



Science and Wonder in Early American Literature

English 657/AMST 650

Spring 2014

T, Th 3:00-4:15

Professor Kristina Bross

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494-3745

Office hours in Heavilon by appointment

Office hours in Beering 1176: Wednesday, 1-3

Texts

Available through Von's Books:

Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*. Ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (must be the Hackett edition).

Mary Rowlandon, *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. Ed. Neal Salisbury (must be the Bedford edition)

Other readings will be made available through Blackboard, or will be accessible through Purdue's on-line databases, as noted in the schedule of readings. One such text is Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*, which is also available in reprint/facsimile paper versions. Another is Increase Mather's *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences*, which is available through Early English Books On-line or Early American Imprints. I encourage you to look at this 372-page text as soon as possible and make plans for the best way to access it during class discussion. I myself have printed it out and slapped it in a 3-ring binder, which I find easier to use in class discussion.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Unit 1, Introduction

January 14-16

T Introductions, etc.

Th Background reading

- Raymond Stearns, *Science in the English Colonies of America*, chapter 1, “Old Science in the New World” (Blackboard)
- Stephen Greenblatt, “Invisible Bullets,” chapter 2 from *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Blackboard).
- David Hall, “A World of Wonder,” chapter 2 from *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment* (Blackboard)
- Katharine Park, and Lorraine Daston, “Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England,” *Past and Present* 92 (1981), pp. 20-54.

January 21-23

T Introductions to the following books (all on Blackboard)

- Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity*
- Sarah Rivett, *Science of the Soul*
- Christobel Silva, *Miraculous Plagues*
- Kelly Wisecup, *Medical Encounters*
- Walter W. Woodward, *Prospero’s America*

Th Background reading, continued

- Justine S. Murison, “Literary Historicism, and *Miraculous Plagues*,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2013), pp. 821-823.
- Cristobal Silva, “Epidemiology as Method: Literary Criticism in the Age of HIV/AIDS,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2013), pp. 832-838.
- Justine S. Murison, “Response to Cristobal Silva,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 70, No. 4 (October 2013), pp. 843-844
- Steven Shapin, “Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle's Literary Technology.” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 14, No. 4. (Nov., 1984), pp. 481-520.

Unit 2: Experimental Islands. For the next two weeks, we’ll be reading Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados* (1657) and other accounts of Barbados. Hurricanes, sugar cane, slavery, pineapples and sketches of *ingenios*. What’s not to love?

January 28-30

T Richard Ligon, *A True and Exact History*. Be sure to read the introduction by Kupperman.

Th NO CLASS (I'll be away at a conference); this is a reading day:

- Myra Jehlen, "History Beside the Fact: What We Learn from *A True Exact History of Barbadoes*," in *Readings at the Edge of Literature* (Chicago, 2002): 179–91 (Blackboard)
- Keith Sandiford, "Mapping the Caribbean: Ligon's Map and *History*—Cartographies of Emergent Knowledge in Early Barbados," *Anglistik und Englischunterricht* 67 (2007): 235–62. (Blackboard)
- Susan Scott Parrish, "Richard Ligon and the Atlantic Science of Commonwealths." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 67, 2 (April 2010): 209-248.

February 4, 6

T/Th

- Ligon discussion, continued
- N.S., *A Continuation of the State of New-England* (1676). Find this short (20 page) pamphlet through *Early English Books On-line*. We'll be focusing on the account of a Barbadian storm, pp. 19-20, but you should look over the rest for context/contrast.

Book Reports Due

February 11, 13

T

- Look through and explore the on-line presentation of the John Carter Brown Library's 2012 exhibit, "Voyage to the Islands":
http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/sloane/index.html
- James Delbourgo, "Sir Hans Sloane's Milk Chocolate and the Whole History of the Cacao" *Social Text*, Spring 2011, 29(1 106): 71-101.
- Christopher Iannini, "Strange Things, Occult Relations" chapter 1 from *Fatal Revolutions*, chapter 1, (Blackboard)

Unit 3: Providence Tales. The center of this unit will be our close reading of Increase Mather's *An Essay for the Recording of Illustrious Providences* (1684), an amazing (and fairly long) compilation of lightning strikes, poison cases, shipwrecks and miraculous escapes from falling wood piles. Again, I ask you, what could be better? Oh, and we'll also study the Jeremiad sermon form and Mary Rowlandon's captivity narrative along the way.

