

EN4/6733: Eighteenth Century Literature
Spring 2014, TR 9:30-10:45
Professor: Peter DeGabriele

Satire and Sentiment in the Eighteenth Century



Satire and sentimentality were two of the major rhetorical modes through which eighteenth-century writers in all genres (literary, philosophical and journalistic) conceived of the relation of the subject to society. Both satirical and sentimental works attempted to produce connections between self and society, and used the resources of their respective forms to perform far-reaching social critique. However, both these forms also threatened to leave the writer, subject, or self profoundly alienated from a society that was either too corrupt for his stern virtue, or too harsh for her exquisitely sensible feelings. In this course we will read poetry, novels, drama, philosophy, and periodical writings and explore how satire and sentiment engaged in and, to some extent organised, debates about governance, charity, virtue, economics, and slavery. We will read such great satirists as Pope, Voltaire, Swift, Smollett, Collier, and perhaps Austen; and great sentimentalists like Sterne, McKenzie and Radcliffe.

During the semester, you will write bi-weekly reading responses, compose two essays and sit for two exams: one midterm and one final.