

**Professor Sunil Agnani**  
**University of Illinois at Chicago**

**English 242, Summer Session 2, 2015**

Dates: 15 June 2015 - 7 August 2015 (8-week course)

CRN/Course ID: 14702/14703

Tues/Thurs, 10.45am-1:15pm

Lincoln Hall 101

**English 242: British Literature 1660-1900**  
**Commerce, Empire and Modernity**

This course is the second in the English Department's sequence, and covers the crucial periods when the relatively small island nation of Britain established itself as a global power through its maritime empire. In literary terms, it encompasses eras and movements conventionally referred to in various ways: the Restoration, the 18th-century, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Victorian period. We will worry less about those rubrics and more about the underlying issues that shaped the cultural world in which writing was shaped, such as the multiple revolutions and political upheavals which took place (the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, the American revolution, demands for the rights of women), the emergence of modernity (urban modernity in the case of London, but also colonial modernity in other spaces such as the West Indies or India), and (finally) the unsettling notion of species transformation suggested by Darwin's theory of evolution. Our guiding question: How do literary texts encode or make sense of the forms of cultural difference—not to mention the forms of mixture (of classes, races, and peoples)—that are characteristic of the modern world? We will alternate between literary/narrative texts and those concerned with ideas, politics, and culture. Our aim will be to develop reading practices that allow us to situate specific texts within a larger field of debates and competing ideas.

Authors to be read include: Aphra Behn, *Oronooko*; Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*; Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*; Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*; Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindications*; Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*; Thomas DeQuincey, *Confessions of An English Opium Eater*; Karl Marx, selections; Charles Darwin, *Origin of the Species*; HG Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau*. Visual materials include excerpts from film adaptations of some works.