

Recovering British Romantic Women Travel Writers

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This submission presents a project from my fall 2018 literature capstone course that engaged ten seniors in the recovery of British women's travel writing from the early nineteenth century. The main requirement of the course was for students to create a significant work of original scholarship. To achieve this goal, they completed a thesis of 20 pages and contributed to our class-created WordPress site *Women in the World: Global Connections in British Women's Travel Writing 1780–1850*.

The students' contributions show how British women's accounts of travel to Europe and the Americas engaged important issues of the Romantic era, such as colonialism, slavery, and women's rights. Pedagogically, the course was innovative for engaging students in both recovery work and digital writing. In particular, the digital platform enabled them to participate in a scholarly conversation, sharing their research with one another and the wider academic community. The project benefits the study of Romanticism by revealing the global reach of the field, introducing more diverse voices into its canon, and providing information and critical readings necessary to understanding underrepresented writers.

I) DIGITAL PROJECT

Women in the World: Global Connections in British Women's Travel Writing 1780–1850
britishwomentravelwriters.wordpress.com

II) SYLLABUS

ENG 390: Literature Capstone

Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Pamela Buck

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Course Description

This course is for senior English majors who are concentrating in literature, and it serves as the culmination of your studies in the major. The topic for our course is "Recovering British Women Travel Writers," and you will have the opportunity to create a significant work of original scholarship on an underrepresented British woman travel writer of the early nineteenth century. The project will draw on your skills as a close reader of complex literary texts, a careful researcher, and an eloquent writer to produce a senior thesis and a contribution to a collaborative website.

In recent decades, scholars have done groundbreaking work in recovering women's texts, and the introduction of their work has dramatically revised our understanding of literature. However, women's travel writing remains a relatively unexplored area. Their texts raise important and fascinating questions such as, what compelled women to travel, and how did their writing help Britain understand the world? What do their texts reveal about British views of race, empire, and colonized peoples? How did travel provide women with opportunities to enter the public sphere and address issues of social and political importance? How did encountering other societies help shape their own gender identities?

Course Objectives

- Develop familiarity with underrepresented literature and its concerns
- Demonstrate mastery of literary analysis and research
- Develop the ability to do innovative, independent work in the form of original scholarship

- Develop and practice both academic and digital writing skills
- Contribute to a wider body of public knowledge in an academic field

Required Texts

Readings on Blackboard

Assignments & Assessments

- Short essays 40%
- Final essay 20%
- Website contribution 20%
- Participation 20%

Short Essays

Because the senior thesis is a lengthy assignment, you will complete shorter written assignments to prepare you for the final product. Short essays will include identifying a text and topic, researching the historical context of your chosen work, constructing an annotated bibliography, and providing an argument about the text supported by close reading. On days essays are due, you will take part in peer review to help you successfully revise your work.

Final Essay

You will use your short essays to write your final essay, a senior thesis of 5,000-6,000 words (approximately 20 pages). This essay must present a central, compelling argument about your chosen text, using relevant biographical, cultural, and critical knowledge from your research to support your ideas. Your essay should conform to MLA guidelines, and your works cited list must include secondary sources from scholarly databases. We will use peer review and individual conferences for this essay.

Website Contribution

The final two weeks are set aside for creating a virtual exhibit of final research projects on a class-created WordPress site. Your website contribution of 1,500 words (approximately 5 pages) should summarize the results of your final essay and incorporate helpful visuals and other design features.

Participation and Professionalism

Our course incorporates active and collaborative learning principles. Class discussion, in-class writing, small group work, and peer review are all part of the participation grade. A portion of the grade, professionalism, relies on your attitude to and level of engagement with the class. Professional students arrive on time, bring their texts, and meet assignment deadlines. They are focused and attentive to other students as well as to the instructor, use technology responsibly during class, and collaborate well with classmates. In short, professional students take responsibility for their own learning.

Attendance Policy

Attending class is essential to a positive learning experience. You may miss no more than *one* class, excused or unexcused, and excessive absences or lateness/early departures will result in failure of the course. If you must be absent, consult with me to devise a plan to help you make up work. In the case of a university closing, our course will move online. Please check your email during this time for updates.

Statement on Academic Integrity

The university has a clearly defined Academic Integrity Policy. You must abide by the university's policy on academic integrity in every piece of work you submit for credit in the course. Violations will result in failure of the assignment or the course and will be reported to the Dean.

Grading Criteria

In this course, grading is a form of active learning, and you will be responsible for the thoughtful, accurate evaluation of your own work and that of others. Grades are determined according to the university's grading system.