Th Increase Mather, *The Day of Trouble is Near*, 1674 (Early American Imprints)
Emory Elliott, "Jeremiad" (Blackboard)

February 19, 20

T *Essay for Recording*

Th *Essay for Recording*

Formal Book Review Due

February 25, 27

T *Essay for Recording*

Th *Essay for Recording*

March 4, 6

T *Essay for Recording* /Mary Rowlandson, *Sovereignty and Goodness of God*. Please be sure to read Salisbury's introduction to the text.

Th Rowlandson, continued

Friday: 5 questions for practice prelim distributed

Unit 4, Witchcraft! This unit will take us through the trial transcripts of the Salem witchcraft trials (1692) and the first literature to come out of that infamous moment in colonial American history. If you've never studied Salem or read the original sources, you'll find some real surprises (glowing jellyfish on the mantelpieces of the village, say).

March 11, 13

T

- Cotton Mather, "A Brand Pluck'd from the Burning." This manuscript is most readily accessible in George Lincoln Burr, ed., *Narratives of the Witchcraft Cases*, which you can find here: https://openlibrary.org/books/OL6567174M/Narratives_of_the_witchcraft_cases_1648-1706.
- Janice Knight, "Telling it Slant," *Early American Literature* 37.1 (March 2002): 39-70.
- Deborah Kelly Kloepfer, "Cotton Mather's Dora," *Early American Literature*, 44.1 (2009): 3-38.

Th Salem lecture

- Trial transcripts, on-line through <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft> (excerpts to be announced)
- James Hartman, "Providence Tales in the New World," from *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature* (Blackboard)

Recommended:

- Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, "Prologue" from *Salem Possessed* (Blackboard)
- Elizabeth Reis, "The Devil, the Body, and the Feminine Soul in Puritan New England," *Journal of American History*, 82.1 (1995): 15-36.

Practice Prelim available. Due no later than Tuesday, March 25. Please take the practice prelim on the honors system. Open it when you can set aside enough time to complete it, but spend no longer than 16 hours on it.

March 18, 19 SPRING BREAK

March 25, 27

T

- Selected Salem trials
- Emory Elliott, "Language of Salem Witchcraft" (Blackboard)

Th

- Tituba trial manuscripts
- Toni Jaudon, "Obeah's Sensations," *American Literature* 2012 Volume 84, Number 4: 715-741.

April 1, 3

T Cotton Mather, *Wonders of the Invisible World*

Th

- Mather, *Wonders*, ctd.
- Letter of Thomas Brattle (Virginia etext)
- Albert Cook, "Damaging the Mathers," *New England Quarterly*, 65.2 (1992): 302-308.

Unit 5: A Pox on You. We will conclude the term by reading the primary sources (newspapers, tracts, medical accounts) of the 1721 Boston small pox epidemic and its accompanying contentious and sometimes violent debate over the introduction of inoculation into the community. This unit may serve as a transition to your future studies of science and wonder in the 18th century as a young Benjamin Franklin joins our cast of characters.

April 8, 10

Cotton Mather, *Angel of Bethesda*, excerpt (Blackboard)

Read through the newspaper excerpts collected here:

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/ideas/text7/smallpoxvaccination.pdf>

Then, read the full issues of the newspapers in which several of these excerpts appeared. I'd like you to look at the following issues, but keep an eye on your email for updates on which we'll actually be reading. I'm still working with the libraries to figure out the best way to make these issues accessible to you.

- *Boston Gazette*, July 10-17, 1721
- *Boston Gazette*, July 27-31, 1721
- *New England Courant*, August 7, 1721

- *New England Courant*, August 14-21, 1721
- *Boston Gazette*, August 28-September 4, 1721
- *Boston Gazette*, October 23-30, 1721
- *New England Courant*, November 13-20, 1721
- *Boston Gazette*, January 8-15, 1722

For additional background reading and to help give you a chronology of the newspaper war of words, see Laurence Farmer, “The Smallpox Inoculation Controversy and the Boston Press, 1721-2,” which can be easily accessed here:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1805980/>

April 15, 17

T, Th We’ll be moving from newspaper exchanges to pamphlet wars this week. The following tracts can be found here: <http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/contagion/smallpox.html>. Their titles below are also hot. The reading looks heavy, I know, but the pamphlets are all in the 10-25 page range.

