

LS 819: From Aphra Behn to Ali Wong: Women and Comedy, 1660-2018

Fall 2018 | Dr. Diana Solomon

COURSE DESCRIPTION

At the turn of the twentieth century, American essayist Minna Antrim wrote: “Man forgives woman anything, save the wit to outwit him.” This quotation speaks to the risks women ran—and still run—when they venture into the world of comedy. If conditions today are still far from ideal, then how did British women in the Restoration and eighteenth century fare? We will begin by reading a few classic female writers of comedy, such as Aphra Behn and Jane Austen, and then consider more contemporary examples, through the lens of comedy theory. Along the way, we will consider such subjects as rape jokes, political comedy, humor and obscenity, self-deprecating humor, feminist and antifeminist comedy, and other subjects according to student interest.

COURSE EVALUATION

- 10% attendance, participation, and presentation at mini-conference
- 20% oral presentations/guided class discussions
- 20% annotated bibliography
- 50% final research paper

REQUIRED READING

- Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*. ISBN 9780199535569
- Aphra Behn, *The Rover*. ISBN 9781551112145
- Wendy Wasserstein, *The Heidi Chronicles*. ISBN 9780679734994
- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*. ISBN 9780156030410
- And online articles posted on Canvas.