

Prof. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon
English 7213
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Early American Literature: Print and Performance in the Atlantic World

Early American literature, critics have recently argued, is neither *American* nor *early*; rather, it is a literature written by colonial subjects who understood themselves primarily in relation to European metropolitan culture. The hypothesis of this course, however, is that the voices of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans emerge within these texts as well, albeit in ways that require us to read with a new set of methods. We will attend to the textual nature of the materials we consider, as well as their sonic, haptic, and performative dimensions. A key concern throughout the course will be our engagement with the archive of colonialism and capitalist modernity: who creates the archive? What is omitted or included in the archive? How do we access the archives of colonialism and what do we do with the materials we encounter (and fail to encounter) there? Does the digital nature of the archive change our encounter or not? We will also consider the role of aesthetics in Atlantic world culture, particularly with respect to the publics convened by texts and performances.

Required assignments include the following:

- Class presentation, publication history: brief class presentation on one of the primary texts we are reading for the class that details to the print or performance history of the text in question: 10% of final grade
- Class presentation, archival finding: twice during the semester you will be asked to find one primary source related to the reading and present it briefly to the class: 10% of final grade
- Class presentation, how to do things with texts: a creative or digital engagement with the text: 10% of final grade
- Class presentation and written review: choose one of the critical works we are reading excerpts from and read the entire book. Write a two to three-page review of the book and present your thoughts on the book in class: 15% of final grade
- Visit to the archive: visit Boston Public Library or Massachusetts Historical Society to find an archival object related to Shakespeare's *Tempest* and write a three page account of the object: 15% of final grade
- Final project: ECDA group exhibit with headnotes and reflection paper or seminar paper building on earlier course writing: 40% of final grade

Schedule of Readings:

Jan. 11: Mapping Early American Studies

Jan. 18: Encounter/Discovery (soundscapes, epistles, knowledge-making)

Christopher Columbus, *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*

“General and Natural History of the Indies,” Oviedo; “Digest of Columbus’s Log-Book,” Las Casas; “Letter of Columbus to Various Persons,” “Narrative of the Third Voyage,” “Letter Sent by the Admiral of the Indies to the Governess of Don Juan of Castile,” “Letter Written ... to the Most Christian and Mighty King and Queen of Spain”

Bartolomé de las Casas, *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (excerpts)

John Phillips, “Epistle Dedicatory” and “To All True Englishmen,” in *Tears of the Indians* (1656)

Secondary:

Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (excerpts)

Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein. “Americanness as a Concept, or the Americas in the Imaginary of the Modern World-System.”

Jan. 25: The Tempest and the Colonial Archive

William Shakespeare, “The Tempest” (1611)

Secondary:

Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (excerpts)

Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (excerpts)

Feb. 1: Reading Indigenous Networks

Edward Winslow, *Good News from New England* (1624)

Secondary:

Richard Cullen Rath, “Hearing Wampum: The Sense, Mediation, and the Limits of Analogy”

Matt Cohen, *The Networked Wilderness: Communicating in Early New England* (excerpts)

Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (excerpts)

Feb. 8: Reading Slave Labor

Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1657)

John Kimber, “The trial of Captain John Kimber, for the murder of two female Negro slaves, on board the Recovery, African slave ship: tried at the Admiralty Sessions, held at the Old Baily, the 7th of June, 1792”

Secondary:

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (excerpts)

Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother* (excerpts)

Optional:

Kathleen Donegan, *Seasons of Misery* (excerpts)

Feb. 15: Oroonoko and the Archive of Performance

Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko* (1688)

Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko* (1696)

Secondary materials:

Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (excerpts)

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World* (excerpts)

Optional:

William Spengeman, "The Earliest American Novel: Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko*,"

Feb. 22: Natural and Unnatural Histories

Hans Sloane, *A Voyage to the Islands*. vol. 1. (1707)

Secondary:

Monique Allewaert, *Ariel's Ecology* (excerpts)

Sylvia Wynter, "Jonkanoo in Jamaica"

Optional:

Christopher Iannini, *Fatal Revolutions* (excerpts)

Mar. 1: Witchcraft and its Geographies

Richard Godbeer, *The Salem Witch Hunt: A Brief History with Documents*

Secondary:

Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (excerpts)

Optional:

Nancy Ruttenburg, *Democratic Personality* (excerpts)

Mary Beth Norton, *In the Devil's Snare* (excerpts)

Mar. 8: Spring Break

Mar. 15: Alternative Genealogies and Epistemologies

William Earle, *Obi: or, The History of Three-Fingered Jack*

Secondary:

Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book"

Toni Wall Jaudon, "Obeah's Sensations: Rethinking Religion at the Transnational Turn"

Nicole N. Aljoe, Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, Benjamin Doyle, and Elizabeth Hopwood, "Obeah and the Early Caribbean Digital Archive"

Optional:

Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (excerpts)

Mar. 22: Narrating the Haitian Revolution

Victor Hugo, *Bug Jargal* (1826)

"Story of Mackandal"

Secondary:

Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (excerpts)

Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed* (excerpts)

Optional:

Laurent Dubois and John Garrigus, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789-1804: A Brief History with Documents* (excerpts)

Mar. 29: Archives of Slavery

Thomas Thistlewood, *Diaries* (1750)

Bryan Edwards, "Sable Venus" (1765)
Norbese Phillip, *Zong!*
Robin Coste Lewis, *Sable Venus*

Secondary:

Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*
(excerpts)
Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts"

Apr. 5: U.S. National Archives

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781) (excerpts)

Secondary:

Lauren Klein, "The Image of Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and
James Hemings"
Kimberly Juanita Brown, "Saving Mr. Jefferson"

Apr. 12: Poetics, Publication, The Public Sphere

Phillis Wheatley, selected poems
Prince Hall, Petition (1773)
Belinda, Petition (1783)

Secondary:

Joanna Brooks, "Our Phillis, Ourselves"
Michael Chaney, "The Concatenate Poetics of Slavery and the Articulate Material
of Dave the Potter"

Optional:

Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

Apr. 19: The Novel, Reconsidered

Leonora Sansay, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808)