

Engl 56A, Fall 2009

Essay topics for the final exam

The first half of your final exam will look very much like the two midterms: you will be asked to identify several passages and to write a short essay, all dealing with the works covered in the last part of the course by Pepys, Dryden, Swift, Gray, Behn, Gay, Pope, Haywood, and Hogarth. That essay will be written on one of the topics below, but only at the exam will you be told which of them to write on.

A. In works that we read, Swift, Behn, and Gay all dealt with major social issues of their day, though never by addressing those issues directly. Discuss the way *A Modest Proposal*, *Oroonoko*, and *The Beggar's Opera* each treat their central issue by giving several specific examples from the text, and then decide which approach you think would have been most effective in bring about social change, and why.

B. As we discussed in class, the period from the English Restoration to the French Revolution was, in British literature especially, marked by wit and satire. Two good examples of that are John Gay's mock-opera and Alexander Pope's mock-epic. Look closely at two specific passages or scenes from *The Beggar's Opera* and two from *The Rape of the Lock* in order to explain what is being mocked in each, how it is being mocked, and how that relates to the overall themes of each work.

C. Haywood's *Fantomina* represents a significant change in attitudes concerning women, and especially their sexuality, which frequently found expression in eighteenth-century literature; we can see similar examples in *The Beggar's Opera*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and even Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* and *Marriage à la Mode*. But what is the nature of that change? Women have certainly been condemned for having wanton and lascivious natures throughout human history—are these eighteenth-century examples any different?

The other part of the examination will consist of a second essay, more comprehensive in nature, and covering works of your own choosing from throughout the semester; the questions for that essay will be given to you only at the examination, but you will be able to choose then which one you want to answer.

The exam is on Tuesday, May 19, 12:15-2:30. Be sure to bring one or two full-sized blue books.