
ENGL7296 / 8296: Studies in the British Novel
“Stage to Page: Theatrical Entertainment and the Early English Novel”

Instructor.	Dr. Darryl P. Domingo	Office Hrs.	Thurs. 3:30 – 5:30
Location.	T.B.A.	Phone.	(901) 678-3458
Time.	Thurs. 5:30 – 8:30	E-Mail.	dphnrhnd@memphis.edu
Office.	Patterson Hall 431	Session.	Aug. 22 – Dec. 8, 2016

Course Description. This graduate seminar will survey the “performative” aspects of early English novels, directing attention to the ways in which the rhetoric of fiction reproduces or reinvents the conventions of contemporary theatre. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, entertainment in general is conceptualized in terms of the stage—drama being, according to Colley Cibber, England’s “national Diversion.” However, in the later eighteenth century, debates over entertainment come to be rehearsed by and through the novel—the newest and most pervasive of the “Reigning Diversions of the Town.” This seminar will seek to determine how and why this happened by discussing intersections between drama and fiction during the period and analyzing the various ways in which novels came to fill the cultural position once occupied by plays. The seminar will ask students to read works of fiction alongside main-piece comedies, tragedies, and tragicomedies, rehearsal plays, dramatic satires, farces, and other examples of what Cibber calls “Theatrical Fooleries,” in order to situate the early novel in its original context where, far from being a discrete literary genre, it was one of many interrelated genres vying for ascendance. Characters in eighteenth-century novels frequently attend the theatre, while characters in eighteenth-century plays are often shown reading works of fiction. How do the form and content of the one genre affect the other, and what does their competition in a marketplace of theatre-goers *and* readers suggest about the development of English culture between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the eighteenth century. It is not coincidental that some of the most influential early writers of fiction also happened to have active careers in the theatre. This seminar will examine the careers of three of these writers—Aphra Behn, Henry Fielding, and Frances Burney—in order to explain how the early novel came to satisfy the demands of an audience avid for entertainment.

Required Reading. Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko and Other Writings*, ed. Paul Salzman (Oxford, 2009 / 9780199538768); Henry Fielding, *The History of Tom Jones, A Foundling*, eds. Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Penguin, 2005 / 9780140436228); Richard Brinsley Sheridan and George Colman the Elder, *The Rivals and Polly Honeycombe*, ed. David Brewer (Broadview, 2012 / 9781554810062); Frances Burney, *Evelina, or, A Young Lady’s Entrance into the World*, ed. Susan Kubica Howard (Broadview, 2000 / 9781551112374); Frances Burney, *The Witlings and The Woman-Hater*, eds. Peter Sabor and Geoffrey Sill (Broadview, 2002 / 9781551113784); and *The Broadview Anthology of Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Drama*, ed. J. Douglas Canfield (Broadview, 2001 / 9781551112701).

→ Inexpensive used copies of these editions are available at amazon.com and abebooks.com.

Method of Evaluation. Seminar presentations (30%); essay proposal and annotated bibliography (20%); 15-page research essay (30%); informed participation in classroom discussion (20%).

Method of Instruction. Each class meeting will begin with two or more students giving an approximately 10 to 15-minute seminar presentation that analyzes the week's readings and facilitates further discussion of the reciprocal relationship between drama and fiction in the late seventeenth and eighteenth century. The seminars will be of two kinds: one will discuss the formal or thematic connections between the week's novel and play, and the other(s) will summarize the argument and explore the implications of assigned critical readings drawn from academic journals and scholarly books (posted in PDF to E-Courseware). Students will be required to sign up for particular weeks' presentations during the first class meeting.

Learning Outcomes. Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify basic narrative forms and define literary terms related to the novel as genre.
- Describe the particular contributions of major literary figures associated with the "rise" of the English novel.
- Distinguish the conventions and characteristics of different dramatic genres in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England.
- Describe the particular contributions of major cultural figures associated with theatrical management and performance in London.
- Appreciate the vital reciprocal relationship between literary text and cultural context, especially between the early English novel and theatrical entertainment.
- Orally discuss critical issues concerning the intersections of fiction and drama, and write about these issues in a clear and coherent manner.
- Undertake advanced research, drawing upon the arguments and evidence of literary-historical scholarship to illuminate the texts and contexts of the course.