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## ENGL 4243 / 6243: Studies in British Literature

### The “Age of Satire” in Britain

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| <b>Instructor.</b> | Dr. Darryl P. Domingo   | <b>Office Hrs.</b> | Mon. / Wed. 3:45-4:45pm |
| <b>Location.</b>   | Patterson Hall T.B.D.   | <b>Phone.</b>      | (901) 678-3458          |
| <b>Time.</b>       | Mon. / Wed. 2:20-3:45pm | <b>E-Mail.</b>     | dphnrhnd@memphis.edu    |
| <b>Office.</b>     | Patterson Hall 407      | <b>Session.</b>    | Jan. 20 – May 7, 2026   |

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**Course Description.** It is often said that we live in an “Age of Satire,” provoked by social and political division and influenced by increasing media fragmentation, manufactured culture wars, and the specter of “alternative facts” and “fake news.” In a world where truth itself seems under attack, and where politicians, celebrities, and authors compete to seize the attention of the public, satire has become a vital means through which to expose vice and folly and bring about reform. Or as John Dryden put it in 1692: “Such fulsome objects meeting everywhere, / ’Tis hard to write, but harder to forebear.” Writing during an earlier “Age of Satire” in Britain, Dryden characterized “satyr” as a public service, but one that often achieved its ends by giving vent to the anger or anxiety of private individuals. In this course, we will examine the form and function of satire by surveying a diverse range of satiric works produced by British men and women between approximately 1660 and 1750. We will familiarize ourselves with mock-epic and mock-pastoral; Horatian, Juvenalian, and Ovidian imitation; Menippean satire; ballad opera; ironic fable; spurious travelogue; lampoon; satiric epistle; parody; travesty and burlesque; graphic satire; as well as meta-satire that comments upon the ethics and aesthetics of satire as a literary mode. Not only were many of the most important poems, plays, and novels of the period “comedic,” “sarcastic,” or “ironic,” but they frequently grapple with contentious issues resonant with those in our own Age of Satire. The course will work from the assumption that literature which provokes laughter sometimes broaches topics that are so unsettling or profound or threatening that they would be difficult to deal with in a more serious mode.

**Required Texts.** *The Broadview Anthology of British Satire, 1660-1750*, eds. Evan R. Davis and Nicholas D. Nace (Broadview Press, 2023 / 9781554812509); Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*, eds. Claude Rawson and Ian Higgins (Oxford, 2005 / 9780199536849); John Gay, *The Beggar’s Opera and Polly*, ed. Hal Gladfelder (Oxford, 2013 / 9780199642229); Henry Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, ed. Darryl P. Domingo (Broadview, 2013 / 9781554811632). Additional course materials will be posted on Canvas.