Celia Barnes  
Lawrence University  
ASECS 2020: Innovative Course Design

Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* and the #metoo Eighteenth Century

**Introduction.**
I’ve always secretly wanted to teach a course on *Clarissa*, but until recently, I just didn’t think it was practical, or even possible. Here at Lawrence University, a small liberal arts college in Appleton, Wisconsin, we are on the quarter system, which to my mind has meant that each term I have just ten weeks to introduce my undergraduates to an entire literary period; most of them, after all, have never even read an eighteenth-century novel and may never have heard of any of the writers on our syllabus. Ten weeks has seemed, for me, too little time to tackle longer novels, much less one of the longest.

And yet, particularly in the wake of the #metoo movement, Richardson’s novel has seemed all too relevant, and I wondered if its narrative claustrophobia would be more affecting and poignant, perhaps, to students today than students even five years ago. To me, that claustrophobia serves to highlight so well the narrative of Clarissa’s trauma—the slow unfolding of her oppression at the hands of her family, Lovelace, and indeed Richardson’s entire narrative world. Perhaps students of this generation, tuned in as they are to issues of trauma and oppression, would be able to tackle and even appreciate the painfully slow accretion that is *Clarissa*. Moreover, a course on one long, epistolary novel might allow students to practice a kind of reading we don’t get to try out in literature classes too often: slow, immersive reading, a phenomenon Deidre Lynch has called “going steady” with a literary text. It’s a practice with which eighteenth-century readers likely would have been familiar, but it’s not something our students do often, if at all.

And I was excited by the prospect of getting students to think about issues they care about—bodily autonomy, consent, the continued subjugation of women in a patriarchal society—in a different, perhaps even occasionally alienating, context. So I decided to go all in, and I taught this course in this past winter term, just before the COVID pandemic moved all of our courses online.

Some general information about my course specifically: the class enrolled 15 students (with a cap of 18). Twelve of those students identified as women, two as men, and one as gender non-conforming. Most but not all were English majors, and most but not all were juniors and seniors. Our guiding questions included: to what extent does the patriarchal constraint so painstakingly explored in Richardson’s novel look like we expect it to look? What is the anatomy of that constraint, how does it work, and what kinds of implications or ripples of it can we detect over the course of our reading? And what does it mean to explore these familiar issues in a fairly unfamiliar form, the epistolary novel, and at such an historical remove?

A class in which we’re reading a really long, depressing, epistolary eighteenth-century novel in ten weeks presents at least three main challenges:

1. Teaching context, both historical and scholarly. Students have little or no familiarity with the period in question, so how can we get “outside” the text to consider the context that produced it? In other words, how can we *not* read Richardson’s novel in a vacuum, given that
we haven’t any time to read much else? And—perhaps a selfish question—how can we do these things without my using class to lecture at length?

2. Making sure that no one gets left behind, as it were, reading-wise. Clarissa a really, really long novel. It would be easy for students to get behind, which (in a class of only 18 or so) could really affect the quality of our discussion—not to mention their ability to succeed in the course.

3. Keeping the novel, and the class, fresh and interesting for the students—and indeed for me. It’s a claustrophobic text, and (let’s be honest) something of a slog sometimes. Students are also unfamiliar with the epistolary form. How can I keep them engaged with the text, with me, and with each other? How do we avoid repetition and staleness in our class discussions?

My answer to these concerns is a series of assignments, each of which addresses at least one of these concerns. Below, I explain each assignment and its rationale, and then I offer some reflection on and examples of how students approached the assignment.

Assignments.

1. Letters as regular, low-stakes response papers.

   The backbone of the written engagement with the course are epistolary short writings that students write to each other before every class meeting. Each student has two partners, and they switch back and forth sending a letter to each (and receiving a letter from each) on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The letters may be handwritten or typed—I let students choose—and I evaluate them twice, as a set of correspondence, during the term.

