?

Some background reading:

John Dryden, *A Discourse Concerning Satire* (1693) [electronic resource]

Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Winter" from "The Theory of Myths" in *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1971), pp. 158-239, esp. 223-239 [electronic resource]

Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (U. of Minnesota Press, 1984), Ch. 4 [electronic resource]

Robert Elliott, from *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton, 1960), pp. 3-99 [Canvas]

Gilbert Highet, from *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton, 1962), pp. 3-21 [Canvas]

Charles Knight, from *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1-49 [electronic resource]

Sept. 17 Early forms and examples of satire: Classical, Medieval, and Early Modern [available on Canvas]

Horace, Epistles I.i; Juvenal, Satire X [Samuel Johnson, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*]

John Skelton, from *Colin Clout*

John Donne, "Satyre III"

Recommended choices:

Ruben Quintero, "Understanding Satire" (BCTS, 1-11)

Caroline Deane, "Defining the Art of Blame: Classical Satire" (BCTS, 31-51)

Laura Kendrick, "Medieval Satire" (BCTS, 52-69)

Ejner J. Jensen, "Verse Satire in the English Renaissance" (BCTS, 101-117)

W. Scott Blanchard, "Renaissance Prose Satire: Italy and England" (BCTS, 118-136)

Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (Yale, 1962), pp. 1-46

Heather Dubrow, "'No Man is an Island': Donne's Satires and Satriic Traditions," *SEL* 19 (1): 71-83

Richard Strier, "Radical Donne: Satire III," *ELH* 60 (2): 283-322

Sept. 24 Civil War and Restoration Satire

John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, *A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind*; "A Ramble in St James Park"; "Absent from thee"; "Artemisia to Chloe"

Samuel Butler, from *Hudibras*, Part 1 [electronic resource]

John Dryden, *Macflecknoe*; *Absalom and Achitophel*

Recommended choices:

Andrew McCrae, from *Literature, Satire, and the Early Stuart State* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 1-50, 208-224

Dustin Griffin, "Dryden and Restoration Satire" (BCTS, 176-195)

Michael Seidel, "Patterns of Anarchy and Oppression in Samuel Butler's *Hudibras*" *ECS* 5: 2940314

David Rothman, *Hudibras and Menippean Satire* *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 34 (1): 23-44

Howard Weinbrot, "Nature's Holy Bands: Fathers and Sons, Satire and Change" in *Modern Philology* 85:4 (1988), 373-92

Susan C. Greenfield, "Aborting the Mother Plot": Politics and Generation in *Absalom and Achitophel*" *ELH* 62:2 (1995), 267-93.

Oct. 1 What is irony?

Jonathan Swift, "A Meditation on a Broomstick"; *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity*; *A Tale of a Tub*; "A Modest Proposal"

Claire Colebrook, *Irony* (Routledge, 2004), 1-46

Recommended choices:

D. J. Enright, *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* (Oxford, 1986)

Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 1-56 [ebook]

Oct. 8 **Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels***

Recommended choices:

Ashley Marshall, *The Practice of Satire in England 1668-1770* (2013)

Harold Bloom, *Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels Modern Critical Interpretations* (Chelsea, 2008)

Claude Rawson, *God, Gulliver, and Genocide: Barbarism and the European Imagination, 1492-1945* (Oxford, 2001)

Oct. 15 NO SEMINAR MEETING

Oct. 22 **Alexander Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*; *Moral Essays***

Recommended choices:

Ellen Pollak, *The Poetics of Sexual Myth* (Chicago, 1985), 1-107

Jonathan Lamb, "The Rape of the Lock as Still Life" in Blackwell, Mark (ed.), *The Secret Life of Things: Animals, Objects, and It-Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Bucknell, 2007), 43-62

Oct. 29 **"Prologue and Epilogue to the Satires"; *The Dunciad***

Recommended choices:

Catherine Ingrassia (ed.), 'More solid learning': *New Perspectives on Alexander Pope's Dunciad* (Bucknell, 2000)

Colin Nicholson, *Writing and the Rise of Finance: Capital Satires of the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge UP, 1994)

Nov. 5 What is parody?

John Gay, *The Beggar's Opera*

William Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness*

Recommended choices:

Rose, Margaret, *Parody, Ancient, modern, and Post-Modern* (Cambridge, 1993)

Robert Chambers, *Parody: The Art that Plays with Art* (Peter Lang, 2010) [e-book]

Jean Marsden, "Dramatic Satire in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century" (BCTS, 161-175)

Nov. 12 Satire and the Novel

Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*

Recommended choices:

Viktor Schlovsky, "Art as Technique" in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (U of Nebraska, 1965) [Canvas]

Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* pp. 259-422; 51-82 (U of Texas, 1984)

John Farrell, *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau* (2007)

Nov. 19 Satire and Women

Aphra Behn, “The Disappointment” [with Rochester, “The Imperfect Enjoyment”]

Delarivier Manley, from *Secret Memoirs from the New Atalantis* [Cannvas]

Jane Collier, *The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* [with Swift, *Directions to Servants*]

Frances Burney, from *Letters and Journals*

Jane Austen, from *Juvenilia*

Recommended choices:

Donald C. Mell, ed. *Pope, Swift, and Women Writers* (Delaware, 1996)

Felicity Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women 1660-1750* (U of Kentucky, 1984)

Tita Chico, *Designing Women: the Dressing Room in Eighteenth-Century English literature and Culture* (Bucknell, 2005)

Melinda Rabb, “Redressing Women Satirists”, *Cambridge Companion to Women’s Writing in the Eighteenth-Century* (Cambridge UP, 2014)

Nov. 26 THANKSGIVING RECESS

Dec. 3 Satire, Irony, and Romanticism

Lord Byron, *Don Juan*

Claire Colebrook, *Irony*, 47-94

Recommended choices:

Charles Donelan, *Romanticism and Male Fantasy in Byron’s Don Juan: A Marketable Vice* (St Martin’s, 2000)

Christopher Yu, *Nothing to Admire: the Politics of Poetic Satire from Dryden to Merrill* (Oxford, 2003)

Dec. 10 Satire, “high” and “post” modernism

Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Claire Colebrook, *Irony*, 95-178

Recommended choices:

Steven Weisenburger, *Fables of Subversion: Satire and the American Novel, 1930-1980* (U of Georgia Press, 1995)

Palmeri, Frank, *Satire in Narrative: Petronius, Swift, Gibbon, Melville, and Pynchon* (U of Texas Press, 1990)

SEMINAR REQUIREMENTS:

1. Read actively and critically.
2. By Tuesday at 9:00 pm, post a response paper (at least 3 double-spaced pages) on the course webpage. Response papers should be read by all in advance of the seminar and will be integrated into our discussions. Raise questions, propose ideas to test in class, and identify crucial passages in the text that will generate discussion. Test out possible ways of reading and interpreting, with the tacit understanding that everything is up for revision. (20%)
3. A book review (5-7 pages) of one of the major perspectives on satire and irony. Book reviews should be posted on the course webpage where they will accumulate as a 'reference library' of ongoing debates about theories and interpretive practices. (20%)
4. A seminar report (30 minutes) that includes an oral presentation, Q&A, and discussion questions on one of the week's assigned readings. Reports should engage with texts and ideas in ways that will open up further conversation. (20%)
5. A final research paper of approximately twenty pages, due on Dec. 15. (40%)
6. Attendance and participation. Two unexcused absences will result in an NC.