English 404 / Spring 2006 / A. Yadav

Paper #3

Due: Thursday, May 4, 2006
Length: five pages (double-spaced)

Assignment: Drawing on texts and excerpts included in The Commerce of Everyday Life (though you are welcome to go beyond these excerpts to the whole texts themselves), discuss how some feature of the cultural politics of everyday life is negotiated in a particular literary work of the early eighteenth century (including poems, non-fictional prose genres, periodical essays). You might wish to focus on an issue or theme highlighted in this volume (gender, fashion, taste, the culture market, commerce, consumption, public opinion) or you might select a theme of your own choosing (e.g., imperialism or race; cosmopolitanism; social class; religion; sexuality; politics).

Whatever theme you choose to focus on, be sure to identify what you take to be the critical issues, controversial positions, or contested values at stake in the culture of the time with regard to the theme or topic you’ve chosen. And be sure to examine how the literary work you’ve chosen to focus on frames, articulates, deploys this topic and, hence, how it negotiates the disputed issues, positions, values you see as central to the topic. In order to clarify how one particular work manages the topic and issues at hand, you may well want to contrast its handling to that in another literary work from the period. But your essay should make use of such comparisons to advance its discussion of the work you’ve chosen to focus on; the comparisons should not transform your paper into a compare-and-contrast discussion of two works.

If you choose a periodical paper as your literary work, you don’t need to discuss the whole run of the work, but only the selected issues of the periodical that are relevant to your topic. If you have questions about whether the literary work you’ve chosen to focus on is appropriate for this paper (especially if it is only included as a brief excerpt in The Commerce of Everyday Life), please discuss the situation with me. Remember that you want to choose a work that seems to you rich enough to sustain a five-page paper on the topic you are considering.