   In the winter term, students came at this assignment from every possible direction: some emailed one another, others created a Google doc, and about a third of them exchanged handwritten letters with at least one of their correspondents. Some of them wrote in character—which was fine so long as they analyzed the text—and one student even wrote her correspondence on scented stationary, complete with a wax-sealed envelope. Some students included some period-specific flourishes. (I’ll add here that I love that a handful of them became devotees of the eighteenth-century sign-off; I laughed when a student ended his letter “Until next time, or at least until I see you at soccer practice, I am your obliged but not unwilling correspondent,” and then signed his name in an ornate cursive hand.) But as charming as these creative touches were, the real value of these letters came in forcing students to grapple with the form and content of Richardson’s novel simultaneously—in other words, to reflect on the themes of the novel while also putting those very themes into practice. Here, for example, I like how the student muses upon epistolarity as a genre, its ability to flesh out characters and to create selves in time, and that those musings allow her to come to sympathize with me in my grading plight:

   We hit 30 pages! And probably 20,000 words (I’m around 400 away right now). I think our correspondence is pretty interesting, but after reading like 20 of these, I think anything would get pretty grating. Perhaps that’s good though; maybe [Professor Barnes] feels our pain a bit with the novel. Now that I’m thinking about it, I wonder if there’s a sort of narrative created by these. Like, if you were just to read all the correspondences organized chronologically, would you get to know us as people? Would you understand the book without even needing to read it? If I end up talking about interiority in my final, I’ll be jealous that Prof. Barnes has access to a bit of a case study on the relationship between individual and epistle.
Richardson would approve of such virtuous reflections, I think. In all seriousness, though, this student is doing some great analytical work in this moment: she yokes together writing, temporarality, and the pain of reading: these form the constellation of issues that arguably underwrite Clarissa’s (and Clarissa’s) trauma. And of course the letter-writer isn’t simply thinking through the implications of Richardson’s epistolarity: she’s using that epistolarity, indirectly anyway, as a way to understand and compose the epistolary narrative she and her classmate are creating together.

2. A class archive—or curiosity cabinet, as I termed it—of contextual material. Twice throughout the course of the term, students bring to class something—a related text they found on ECCO, a sheet with a few blurbs from a critical essay they think is interesting, an OED definition of a word, or anything else that offers us a new perspective on the novel—and present it to the class, providing some prompts for their classmates in order to jumpstart a short discussion of what they have found. I then place their materials on our class Moodle site, where they become a class archive of primary and secondary materials to be used in the final essay exam. Our department has agreed that upper-level seminars like this one should teach our students something about research, so this is my attempt to fulfill that departmental goal while also keeping the outside reading to a minimum. Moreover, these assignments put the onus on students to sketch out, together, the historical and critical context of Richardson’s novel, which cut down on my need to provide that context to them in the form of lectures or supplementary reading.

The curiosities students contributed in the winter were far-ranging and showed a real breadth of interest. We all agreed that they demonstrated the extent to which Richardson’s novel pointed in so many directions. I’ll mention just a few of the topics students explored: hoop skirts and pockets, Richardson’s *Letters To and From Particular Friends*, contemporary definitions and understandings of the word “consent,” period representations of older women, a data-mining analysis of the most often used words and phrases in Volume 1 of the novel, Hogarth (both the *Rake’s Progress* and the *Harlot’s Progress*), Elizabeth Carter, newspaper stories of the period that may have influenced Richardson, and fainting women in the sentimental tradition. Admittedly, the questions they posed were rough sometimes, which led to some awkward discussions initially, but I was okay with that; undergraduates are still learning how to pose interesting questions, and this is the way they learn.

3. Skyping with Scholars. Several times during a term, I invited scholars in the field (and our opera director, Copeland Woodruff, who has a theory about *Clarissa’s* operatic underpinnings!) to visit our class over Zoom to discuss the novel informally. Our scholars during the winter term were Copeland Woodruff, Courtney Wennerstrom (who enjoyed her first visit so much, she came back at the end of the term to have a spoiler-free discussion), Jack Lynch, Emily Friedman, John Han, and finally Christopher Fanning, who visited Lawrence during the final week of the class to sit in on a class session and give a talk the following day on insomnia in the novel. During the Zoom sessions, which lasted about half an hour, the scholars talked for just a few minutes about what they found particularly interesting about the novel, and then I opened the floor to questions.
The idea here is to bring the scholarly conversation into our classroom, to expose us to new and fresh perspectives, and perhaps even to remind students that literary critics are real people who rarely if ever wear blazers with elbow patches. I also like that this assignment encourages students to practice that difficult skill of asking questions and allows me to talk about asking questions as a form of generosity we practice as a scholarly community.

