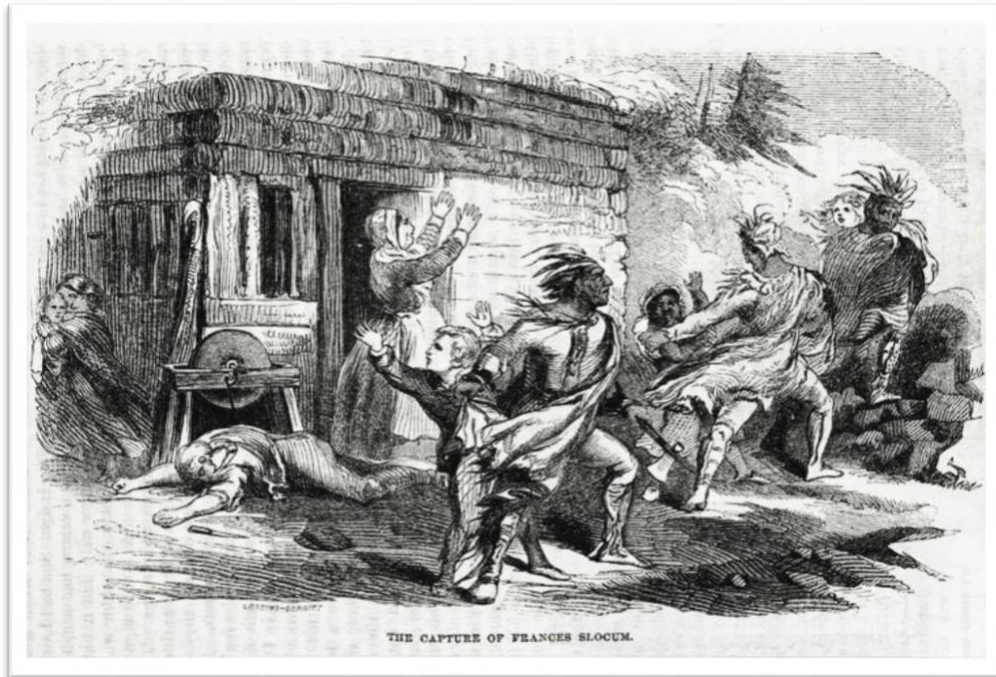


EN 4893/6893: American Literature to 1800
Catastrophe and Early America

Dr. Bonnie Carr O'Neill

MW 2:00 – 3:15 p.m.



Whether actual, imminent, or imagined, catastrophic events recur throughout the literature of early America. Kathleen Donegan advises “looking at catastrophe as a discourse rather than as a material consequence” of the conditions of early American life. Among other consequences, such a view challenges us to rethink deterministic visions of American exceptionalism. In this class, we will set catastrophe alongside terror, faith, and culture as an organizing principle of American colonial life and of the literature we read together.

Readings: our readings may include accounts of European settlement by John Smith, William Bradford, and others; Indian captivity narratives, such as those by Mary Rowlandson, John Williams, and others; novels by Charles Brockden Brown, James Fenimore Cooper, and Susanna Rowson; selected poetry. In addition, we will read excerpts from Donegan’s book *Seasons of Misery: Catastrophe and Colonial Settlement in Early America* (UPenn Press, 2006) and other relevant criticism and theory.

Requirements: All students will be required to lead class discussion and submit two essays, including one research paper, and the class will include both a midterm and a final exam. Assignments will be modified for graduate students as appropriate.