

English 479-23417: What is a Brontë Author?
Winter 2014

Professor H. Kaufman

Email: hkaufman@uoregon.edu
Office: 365 PLC Hall
Office Hours: MWF 2-3, and by appointment
541-346-3932

Class Meetings:
204 Chapman
MWF 1:00--1:50

Course Description

Three lonely sisters, living in isolation, stranded on the dark and stormy Yorkshire moors, produced some of the most psychologically disturbing books in English literary history—or so the legend goes. This course will focus on novels by all three Brontë sisters, including Charlotte Brontë's, *Jane Eyre*, Emily Brontë's, *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne Brontë's, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Our study will consider as well Lucasta Miller's, *The Brontë Myth* to help us think about the ways in which the mythology of the sister authors has shifted over time and in response to adaptations of their work. Central to the construction of their authorship, however, are the book histories of the Brontës' novels. Therefore, we will also study rare editions of the Brontës' novels housed in Knight Library's Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA). Along the way we will not only learn how to handle and "read" these rare editions, but will consider the ways in which the medium and form of books by the Brontë sisters shaped and reflected both the constructions of the writers' lives and interpretations of their writing. In addition to heavy reading, course work includes one term-long research paper (comprised of several shorter writing assignments), contributions to our digital exhibition space (a caption and photographs), pop quizzes, and a short presentation.

Required Texts (Available at the UO bookstore). Please get the editions specified below:

Lucasta Miller, *The Brontë Myth*, Anchor; Reprint edition (January 4, 2005),

ISBN: 9781551115320

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Broadview Edition (edited by Richard Nemesvari),

ISBN 9781551111803

Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Broadview Edition (edited by Lee A. Talley),

ISBN: 9781551115085

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, Broadview Edition (edited by Beth Newman),

ISBN-13: 978-1400078356

Course Expectations and Details

Reading

This class will have some demanding (but wonderful!) reading assignments. We will move at a steady pace and I will expect everyone to keep up. **Please bring to each class the book/text we are reading for that day, paper, and a writing utensil** (notes may be taken on computers, but paper will be necessary for in-class writing & quizzes).

As you read each night's assignment you should take physical or mental notes, asking questions, or identifying important or confusing passages. I've included a Reader's Guide (see last page of syllabus) to help with class preparation.

Class Participation

Each person enrolled in this course is expected to help foster a community of respect. We will read controversial material and I expect that everyone will not always agree, or that your experiences may be much different from those you learn about in the course materials. It is crucial that everyone listen carefully and contribute to class discussion in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Please turn cell phones to vibrate before class begins, and silence any electronic equipment capable of interrupting class. The use of electronic social media during class time is prohibited.

Quizzes

Quizzes are unannounced and will focus on the reading due on the day of the quiz. If you are absent on the day of a quiz, you cannot make it up (since it will be “pop”). However, you may drop one quiz grade from your quiz grade average. If you’ve missed one quiz, you can count it as your “dropped” quiz. If you haven’t missed a quiz then the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes take place at the start of class.

Writing and Research Essays

This course is structured around a term-long research project. You will work in pairs with one book/object written by or about one of the Brontë authors, housed in Knight Library’s Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA). See “What is a Brontë author?: Research Guide” handout for details.

All work should be submitted to Blackboard by the due date. You should upload your work—saved as a single Word file—onto the section on Blackboard titled “Assignments.” All written work should follow MLA formatting guidelines.

Late work can be uploaded, but it will be counted as “late.” Paper grades will be docked 5 points for each day late. Extensions and incompletes will be given only for documented emergencies. I do not accept written work submitted by email.

Digital Exhibit

Everyone in this class will contribute to **The Brontë Exhibit**. See Research Guide for details.

Presentation

The final week of this course will be dedicated to partner presentations of your book projects. See Research Guide for details. **All partners should make an appointment to meet with me during week 9 of the term to discuss the content of your presentation.**

Work & Assessment

- 10% Class participation — including quality and consistency of contributions to discussions, punctuality, preparedness for class, and quiz grades
- 20% Exhibit Contributions (Average of Part I and II of Research Guide)
- 20% Research Components (Average of Part III and IV of Research Guide)
- 40% Final Research essay
- 10% Final Presentation

Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. It is your responsibility to sign (your name only) the sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class. If you neglect to sign your name you'll be listed as absent for that day. Signing names other than your own is prohibited.

Your regular attendance is vital to the goals of this course. You may miss two class meetings without penalty. *Your final grade will drop one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence unless you have contacted me and we have agreed on alternative arrangements.* You are responsible for making your sure work is turned in on time despite absences.

Plagiarism

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. Plagiarism will be handled according to the *Student Conduct Code*:

<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>

Grading

A range: You've read the material/text carefully, and have responded insightfully and persuasively with clearly written prose. Your writing addresses the specific expectations of the assignment, and is guided by a clear focus and logical progression from one idea to the next. Your essay is well organized, succinct, specific, well informed, free from grammatical errors, and does not rely on generalities or assumptions. It is clear that you have spent time thinking about the way the text is put together and how it makes its point.

B range: Essays in this range need a more carefully developed thesis, or raise an interesting thesis, but need more persuasive tactics to make the essay claims convincing or clear to the reader. B-range essays include quotes or examples from the text and a careful analysis of what those quotes/examples mean and why they matter to the overall focus of the essay. Essays in this range may also have a few grammatical errors or rely on tired or unspecific language and generalizations.

C range: Essays in this category contain some interesting ideas that are in desperate need of focus, specificity, and analysis, such as "I really liked this piece a lot" or "This was really boring." If you include quotes without close analysis or interpretation, your grade will fall into the C range. If your essay lacks organization and/or a clear focus/argument, you'll earn a grade in the C range.

