

# ENGL 372

Special Studies in 18th-century Literature:

The Eighteenth Century Now

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## Course description:

The eighteenth century is not over. Its terms remain our terms, much as we may wish to assert progress. And it captivates passionate artists still. Since art is the best criticism of art, this course coordinates major figures of the eighteenth century with their representations in the fiction and poetry of our day. The aim is to sharpen historical and

generic self-consciousness while making acquaintance with the topics and the personnel of an era when so many of our methods and obsessions emerged. How do we square a given philosophy with the pursuit of an individual life? How ought men and women to relate? What is freedom? The relationship of Indigenous peoples to colonists, of human beings to “nature,” of a volatile techno-sphere to tradition, of the public to the private domain—the issues remain electric, momentous and unresolved.

#### Proposed reading list:

Note: this list is tentative still.

Susan Sontag, *The Volcano Lover*; Penelope Fitzgerald, *The Blue Flower*; Andrew Gray, *Casanova*; John Steffler, *The Afterlife of George Cartwright*; Douglas Glover, *The Life and Times of Captain N*.

Together with the works, relevant eighteenth-century materials will be read.