Students reported on evaluations that these visitors and the epistolary assignment were their favorite aspects of the class. Pedagogically, the sessions did at least two things: first, they sketched out, rather beautifully in fact, a kind of critical conversation. That is, scholars often emphasized similar issues, or came back to ideas I had hit on during our class discussions, so students were able to see some of the Bigger Picture here: how the novel fits into the “rise” of the novel form, the way its epistolary form allows for new ways to read and understand character, and the relationship between Clarissa and Pamela (the latter, of course, which we didn’t have time to read). Second, they gave students perspectives other than mine—or I should say other than ours. We are a small class reading a very big novel; as such, we run the risk of circling a discussion drain of our own making by returning, time and again, to our own interests and and obsessions and investments in Richardson’s novel. Inviting other voices to join the conversation keeps it fresh and interesting, and it reinvigorates our discussions throughout the term.

4. Timed final essay.

The class ends with an open-book essay exam where students are asked to offer up an original interpretation of the novel that also pays attention to the historical and critical context: in effect, they are asked to use all of the materials we have collected in the previous assignments to put together their best “take” on the novel.

I don’t usually administer exams in my upper-level classes, so this was a source of great anxiety for me, but in a class like this one, where we really needed all term to finish the novel, a timed essay seemed like the best way to allow students to showcase their knowledge without incorporating a formal research paper into an already tight schedule of reading.

Unfortunately, the end of our winter term coincided with the announcement that students would not be coming back to campus, so I decided that week to make the exam optional and take-home. I did get some exams—about half the class handed one in—but I noticed that they showed signs of strain. Students were tired and upset and the world was uncertain, and the exams I received reflected that fact.

It’s difficult, then, to know how, or whether, the assignment would work in a “regular” term (if indeed we ever get back to those), but there still were some good signs. One student asked me if it would be okay for her to write her essay as a letter, and so she did: she addressed her exam to Clarissa, and it managed both to analyze the way feeling works in the novel while also expressing that feeling. (The student thanked her heroine for their long, patient relationship; the exam was a love letter of sorts, which actually was quite moving.) Another student wrote a more conventional essay about Lovelace’s villainy, claiming it was a kind of authorial power grab. Just as “things like spoilers don’t affect the quality of a reading of Clarissa the way they might a more plot driven novel,” he writes,

I argue the same idea applies to this fourth wall breaking dynamic. The characters know they’re in a book because they’re literally writing it. As such, Lovelace claims
power for himself not only with his actions and words to other characters, but from Richardson and the letter itself, further showing the power of the novel, as Richardson was interested in doing. Lovelace’s villainy is deepened because not only are his actions in the text horrific but because he tears at the fabric of Richardson’s universe itself, threatening at any moment to take over with the god-like power Richardson as author wields.

The student goes on to connect rape and creative representation, focusing on those moments when Lovelace overpowers Clarissa with sexual and verbal violence.

What I appreciated about this exam, and indeed the written work I received from so many students over the course of the term, is that they engage in some really serious and deep reflection on both form and content. I would argue that this is a function of the novel itself, which forces us as readers to reflect on the real, and sometimes even dangerous, stakes of our own reading and our own investment in the novel as a form.

Some Brief Closing Thoughts.

I’ll end by saying that, when I teach this course again, I would make one major change. This past winter, I would come to class every day with a lesson plan, but I rarely would get to put that plan into practice because we always had at least one or two, sometimes three, curiosity-cabinet presentations, and those would end up taking the entire class time. While I am all for student-centered learning, I think that the class probably needed a bit more direction from me, but I had designed the course such that I wasn’t able to offer that direction much at all. When I was trying to make myself feel better about that choice during the term, I told myself that this kind of eclectic, unpredictable, student-driven way to organize (or not organize) our discussions allowed students some much-needed freedom—and that maybe having a pedagogical “arc” to a class isn’t always necessary. Still, I think the balance needs to shift in this course a bit, so I either would cut the curiosity assignments down to one per student per term or offer more specific parameters for how the discussion might proceed more concisely if I decided to keep them at two.
SAMUEL RICHARDSON’S
*CLARISSA AND THE #METOO EIGHTEENTH CENTURY*

Winter Term 2020
MWF 3:10-4:20, Main Hall 216
Professor Celia Barnes
Main Hall 304, X6694
barnesc@lawrence.edu
cell 920-460-3914 (before 9pm, pls)
Office hours: 2-3 MWTh and by appointment

*COURSE DESCRIPTION:*

*Clarissa,* wrote lexicographer, critic, and all-around awesome eighteenth-century person Samuel Johnson, is “the first book in the world for the knowledge it displays of the human heart.” And philosopher and social malcontent Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who rarely agreed with Johnson on anything, proclaimed that “no one, in any language, has ever written a novel that equals or even approaches *Clarissa.*” More recently, *The Guardian* named Richardson’s novel fourth in its 100 Best Novel Series in 2013, while the BBC went a bit lower, crowning *Clarissa* number 14 in a similar series in 2015.

