ENG 2306G: Seventeenth-Century Literature and Culture
Mondays 3:30-5:30pm & Wednesdays 2:30-3:30pm
Instructor: Dr. Amanda Di Ponio

The seventeenth century was a very exciting time: developments in religious, economic, political, intellectual, literary and cultural history were revered – and reviled – the world over. England, considered a super power by the end of the century, acquired its position as an Imperial power through colonial and overseas projects usually sponsored by the Crown: under Sir Walter Ralegh, Virginia, the West Indies, and South America were explored and exploited; campaigns fronted by the East India Company (1600), The Hudson’s Bay Company (1670), The Royal African Company (1672), and the slaving voyages of John Hawkins – Elizabeth I would also refer to the enterprise as “detestable” – all took place during this time. Some critics suggest, therefore, that from the 1620s – and even earlier – the literature of England is not separate from the literature of England’s colonies.

With this understanding in stride, we will study popular literary and cultural phenomena of Europe – such as the imperialist drive, the marginalization of the other, auto de fé – and their permeations across the globe in the West Indies, the Americas, and Asia. We will also examine the colonies’ agency in responding to/setting important literary and cultural trends – often in response to exploitation – and will look for those powerful voices of dissent on the continent and abroad. We will read novels, short stories, poetry, drama, historical treatise, and diaries (the following is a selection only): Francis Bacon (“Of Empire”), Anne Bradstreet (selected works), Aphra Behn (Oronoko), Sir Walter Ralegh (The Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana), Shakespeare (The Tempest), John Milton (Eikonoklastes).

Questions? adiponi@uwo.ca