

The Lives of Early American Women Through Primary Sources and Contemporary Writing With Kalela Williams

Section I: Revolutionary Women

3 monthly sessions in person at The Rosenbach: Saturdays, Nov 13, Dec 11, Jan 8 | 1:00–3:00 p.m. EDT

Primary Text: *Women's Letters: American from the Revolutionary War to the Present* edited by Lisa Grunwald and Stephen J. Adler

Other readings as provided

Historical fiction and poetry by contemporary authors meet primary sources written by U.S. women during the 17th and 18th centuries in this course series, allowing a deep exploration of the texture of women's lives during this era.

Together, we'll read and discuss the letters, diaries, and associated primary sources of a diverse set of 17th and 18th century U.S. women: from those by literary scions like Phillis Wheatley; to personal writings by early feminist icons like Mary Wollstonecraft and Mercy Lewis, to those of more unknown voices. We'll also explore how modern day novelists and poets, including Honorée Fannone Jeffers and Alex Meyers, fictionally render the lives of 18th century women in their books.

Throughout the series, discussions will connect us with the works in question, while creative prompts and activities will engage us with our own writing; and the true life or fictionalized stories of women will inspire us to delve into the actual, lived experiences of other U.S. women of this era, learning how they lived and worked; what they wore, and how they cared for their families.

Part I: Revolutionary Women runs from November 2021 through January 2022. Participants are especially encouraged to register for Section II: Victorian Voices, taking place February 2022-April 2022, when registration opens. A special "Founding Sisters" tour for participants of both course series will take place in April 2022.

Workshop 1: Stirrings of Freedom

Discussions:

Mary Wollstonecraft and Mercy Lewis letters (in text)

Passages from *Love and Fury: A Novel of Mary Wollstonecraft* by Samantha Silva (provided)

Primary Sources around Elizabeth Freeman (Mum Bett) and Aggy of Turkey Island (provided)

In-class creative writing prompts

Workshop 2: Assimilation and Subversion

Discussions:

Phillis Wheatley poetry and letters (provided)

Selected poems from *The Age of Phillis Wheatley* by Honorée Fannone Jeffers (provided)

Primary sources around Matoaka/Pocahontas (provided)

Assorted women's letters from primary text

In-class creative writing prompts

Workshop 3: Deception and Transgressions

Discussions:

Selections from *The Female Review: Life of Deborah Sampson, the Female Soldier in the War of Revolution*

Selections from *Revolutionary* by Alex Myers

Interviews with Ona Judge Staines and Madison Hemmings (provided)

Assorted Women's Letters from primary text

About the Instructor

Kalela Williams is the founder of [Black History Maven](#), a gathering community that honors all diverse pasts, affirms Black identity and pride, and engages communities in literary, artistic, and cultural conversations. She is the current Director of Writing of Philadelphia youth organization Mighty Writers, and previously worked in literary programming for the Free Library of Philadelphia and James Madison University's Furious Flower Poetry Center.

In addition, Kalela serves on the board of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and writes fiction that connects history with the present. Her essay, "The Three Century Walk" is forthcoming this fall in *Making Tracks: Reflections on Walking* by New Door Books, and she recently was awarded a Tin House Writing Residency for her YA novel-in-progress, *The Rosebine Daughters*. She has led literary and writing workshops for museums, organizations, and institutions including the Barnes Foundation, the Philadelphia Art Museum, the Library Company of Philadelphia, Mural Arts, and many others.