And yet I’m guessing that *Clarissa* isn’t much read outside of the academy these days, perhaps because it is so demanding, not merely in terms of its length, but also in how it seems to insist we read it: told through a complex interconnected web of letters, with a story that unfolds so slowly and carefully that it seems designed intentionally to frustrate, *Clarissa* is a novel that requires a significant investment of time, attention, and emotional and intellectual energy.

In this class, then, we’re going to expend that time and energy, and we will read this tome—all of it!—with a couple of goals in mind. First, I want us to try our hand at steady, immersive reading: what does it mean to practice what literary critic Deidre Lynch calls “going steady” with a text? What does it mean, that is, to enter a single fictional world over the course of ten weeks and to parse that world—its assumptions, its values, its beauties—together, carefully and methodically? Second, I hope to get us thinking about history, literary and otherwise, in new (dare I say “novel”) ways: how does Richardson’s text fit into the conversation, going on then and now, about the degree to which women can exercise autonomy and dignity in a world in which they are under severe patriarchal restraint? How might we use this text to challenge what we in the biz call “Whiggish history,” or historical narrative as a narrative of progress? How does this novel seek to yoke together violence and narrative in ways that are familiar to us? Unfamiliar?
CONTENT NOTE:
This is a novel about the abuse of women and the various forms such abuse might take. As such, it invites us to ruminate (at length!) on topics we might prefer not to think about at all.

That said, I want to caution you, as I always do in courses that are period specific, not to read anachronistically. It’s good policy, in other words, always to remember that early-modern texts are at some basic level not relatable, and that’s okay. We must get out of our comfort zones and seek to understand texts like Clarissa on their own terms, which is, I would suggest, an exercise that builds strong readerly and critical muscles.

REQUIRED TEXT:
There’s just one! Please, please, please get the Penguin edition, though, so that we can always be on the same page—literally.

CLASS POLICIES:
- Attendance: Be in class, every day, ready to participate. I reserve the right to lower your final grade 1/3 of a letter-grade for each absence after three.
- Plagiarism: Academic integrity is a core value in any intellectual community, so please reaffirm the LU Honor Code on all your written work.
- Late Papers and Extensions: Late assignments—and this does not include short informal writings—will receive a letter-grade reduction for each calendar day they are late. Please understand: I do not grant extensions except in cases of emergency—and that you have other deadlines does not, unfortunately, constitute an emergency, so please plan ahead.
- Electronics: I would prefer that you take notes in class the good, old-fashioned way—on paper, like Clarissa would have wanted—and I insist that you save the Facebooking, tweeting, texting, and other technological ways of connecting for outside of class. #luddite #sorrynotsorry #oldpersonrule
- Inclusion: I promise to do my best to create a classroom environment that welcomes and supports students of all gender identities, races, ethnicities, abilities, cultures, and backgrounds. Please help me make our classroom as inclusive as possible by treating your classmates and their ideas with respect, and by coming to see me if you have suggestions, questions, or advice about how to make our classroom a more welcoming intellectual community.
- Office Hours: Please come hang out with meeeeeeee! Seriously, come to office hours often; they really do help.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:
There are 1000 possible points for the term, and your final grade will be a sum of the points you receive, converted to a letter grade. The point breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistolary Correspondence (2 sets at 125 points each)</td>
<td>250 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curiosity Cabinet Mini-Project (2 at 100 points each)</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Essay Exam</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (including Q&amp;A with our visitors)</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,000 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Epistolary Correspondence:* This assignment—or set of assignments, rather—is the lifeblood of our
class. See the assignment sheet for more details, but in a nutshell: you will have two correspondents for the duration of the term and, in those pairs, you will write each other short, informal response epistles about the text. The idea here is to keep us all up to speed on the reading, to expand the conversation about the novel outside the classroom, to practice regular low-stakes writing, and to think through issues of epistolarity by practicing it.

