

Name	Sarah Gracombe
Department	English
What course are you proposing to collaborate on?	Fictions of Englishness (EN306)
In which semester would you be teaching this class?	Spring 2014
Project Title	Archives of Englishness

Project Proposal (250–500 words)

One of my most pleasant surprises since arriving at Stonehill has been discovering the impressive collection of Victorian periodicals located right here in our own library. Since learning of this treasure trove, I have been trying to figure out how best to turn it to the advantage of my students. My attempts began last year; after participating in the Teaching and Learning Seminar, during which I researched different pedagogical models of integrating primary sources into class materials, I created a course entitled “Fictions of Englishness, 1800–2000.” It is a revised and improved version of this course that I propose for my FLPP project. Since it would now count for four credits, I would be able to devote more time to, and expect more independent student research on, periodicals both in the library and online (such documents are increasingly being digitized).

I have several goals for this course: first, by requiring independent and joint research into periodicals, I aim to develop my students’ knowledge of nineteenth and twentieth century Englishness in all its contradictions and material richness. Secondly, I hope to introduce students to the skills and the pleasures of archival research. One of the dangers of many texts taught in my period is that they are so well-trodden by scholars that students often feel there is nothing new to say. But engaging directly with periodicals can change that, allowing them to produce new knowledge and contextualize now-classic Victorian novels in fresh ways. This engagement can also foster valuable critical thinking as students learn to evaluate the accuracy, reception history, and historical context of the documents they discover. Of course, such skills are essential not just for reading an article in Dickens’ *All the Year Round* but for reading all the year round, even (or especially) when the year is 2013.

There are clear ways that collaborating with a librarian would enhance these goals. Indeed, I think it would be very difficult for me to achieve them alone! I envision an “integrated” librarian helping to craft assignments and locate appropriate periodical materials online; holding information sessions to support assignments; assisting students individually as they undertake research; and helping both them and me to create the course’s centerpiece: an online Archives of Englishness. Each student would locate an article/poem/story/advertisement/cartoon from one of the library’s Victorian or Edwardian periodicals that in some fashion illuminates ideas of Englishness at the time. After researching that document, they would write an essay explaining their research. This essay, along with a scanned copy of the original document, would be uploaded to a website accessible not just to the class, but to future students. Having already piloted a smaller version of such an assignment last year, I know that students were quite enthusiastic about its possibilities. I also know that they would have benefited from more time and direct assistance from librarians along the way. I am eager to improve the assignment and create an expanding, original Archive of Englishness that is built to last.

Course Description/Syllabus

Prof. Sarah Gracombe

“I will assume then—for it is that to which the question really comes—that England is England and that Englishmen are Englishmen, that we are ourselves and not some other people.”—E. A. Freeman, 1872

“It just goes to show, you go back and back and it’s still easier to find the correct Hoover bag than to find one pure person, one pure faith, on the globe. Do you think anybody is English? Really English? It’s a fairy tale!”
—Zadie Smith, 2001

What Zadie Smith calls the “fairy tale” of Englishness has long preoccupied British fiction. Through close readings of English novels, as well as Victorian periodicals, films, and contemporary scholarship, this course will examine that fairy tale. To understand how writers both reflected and shaped theories of Englishness over the past 200 years, we will trace cultural, territorial, religious, racial, and political aspects of Englishness. Particular attention will be paid to the significant, ongoing tension between a national identity grounded in race/ancestry and a more flexible—if no less contested—Englishness based in culture. To that end, we will analyze representations of England’s Others: Bangladeshi immigrants (*White Teeth*), Jewish artists (“Alien Corn”), vampiric Eastern invaders (*Dracula*), or even “foreign” Gothic novels (*Northanger Abbey*). Grappling with these Others both at home and abroad, our texts repeatedly ask whether Englishness can be acquired or only inherited. Can education, habits, and the consumption of cultural products, from books to food, succeed in making one authentically English? To help answer such questions, we will also explore the library’s collection of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century periodicals. Researching original materials from these periodicals, the class will create our own online Archives of Englishness.

Required Texts:

Maria Edgeworth, *Harrington*

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Somerset Maugham, *A Trembling Leaf*

Rebecca West, *Return of the Soldier*

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*

All additional readings will either be part of your course reader or selections assigned from the Norton Critical editions of your novels.

Course Requirements:

Participation (including short preparatory assignments): 7%

1 Short Essay (4 pages): 20%

1 Periodical Essay (4 pages): 20%

1 Quiz: 5%

Presentation: 15%

Final Essay (10–12 pages): 28%

Proposal for Final Essay: 5%

I am happy to recommend ideas and sources for your presentation and papers—please feel free to come by my office hours and/or contact me via email with any questions you may have about the readings, the course, your own work, etc.

Schedule

Introduction to National Identity

Class 1: Introduction, Excerpt from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*

In class: *Dirty, Pretty Things* (dir. Stephen Frears, 2002)

Religion and Politics: Enacting Englishness

Class 2: *Harrington* (1817)

Excerpts from Linda Colley, *Britons* and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Short Assignment

Class 3: Finish *Harrington*

Optional: Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Jewish Disabilities" (1831)

Short Essay Option 1

Periodical Search & Rescue

Class 4: Meet in the library for research day

Start *Northanger Abbey*

Gender and Class: Englishwomen at Home

Class 5: Finish *Northanger Abbey*

Excerpt from Ann Radcliffe, *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) in Norton

Class 6: Excerpts from Sarah Stickney Ellis, *Women of England* (1839)

Excerpt from Raymond Williams, "Literature and Rural Society"

Northanger Abbey cont.

Short Essay Option 2

Start *Dracula*

Race and Culture: Englishness Lost and Found

Class 7: *Dracula* (1897)

Optional: Excerpt from Stephen Arata's "The Occidental Tourist" in the Nortons

Class 8: *Dracula* cont.

Quiz

Short Essay Option 3

Class 9: John Buchan, "The Grove of Ashtaroth" (1912) and W. Somerset Maugham, "Alien Corn" (1931), "The Pool"

Excerpt from Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*

Short Essay Option 4

Englishness Under Fire

Class 10: *Return of the Soldier* (1918)

Optional: "The Janeites" (1926)

Class 11: *The Queen* (2006), in-class film

David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance, and Meaning of Ritual: the British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition, c. 1820–1977"

Periodicals Essay Due

Contemporary Englishnesses

Class 12: White Teeth (2001)

Final Essay Proposals Due

Class 13: White Teeth

Excerpt from Ian Baucom's *Out of Place* on the Indian Mutiny

Short Assignment

Class 14: White Teeth/Final Paper Discussion

1 week later: Final Essay Due