This course will explore the ethical imagination in the eighteenth century by looking at literary representations of social organization and encounters with the other alongside readings from moral and political philosophy. Both literary and philosophical discourses were deeply invested in normative claims about how men and women should live their lives, but they often developed radically divergent concepts of consent, virtue, the "State of Nature," natural sociability, and rational autonomy. We will explore these divergences by taking seriously the intersections and impasses that emerge when literature and philosophy are put into conversation.

Discussion and assignments will address the ways in which different literary forms and traditions develop and critique "practical" philosophies, and how the "realisms" of literary and philosophical representations tell different stories about moral imperatives.

**Crosslisting: College of Letters 299; Certificates: Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory**

**This course fulfills the Literary History 2 and Theory major requirements and contributes to the British Literature and Theory and Literary Forms concentrations of the English major.**

**Assignments:**

Four short response papers, one for each unit (listed in bold on the reading schedule). You will choose your own deadlines, but those deadlines will be firm. Response papers should be two pages and should engage critically (i.e., no summary) with an aspect of that day’s readings. 20%

One mid-term paper (7 – 10 pp.) developing a focused, critical argument. Mid-term papers should not simply reproduce or expand response papers. 30%

Final research project (15 pp.), including a research proposal and a bibliography. 40%

Class participation. This will be a discussion-based class with a fairly heavy reading load. Please come to class every day having actively and critically read all of that day’s assigned reading, and be prepared to participate actively in the conversation. 10%

**Additional Policies:**

Wesleyan University is committed to providing accommodations to students with documented disabilities. To receive accommodations, students must self-disclose by completing the Notification Form and making a follow-up appointment with Dean Patey. All work must be completed and submitted in strict compliance with the Honor Code. Due dates are firm; no extensions will be given except in cases of documented medical emergencies.
Please shut down electronic devices before class begins.

**Texts** (available at Broad Street Books):

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*  
Margaret Cavendish, *Paper Bodies*  
Lawrence Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*  
Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*  
Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*  
Sarah Fielding, *A Simple Story*  
William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*  
Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence*  
Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Additional readings will be provided. Please print readings from *Moodle* and bring them to class with you.

**Tentative reading schedule:**

**Jan 23**  
*Introductions to the course*  
“The Grumbling Hive”  
“The Rape of the Lock”  
“The Eolian Harp” (excerpt)  
“Eighteen Hundred and Eleven” (excerpt)

**Jan 30**  
*Freedom, Property, the State of Nature*  
*Robinson Crusoe*  
To page 176, “It happen’d one Day…”  
Hobbes, chpts 6, 21, 13  
Locke chpts 1 – 6

**Feb 6**  
*Robinson Crusoe*  
Hobbes, chpts 14, 15, 16  
Locke, chpts 7, 8, 9  
Charles W. Mills, chapter 1, “Overview,” from *The Racial Contract*

**Feb 13**  
Cavendish, excerpts from *The Worlds Olio, Female Observations, The Blazing World*, and selected poetry (136 – 263), from *Paper Bodies*  
Hobbes, chpts 17, 18  
Hamilton, excerpt from *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah*  
Crèvecoeur, letters 2 & 3

**Feb 20**  
*Religion, virtue*  
*Pamela*, vol. 1
Hobbes, chpt 12
Rousseau, excerpt from “Savoyard Vicar” (292 – 301)

Feb 27
*Pamela*, vol. 2
Haywood, excerpt from *The Anti-Pamela*

March 2 (Monday): Mid-term paper due by the end of the day

March 6
*Millenium Hall*
Plutarch excerpts on Lycurgus and Numa
Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, chpts 9, 10
Rousseau, Book 1 chpts 5, 6, 7, 8; Book 2 chpts 6, 7, 8

March 13 recess

March 20 recess

March 27  Natural Sentiment, Natural Sociability
*Sentimental Journey*
Hume, 1.2.3 (on space and time); 1.2.6 (idea of existence); 1.4.1, 1.4.2 (skepticism); 1.4.7 (Conclusion of Book 1); 3.2.1, 3.2.2 (justice)

April 3
*David Simple*, Books 1 – 3
Shaftesbury, section 1 of “A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm”; excerpts from “Sensus Communis”
One-page research proposal due

April 10
*David Simple*, Book 4 and “Volume the Last”
Smith, Book 1 chpt 2, excerpt from Book 4 chpt 2 (288 – 295)

April 17  Progress, Categorical Imperative
*Caleb Williams*, to volume 2, chapter 10
Kant, “Preface” and First Section
Godwin, excerpt from “Political Justice”
Walker, excerpt from *The Vagabond*
Annotated bibliography due
April 24

*Caleb Williams*, finish
Kant, Second Section

May 1

*Letters Written During a Short Residence*
Kant, Third Section

Final research project due by the end of Tuesday, May 5th