- Mather, Cotton, Emanuel Timoni d.ca, Iakovos Pylarinos, Zabdiel Boylston, and Samuel Gerrish. *Some Account of What Is Said of Inoculating or Transplanting the Small Pox.*
- Douglass, William, Alexander Stuart, and James Franklin. *The Abuses and Scandals of Some Late Pamphlets in Favour of Inoculation of the Small Pox, Modestly Obviated, and Inoculation Further Consider’d in a Letter to A– S– M.D. & F.R.S. in London...; Abuses and Scandals of Some Late Pamphlets in Favour of Inoculation.*
- Williams, John and James Franklin. *Several Arguments, Proving, That Inoculating the Small Pox Is Not Contained in the Law of Physick, Either Natural or Divine, and Therefore Unlawful: Together with a Reply to Two Short Pieces, One by the Rev. Dr. Increase Mather, and Another by an Anonymous Author, Intituled, Sentiments on the Small Pox Inoculated: And Also a Short Answer to a Late Letter in the New-England Courant.*

One final tract can be found on-line through the library database, Early American Books. If you find that the Harvard open collections program is a pain to use, search for the titles of the other tracts in that database as well.

- William Cooper, *A Letter to a Friend in the Country*

April 22, 24

T, Th: Again, you can find the following tract (a bit longer this time) either through Harvard’s open collections or through the Early American database: Boylston, Zabdiel. *An Historical Account of the Small-pox Inoculated in New England, Upon All Sorts of Persons, Whites, Blacks, and of All Ages and Constitutions: With Some Account of the Nature of the Infection in the Natural and Inoculated Way, and Their Different Effects on Human Bodies: with Some Short*

Directions to the Unexperienced in this Method of Practice / Humbly Dedicated to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales.

Coda: There be Giants

April 29-May 1

T

- Dispatch on the discovery of a giant tooth. See *Boston News-Letter*, July 23, 1705 (Blackboard)
- David Levin, “Giants in the Earth: Science and the Occult in Cotton Mather’s Letters to the Royal Society,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 45.4 (October 1988): 751-770. This note contains the text of Mather’s letter describing the fossil find.
- Edward Taylor, “Great Bones . . .” (Blackboard)
- Amy Morris, “Geomythology on the Colonial Frontier.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 70.4 (October 2013).

Th TBA; we’ll either begin our presentations during our class time or schedule our full mock conference for finals week.

Finals week: conference or seminar papers due on Wednesday by noon.

Assignments

- Book “reports” and reviews (30%)
- Providence Tales discussion (10%)
- Prelim exam practice and (25%)
Conference+ paper (25%)
OR
Seminar paper (50%)
- Participation, including conference review and mock conference presentation (10%)

Book reports and reviews (30%)

For this assignment, I will ask you to choose two of the following five books to read in their entirety and review for the class. My assumption is that as we run across ideas, texts, histories or theories that are illuminated by these secondary studies, the students who have read them will serve as resources on those studies for the rest of the class. Of course, you are more than welcome to read all five of the books for yourself! You are also more than welcome to meet/email/otherwise discuss your take on the book with the other members of this class as you prepare your reports and reviews.

For each of the books, send me a 2-4 page “report” based on the template below (due February 6 at the start of class). I’d like to post these reports on our Blackboard site as a resource for the rest of the class. Please follow up one of the reports with a 4-6 page formal review of the book to be handed in to me on February 20 at the start of class. The review should be submitted in 12-point font, double spaced, with the following header:

Reviewed by <name>
<book title>. <author’s name>. <place of publication: press, date of publication>. <number of pages>.

See any recent book review in the journal *Early American Literature* for examples, or see published reviews of the book that you are reviewing for this class.

Book report template:

Respond to the following prompts in a word document, using these sections/ headers:

1. Bibliographic information.
2. Summary (1-2 paragraphs) of the book’s central argument and/or stakes of the argument.
3. Scholarship or critical discussion upon which this book depends.
4. List of chapters or sections, with description of how those chapters/sections relate to the units or themes of this course.

5. List of 3-4 strengths of the book.
6. List of questions or concerns about the book.
7. Bibliography of published scholarly reviews of the book (if any, and a select list is OK).

Providence Tales discussion (10%)

Please sign up to help lead class discussion on one of the days that we are discussing Increase Mather's *Illustrious Providences*. Among the many providences that he details, choose one that you want to bring to our attention, bring in 3-4 discussion questions to distribute to the class (and here I'm looking for questions that follow the model of prelim exam questions). In particular, I'd like you to choose a providence that can be illuminated by or that challenges our secondary readings.

