

ENGL 7296/8296: Studies in the British Novel
Women & the British Novel: From the Intertextual to the Intersectional
Carey Mickalites
Spring 2024: Thursdays, 5:30

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929) Virginia Woolf uses the techniques of the fiction writer to convey a scathingly impressionistic account of the patriarchal exclusion of women from the spheres of education, money-making, and writing, having been relegated to unpaid forms of reproductive labour instead. Along the way, she tells the story of women's gradual entry into the world of public writing, moving from their violent exclusion in the Elizabethan age to Aphra Behn's commercial success to Charlotte Brontë's gendered fury and Jane Austen's emotional insight refined through her mastery of the sentence. And we learn of all this from Woolf herself, one of the masters of the modernist novel and its innovative capacities for rethinking consciousness in its complex relationship to social reality, including the inherent violence of patriarchal capitalism.

Woolf's text offers us an entry point, in medias res, to a study of canonical and lesser-read novels by women from Britain and along its colonial contours. Rather than resting on some essentialist notion of "women's writing" or even "women," we will look to works that reflect critically on questions of women's agency and authority across historical periods, and link those concerns to other structures of political economy. Novels we will read might pose links between female domesticity in Victorian England to racial oppression in the Caribbean; explore LGBTQ desires and identities; question capitalist imperatives for reproduction and other wageless forms of bodily extraction; and above all carry out an active intertextual engagement with other writers interested in the novelty of the novel and its social entanglements.

Likely Novels for the Course

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko*

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (or) *Mansfield Park*

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (or) Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando*

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*

*This reading will be supplemented with a range of theoretical and critical texts. TBD.
Contact Dr. Mickalites with questions or suggestions!

cjmcklts@memphis.edu