*Curiosity Cabinet Mini-Projects:* Curiosity cabinets, or small collections (usually owned by gentlemen) of extraordinary or exotic objects, were all the rage during the eighteenth century, and this assignment will help us build a textual one as a class. Twice during the term, you will bring in a source—either primary or secondary—that you think illuminates the text in some way and present your curiosity to the rest of the class. This might be a critical essay, a historical source that outlines an important contemporary event or issue, a contemporary poem or painting or any other genre: the idea is to find something that allows us, again, to move outside the text a little bit. In other words, find a source that helps us understand something in *Clarissa* or offers us a fresh way of reading the novel.

*Participation:* I realize that speaking up in class might seem daunting sometimes, but I want to encourage you to throw caution to the wind! Good ideas don’t just happen; you have to take risks, ask questions, and be willing to share ideas you may not be completely sure about. However, if you feel as though you might have trouble speaking in class regularly, please come to talk to me right away so that we can work together to ensure your participation grade doesn’t suffer.

*Final Exam:* This essay exam will be timed and proctored, but the question itself will be open ended, allowing you a good deal of freedom to maneuver, and you are welcome (encouraged!) to use all of the resources from our course at your disposal: your epistolary correspondence, our curiosity cabinet, and anything else I provide to the class.

**Week 1**
- Monday, January 6
  - Introductions
- Wednesday, January 8
  - Richardson’s preface, L1-12
- Friday, January 10
  - L13-L21

**Week 2**
- Monday, January 13
  - L22-L42.1
- Wednesday, January 15
  - L44-L56
- Friday, January 17
  - L57-L68

  **Skyping with Scholars:** [Courtney Wennerstrom](mailto:)

**Week 3**
- Monday, January 20
  - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: no class meeting
- Wednesday, January 22
  - L69-L98
- Friday, January 24
Week 4
Monday, January 27
L.116-L.152

Skyping with Scholars: Jack Lynch, Rutgers University-Newark

Wednesday, January 29
L.153-L.172

Friday, January 31
L.173-L.187.1-4

Week 5
Monday, February 3
L.188-L.214

Wednesday, February 5
L.215-L.225

Friday, February 7
L.226-L.232

Week 6
Monday, February 10
L.233-L.246

Wednesday, February 12
L.247-L.261

Epistolary Correspondence part 1 DUE

Friday, February 14
Midterm Reading Period: no class meeting

Week 7
Monday, February 17
Paper 1-L.314

Wednesday, February 19
L.315-L.322.2

Friday, February 21
L.333-L.345

Skyping with Scholars: Copeland Woodruff, Lawrence University

Week 8
Monday, February 24
L.346-L.383

Wednesday, February 26
L.384-L.416

Skyping with Scholars: John Han, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Friday, February 28
L.417-L.429

Week 9
Monday, March 2
L.430-L.464

Wednesday, March 4
L.465-L.492.2
Week 10
Monday, March 9
L508-end

Skyping with Scholars: Emily Friedman, Auburn University

Wednesday, March 11
Final discussion day

Thursday, March 12, Main Hall 201, 4:30 p.m.
Christopher Fanning, Queen’s University, lecture (mandatory)

Friday, March 13
Exam review, review of the course
Epistolary Correspondence part 2 DUE

Final Exam
Wednesday, March 18, 11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. in our classroom
This is an open-notes, open Moodle essay exam; I will distribute the prompt the day of the exam, but you may consult the class curiosity cabinet, either of your correspondence threads, and/or your class notebook to construct your essay. Please do NOT consult other sources; let our classwork be the only archive you need.
“It was wisdom,” says Seneca, ‘of ancient times to consider what is most useful as most illustrious.’ If this rule be applied to works of genius, scarcely any species of composition deserves more to be cultivated than the epistolary style, since none is of more various or frequent use, through the whole subordination of life.”

~Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* no. 152 (August 31, 1751)

“Having the agreeable prospect of an undisturbed half hour, I am going with great pleasure, dear Miss Carter, to employ it in conversing with you, and I am not sure after all, whether these silent, and permanent conversations have not some advantages, over the talkative ones we used to have last year.”