Prelim Practice Exam (25%)

If you are planning to take a prelim exam in literary criticism or theory, this assignment may be a good option for you. If you want to tackle this assignment, you'll need to plan on taking a day away from other responsibilities to complete it, as I would like you to write under conditions as similar as possible to the real exam.

Drawing on the questions proposed by the class for Increase Mather's work and on earlier class discussions, I will distribute a list of five questions related to the texts in the first half of the semester. A week later, I will make a mock prelim exam available to you, in which I'll ask you to answer two of three questions, drawn from the five I distributed earlier. You may take up to 16 continuous hours to complete the mock exam, which should be no more than 14 double-spaced pages in length.

Conference paper (25%)

A 20-minute conference paper is about 9 typed, double-spaced pages. For this paper, you may hand in 9-12 pages on any topic related to 17th-century science and wonder in early American literature. I will ask you to submit a formal conference proposal in advance of the due date, and I will expect you to meet with me twice: once before the proposal, and once before the final draft is due.

Seminar paper (50%)

If you would like to explore the course topics in more depth, or if you don't need the prelim exam practice, I encourage you to write a full seminar paper rather than the conference paper. This paper should be 25-35 pages (including bibliography), on any topic related to 17th-century science and wonder in early American literature. I will ask you to submit a formal proposal in advance of the due date, and I will expect you to meet with me twice: once before the proposal, and once before the final draft is due.

Mock conference presentation (10%): During the final week of class and/or finals week, we will conduct a mock conference in which each of you makes a 15-minute presentation of your research findings.

Participation: I am not assigning a formal grade to participation, because it is a given in a graduate seminar that you will attend every class and participate in the class discussion actively. You cannot earn an A in the class without consistent attendance and active contributions to the class discussions. Please talk with me if you know you have a conflict with a class meeting time, and contact me as soon as possible in case of illness or emergency.

Plagiarism and honesty policies: The submission of plagiarized work in whole or in part is a violation of University policy and will result in penalties up to failure in the course and referral to the dean of the college. See me if you have any concerns about proper citation style. Also, I will only accept original work produced specifically for this class in fulfillment of course requirements. Again, please see me if you have questions.

Campus-wide emergencies: in case of campus closure or other disruption to our schedule, I will contact you by email with arrangements/revised syllabus.

Other opportunities: Over the course of this semester, you will have the opportunity to attend at several conferences or other presentations related to our topic of study. I'm happy to help arrange travel as a group just for the intellectual stimulation, or, given the riches of the extracurricular events this semester, I'd be happy to extend extra credit should you wish to attend and write a review. I've listed several possibilities below; if you have a nomination for another event, please let me know! If you'd like extra credit, choose an event and provide me a 2-4 page, double-spaced review of a) the conference/workshop as a whole or b) an individual panel/session. For examples of published reviews of conferences, see the following

Sandra M. Gustafson, "Symposium on the English and Dutch in the Early Modern World." *Early American Literature*, Volume 48, Number 2, 2013, pp. 523-525.

Steven W. Thomas, *The American Literature Association Conference*. Boston May 26-29, 2011. *Early American Literature*, Volume 47, Number 1, 2012, pp. 243-251.

Conferences, etc.

- March 18-23, 2014, American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies (Williamsburg, VA)
- April 11-12, 2014, Early Atlantic Reading Group Colloquium (Purdue)
- April 17-18, 2014, Purdue American Studies Symposium (Purdue)

Newberry Library workshops and presentations:

Eighteenth-Century Seminar, Tobias Menely, "History's Atmosphere: The Matter of Air in the Enlightenment." Saturday, February 22, 2014, 2:00 pm.

History of the Book Lecture, Bruce T. Moran, “Preserving the Cutting Edge: Woodblocks, Visual Knowledge, and Practices of Botanical Illustration in Early Modern Europe.” Friday, April 4, 2014, 2 pm.

Note: both Newberry lectures are free, and you may even be able to apply for travel funds (contact Professor Michael Johnston). But you do need to pre-register to attend. See [http://www.newberry.org/calendar?tid=12&field_event_date_value2\[value\]\[date\]=01/05/2014&field_event_date_value\[value\]\[date\]=05/05/2014&page=1](http://www.newberry.org/calendar?tid=12&field_event_date_value2[value][date]=01/05/2014&field_event_date_value[value][date]=05/05/2014&page=1).