ENG253
Week #5: Weekly Writing

Tuesday: Benjamin Franklin, p 182 – 230

Thursday: Phyllis Wheatley, p 248 – 254

Write in response to two of the following (please write one response for Franklin and one for Wheatley), each response about a half page single spaced.

Franklin

“Franklin’s work both derives from Puritan religious method and is a reaction to it.”

- Benjamin Franklin brings us into the Age of Enlightenment. Draw from his writing selections in our text (as well as your research outside our text) and compare his “project of arriving at moral perfection” to the Puritan introspection and meditation.
- Consider Franklin’s writing style, his rhetoric. He was very sensitive to his audience and purpose and adapted his style according to both. Consider any of the selections in our text and characterize his style, using specific examples and quotes from the text. For example, in his self-portrait in the Autobiography, hew is writing for posterity as well as his contemporaries. Who is he presenting? What style is he using for this presentation. In what ways does he use humor? Irony? Satire? Finally, you might consider comparing his style to any of the writers we’ve studied so far regarding purpose and style: John Smith, Cabeza de Vaca, Mary Rowlandson.

Wheatley

“. . . the first decidedly American poet on this continent. Black or white, male or female.”

- June Jordan

- The first black person to publish a book of poetry in English, Phyllis Wheatley was the subject of a test in 1761. She appeared at the courthouse in Boston to undergo an oral examination. Research and write about that examination, its purpose and significance. Write from the perspective of one of the members present, e.g. John Hancock, Thomas Hutchinson, governor of the colony, Andrew Oliver, his lieutenant governor. Explain to the 21st century why this was necessary.
- Take on the persona of Phyllis Wheatley and explain (either in verse or prose) to this 21st century audience why you could not take on the subject of slavery in the ways we might have hoped for.