HIS 300
Gender Transgression in the 18th Century:
From 'Macaroni' to Cross-Dressing Sapphic

Satisfies: SBS+ [DEC: F] | WST elective

Instructor: Jocelyn Zimmerman
Online Asynchronous

Did you know “macaroni” (yes, the same one referenced in the American tune “Yankee Doodle”!) was an eighteenth-century epithet for an effeminate man? In this course we will explore gender transgression in the eighteenth century and will ask when, why and how certain people and identities were ‘othered’ along the lines of sex and/or gender. We will begin by discussing the difference between sex and gender in an eighteenth-century global context and will ask whether we can use contemporary language about “queerness” to make sense of the past. Then, we will consider examples of eighteenth-century gender transgression through cross-dressers, ma níng, hijra, macaronis, castratos, nabobs, blue stockings, mollies, tommites, Sappho, adulterers, polygamists, and more…! We will peruse eighteenth-century letters, satire, pornography, sermons and political cartoons alongside secondary sources to piece together a broad picture of both actual gender-transgressing individuals and the ways in which popular media and literature depicted them. Twice-weekly voice thread and blackboard discussions will ask you to “read” visual and textual sources for all of their possible meanings. Two larger projects, one of which must be an essay and one of which can be a podcast or form of creative writing, will ask you to synthesize course material and to posit your own reading of sex/gender transgression in the eighteenth century.