D range: This mark indicates that you have put very little work into the assignment. You've offered some thought, but your essay appears to have been thrown together at the last minute, is littered with errors, lacks focus and organization, and fails to follow the essay assignment.

F: Failure to complete the assignment.

Tutoring and Help

Writing help is available through Academic Learning Services, located in 68 PLC, and available by phone at 346-3226. I am also very happy to help you will coursework. Please contact me by email or after class to set up a meeting time.

Course Website (blackboard.uoregon.edu)

You will need to access this site to upload your writing assignments; receive feedback on your written work; and access syllabi and handouts.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodation, let me know by week two of the term so that I can make appropriate arrangements. Please request that the office of Disabilities Services send a letter indicating that you've consulted with them about your disability.

Assignment Schedule

Assignments are due on dates listed below. Please use editions of the novels listed on the first page of this syllabus.

Week 1

M 1/6 Introductions
W 1/8 *Jane Eyre* pages 59-121
F 1/10 *Jane Eyre* pages 122-187

Week 2

M 1/13 *Jane Eyre* pages 188-286
W 1/15 *Jane Eyre* pages 287-361
F 1/17 *Jane Eyre* pages 362-443

Week 3

M 1/20 **No Class; Day of observance for Dr. Martin Luther King**
W 1/22 **Visit to Special Collections** (Class will meet in Special Collections, on the second floor of Knight Library); Read "Books Beyond Texts" and "Variety Through Ownership" (Blackboard)
F 1/24 **Visit to Special Collections** (Class will meet in Special Collections); Read Darnton's "What is the History of Books" and Roger Chartier's "Labourers and Voyagers" (Blackboard)

Week 4

M 1/27 *Jane Eyre* pages 444-end
W 1/29 *Wuthering Heights* 37-95
F 1/31 *Wuthering Heights*; 95-146 & **Research Guide Part I due on Blackboard**

Week 5

M 2/3 *Wuthering Heights* 147-229
W 2/5 *Wuthering Heights* 229-274
F 2/7 *Wuthering Heights* 274-312 (end) & **Research Guide Part II due on Blackboard**

Week 6

M 2/10 Appendix C and Appendix D in Broadview edition of WH
W 2/12 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 37-100
F 2/14 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 100-148 & **Research Guide Part III due on Blackboard**

Week 7

M 2/17 **Class will meet in the Digital Scholarship Center (DSC), Room 142 in Knight Library; Bring Part I revisions to class; *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 148-219**
W 2/19 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 219-290
F 2/21 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 290-352 & **Research Guide Part IV due on Blackboard**

Week 8

M 2/24 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* 352-409 (end) and Appendix B
W 2/26 Lucasta Miller
F 2/28 Lucasta Miller; **All Headers, Captions, and Photos must be uploaded to the Exhibition space by 5:00 PM**

Week 9

M 3/3 Lucasta Miller
W 3/5 Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author" (Blackboard)
F 3/7 discussion continued

Week 10

M 3/10 Part VI--Opening Day at the Exhibition: Part I (presentations)
W 3/12 Part VI-- Opening Day at the Exhibition: Part II (presentations)
F 3/14 Part VI-- Opening Day at the Exhibition: Part III (presentations)

Final Essays (Part V) should be uploaded to Blackboard by 5:00 PM on Friday, 3/14

A Few Writing Reminders

- * All written work should follow MLA formatting guidelines. Essays must be typed and double-spaced with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides. Use Times New Roman 12 pt. font.
- * Essays should have a title focused around your thesis.
- * Mark your name in the upper right-hand corner of the essay's first page. Insert page numbers.
- * Keep a copy of your paper.
- * Proofread and edit your paper many, many, many times before submitting it. Thoughtful, well-written, edited essays cannot be thrown together at the last minute.
- * Introduce an author by citing his/her complete name; thereafter, use the last name only.
- * Your assignment is textual analysis, not plot synopsis, and not simply historical commentary.

Reading Guide

- 1) Find a passage that struck you as interesting, beautiful, ugly, sad, striking, or that otherwise stands out in your mind. What is it about that passage that you find so compelling or striking? Pinpoint some of the features (language, image, setting, character description, plot twist, suspense, surprise, etc.) that make it jump off the page for you.
- 2) Which character bothers you most? Why? What do we know about that character that leads to such a strong reaction?
- 3) What do you notice about the setting of the novel? What does it look like? How does the setting shape your impression of the story?
- 4) Many novels take on controversial or taboo subjects. Which subjects does this novel raise that would have been controversial to nineteenth-century readers? Are these subjects still controversial? Why? Even if you don't know a lot about the issues, identify places where you sense they are rising to the surface of the text.
- 5) Is the novel told in the present or past tense? How does the perspective of the narrator alter your reading? How would an alternate perspective (told from a different moment in time or by a different kind of narrator) affect your reaction to the story?
- 6) Select a surprising moment. What do you notice about the way the writer presents that surprise? Did it catch you off guard, or did you see it coming? Which details from earlier passages prepared you for the surprise?
- 7) What shape does this novel take? Is it 10 chapters of equal length, or does it have unique structural features (diaries, letters, short chapters, no chapters, etc.?). Give some thought to how those features influence your understanding of the novel.
- 8) What is the significance of the novel's title? What is the significance of a particular chapter's title?
- 9) How does the writer get you to sympathize with particular characters? How does the writer get you to dislike or become frustrated with particular characters? What's going on in the writing that leads you to certain conclusions about characters or events?
- 10) What do you know about the narrator of the story? How does the narrator's tone or perspective alter your impressions of the narrative?