~Catherine Talbot, in a letter to Elizabeth Carter (February 4, 1750)

Learning Goals:
- to allow you to track your responses to the novel with a degree of regularity
- to encourage you to share and develop those responses in correspondence with your classmates
- to create a discussion outside of the classroom and on the page
- to practice writing to different audiences—or at least audiences more diverse than the scholarly audience we imagine when we write research papers
- to mimic, and therefore to reflect on, the form of Richardson’s novel

The Skinny:
This is not so much an assignment as it is a way of life in this course. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (at some point before class, not after), you will write and send a short letter to one of two correspondents. You’ll switch back and forth between the two throughout the term, so that you’re
writing a letter and receiving a letter on the same day. In your letter, you’ll do what people do with letters: you’ll respond to your correspondent’s thoughts and add your own. You should shoot for about two healthy paragraphs, and your tone can be as formal or informal, as modern or not, as you like.

I don’t want to insist on a particular form or yoke you into a particular way of going about these responses, but a few suggestions for what you might consider as you write them throughout the term:

1. Bringing in recent class discussion and reflecting on it.
2. Discussing with one correspondent something that was said in your other epistolary conversation.
3. Bringing in something you discovered about the novel, either on the internet, in a scholarly source, or in a primary source.
4. Making connections to other texts or novels (either contemporary with Richardson’s or more recent).
5. Returning to a previous discussion you and your correspondent had to refine your thoughts in light of recent reading.
6. Puzzling over difficult, interesting, or revealing passages in the reading. (I mean, really, this is a must; you are in an English class, after all.)

Whatever you and your correspondent converse about, though, it must be relevant (i.e., about the novel), current (i.e., keep up with the reading, yo), engaging (i.e., don’t bore your friend to death; good letter-writers don’t do that), and—most of all—regular.

In other words—and this is important!—this assignment, completed 3 times a week, doesn’t have to take you very long at all (15-30 minutes or so), but you should be diligent about it. Don’t leave your correspondent hanging, and surely don’t make them write two letters in a row: how rude!

Format:
This is up to you. You can email, print and bring your letters in paper copies to class, keep a Google doc with your correspondence, or even share a notebook that you circulate back and forth. I can see the format changing the way this entire assignment feels, so choose it thoughtfully.

Criteria for evaluation:
At midterm and at the end of the term, I will collect your correspondence and you will be evaluated on the quality of the discussion, specifically:

1. Your use of regular references to specific passages in the text. (No helicoptering above the text, pls.)
2. Your ability to sustain an epistolary conversation about a topic or issue in the text in a way that allows for new insights before the discussion topic changes.
3. Your creativity, either with topics, style, bringing in outside material, or some or all of these.
4. Your diligence in keeping up your end of the epistolary bargain.
For your final exam, I want you to write the essay you’ve always wanted to write on *Clarissa*! It can tackle any issue in the text, and there is no upper or lower limit in terms of word count, but your essay must adhere to the following criteria in order to be successful:

1. Your essay must have an arguable, nuanced, and non-obvious thesis that doesn’t simply reproduce what we have said in class or what a Curiosity-Cabinet critic says about the novel.
2. Your essay must offer up representative evidence from the text to support that thesis and discuss that evidence in surprising, specific, and nuanced ways.
3. Your essay must be sensitive to the historical and critical context of Richardson’s novel. This means you should be prepared to bring in relevant primary and secondary sources that come from (and only come from) our class Curiosity Cabinet, Skyping with Scholars sessions, and/or Christopher Fanning’s talk last week.
4. Finally, your essay should be something that grows out of our specific class. This just means that you should remember to engage with and reflect on the work we’ve done: our discussions, your epistolary correspondence, the Skyping with Scholars sessions. In other words, while a more formal essay or term paper assignment might ask you to write something that looks kind of like a miniature journal article, here you have more freedom to reflect (in first-person, if you like!) on our time together over the past ten weeks.

A word about exam parameters: this is an open-book, open-Moodle exam. You may also consult the page of notes that you prepared in advance. Please don’t consult anything else, however, and please remember that you should be composing your exam here, in the classroom: your notes should be just that—notes, and not pre-composed essay material.

Please type your essay and, when you’re finished, email it (attached as a Word document, but also copied and pasted into the body of the email) to me.

Now, good luck, and take inspiration from this picture of Samuel Richardson completing his English 452 exam.

PS: If you write to me that you have or will, on your honor, fill out a course evaluation, I will award 3 extra credit points on the exam. Thanks for a wonderful term. I think you’re all so great. <3