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## **English 2316F: Special Topics in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Rights, Resistance, and Revolution: The Radical 18<sup>th</sup> Century**

### Course Description

The 18<sup>th</sup> century is generally seen as a time when Enlightenment ways of thinking and believing — ways that 20<sup>th</sup> century people of the West have inherited — were crystalized. These beliefs and ideas involved valuing not only such human character traits as reason and emotional control but also social systems that upheld the appropriateness of the monarchy and aristocracy and the naturalness of patriarchy and the class system. But at the same time that these beliefs were being concretized, they were also being resisted. This century also saw the rise and advancement of some major political and social movements that sought to undermine this mainstream ideology, movements that openly questioned, for instance, patriarchy, the political ascendancy of the middle and upper classes, the slave trade, orthodox Christian religions, and the centrality of standard English. In this course we will study some of the writing from this ‘anti-enlightenment.’ Our focus will be on the last two decades of this century, and we will examine some literature by female, working-class, Scottish, and even canonized English authors. One of the objectives of this course is to encourage students to re-imagine the 18<sup>th</sup> century by exploring in (predominantly) literary texts the alternative historical, theological, literary, emotional, and political worlds that edged the enlightenment.