Resources

- Jandrisevits Learning Center – academic support, accommodations for students with disabilities, and writing tutoring
- Ryan Matura Library – print and online resources, research guides, and reference librarians

Schedule of Assignments

Week 1	August 30 Course overview Recovering Women Writers
Week 2	September 6 Carl Thompson, <i>Travel Writing</i> , Introduction - Chapter 3
Week 3	September 13 Essay 1 due Sara Mills, <i>Discourses of Difference</i> , Chapter 1; Carl Thompson, <i>Travel Writing</i> , Chapter 7
Week 4	September 20 Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i> , Introduction; Mary Louise Pratt, <i>Imperial Eyes</i> , Introduction
Week 5	September 27 Essay 2 due Library instruction session
Week 6	October 4 Library research
Week 7	October 11 Essay 3 due
Week 8	October 18 Essay outline
Week 9	October 25 Essay 4 part 1 due
Week 10	November 1 Essay 4 part 2 due
Week 11	November 8 Essay conferences
Week 12	November 15 Final essay due
Week 13	November 22 No class
Week 14	November 29

	Website design
Week 15	December 6 Website design
Week 16	December 13 Website contribution due

III) COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Recovering Women Writers

For this assignment, you will research your two assigned writers from our British Women Writers List and recover one more writer of your choice using the online resources reviewed in class. For each of your three writers, please write a brief paragraph explaining who she was, where she traveled, when and what she wrote, and one or two interesting facts about her and her work.

- *Women's Travel Writing 1780–1840* <http://www4.wlv.ac.uk/btw/>
- *A Celebration of Women Writers* <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/writers.html>
- *Orlando Project* http://www.artsrn.ualberta.ca/orlando/?page_id=81
- *Women Writers Project* <https://www.wwp.northeastern.edu/>

Essay 1: Identification

This essay asks you to describe the text you have chosen and provide the topic you intend to pursue in your literary research this term. It should be approximately 3-4 pages and address the following:

- **The text:** What do you know about it so far? When was it written? Was it intended to be public or private? If published, does it appear to have been popular? Is it still in print today? If it has a table of contents or an introduction, what main topics does the book cover?
- **Your topic:** Why does the text interest you? What main idea or ideas about this text do you hope to explore? What major questions are you curious about?
- **Next steps:** What questions do you have about the text, the writer, or the period in which it was written? What else will you need to find out, and where will you look for more information?

Essay 2: Historical Context

For this essay, you want to explore the world in which your chosen author wrote her travel account, focusing on the major historical and cultural events of the time. This essay should be approximately 5-7 pages and address the following:

- **Writer:** What do we know about her background, including her social class and education? When did she travel, for how long, and for what purpose? What were the material conditions of her journey? What other texts did she write, and how do they relate to her travel account?
- **Context:** What political, economic, or social issues occurred when this text was written? How might they have influenced her writing? How did cultural norms in Britain differ from the place she visits, and how might such differences affect her views?

Essay 3: Annotated Bibliography

This assignment asks you to locate secondary sources that consist of scholarly criticism about your text. These should consist of academic articles and books found through the library's databases. For each source, provide complete documentation in MLA style, followed by an annotation that explains what material or ideas it covers and indicates how it would be helpful to your research. Aim for five to ten

sources. While you may not end up using them all in your final essay, becoming familiar with the major critical work on your text will allow you to develop a better argument about it.

Essay 4: Close Reading

For this assignment, you will do a close reading of your chosen text in two parts. Consider what you want to argue about the text so far, and choose several sections to discuss that you believe support this argument. Use passages from the text to provide evidence for your argument and support your ideas. You will want to discuss your own interpretation alongside those of your critical sources. Use in-text citations and a works cited page in MLA style to document your sources. Each part of the essay should be approximately 5-7 pages.

Website Contribution

For our last assignment, we will create a virtual exhibit of your final essays on our collaborative website. This digital project allows us to provide a valuable online resource for a reading public, namely students of literature and scholars interested in women's travel writing. The assignment has two parts:

- **Home Page:** This is the first page that readers will see when they land on our site, so it should serve as an introduction to our project. Based on your topics, we will work with three themes: empire, culture, and gender. You will work in small groups to write sections of the introduction, using ideas from our course readings and explaining how your projects reflect these themes. Be sure to hyperlink any concepts that you think readers would need defined.
- **Author Page:** Your 1,500-word contribution should present the highlights of your final essay. It should contain your argument, relevant biographical and cultural context, and interpretation with passages and critical sources for support. Since digital writing is visual in nature, use clear headings and paragraph breaks, include 3-5 visual images that present ideas in your content. Hyperlink the title of your primary source to an online version for access to the full original text.