Syllabus ENG 316:
Women Writers: Proper and Improper Women

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CRN 22329 Winter 2011

Office: 236 PLC
Office Hours: Tue 11-2pm and by appointment
Phone: 346-0056
Class meets: Allen 216 MWF 10-10:50am

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Course Overview

This course examines the construction of femininity as seen through the eyes of nineteenth-century women novelists. In particular, we will consider the distinction between “proper” and “improper” femininity, as novelists grappled with and challenged the demure and domestic ideal of womanhood, producing heroines prone to emotional outbursts, sensational behavior, and even criminal deviancy. We will consider to what extent even apparently well-behaved heroines may challenge their social reality, as well as exploring sexually independent, “monstrous” female characters. Along with Charlotte Brontë’s Gothic-influenced Villette, we will read notorious women’s “sensation” novels of the nineteenth century depicting sexual transgression, madness, and violence. Critical and contextual readings will underline our discussions, which will consider the literary marketplace and reception (hostile or otherwise) for female novelists.

Required Texts (from UO Bookstore)

Charlotte Brontë, Villette (1853)
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lady Audley’s Secret (1862)
Ellen Wood, East Lynne (1861)

Packet containing critical essays (from Copyshop on E 13th Ave)

Course Requirements:

1. Regular and active participation in class discussion & presentation. 10%
2. Quizzes. 10%
3. Discussion questions. 10%
4. Midterm. 15%
5. Paper one: 4 pages. 20%
6. Paper two: 6-7 pages. 35%
Policies

Attendance
Attendance is mandatory and you must arrive **promptly**. More than three unexcused absences will result in your final grade being lowered by half a letter (eg A- to B+).

I will post brief discussion notes from each day’s class on the Blackboard site no later than 48 hours after class.

Quizzes
Quizzes will be held every Friday. If you are sick, you may take up to two quizzes by email. You need to email me before class, and I will email you back the quiz. Print out the quiz and bring to the next class session.

Presentations
Groups will prepare a set of discussion questions for the class on the reading assigned for that day (usually a Wednesday). You will also pick out a passage you consider important or interesting for the class to discuss.

Discussion questions
Every Monday you will print out and bring to class two detailed discussion questions based on your reading over the weekend. These discussion questions will contain quotes, page numbers, and comments/questions that we can use in class.

Take-home midterm
Please use the early readings in the packet to answer a question about 19th-century women writers and their reception (handout will be available).

Papers
Written work is due in class on the day assigned, unless you have made prior arrangements with me. Late work will be penalized. Do **not** consult any Internet sources when writing your paper. Many such sources are unreliable and may themselves be plagiarized. Both your essays will respond to the critical or primary source material we have read in class.

**Paper one:** 4 pages. 20%
Use the critical or theoretical essay read in class to construct an argument about *Villette* (a handout will be available).

**Final paper:** 6-7 pages. 35%
Use any of the critical or primary texts we have read in class to help construct an argument about the sensation novels *Lady Audley’s Secret* and/or *East Lynne*.

Academic Honesty
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.
See the Library’s website for more information about plagiarism in general, and about specific UO policies:
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/
Academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade for this course. For more information about the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Student Conduct Code (especially Articles V.A and XII.A):
http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/programs/student_judi_affairs/conduct-code.htm
Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources, or about this policy.

Formatting essays

Please use 12-point Times or Times New Roman. Essays which are shorter than required due to extra-large font and margins will be penalized.

You must have a Works Cited page.
In literary essays, MLA style indicates you need only the page number in parentheses followed by a period. You do not need to cite the author as in other disciplines (eg. Conrad, 87) if this is obvious from the context. Longer quotes must be indented, with no quotation marks, with the period coming before the page number.

**Examples of MLA style:**

In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad describes the company manager as inspiring “neither love nor fear, nor even respect” (87).

Carretta and Gould explain that:

> The black writing that appeared during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — which included the genres of spiritual autobiography, captivity narrative, travel narrative, public epistle, sea adventure, and economic success story — is a literature of diasporic movement and cultural encounter. Born to enslaved African parents on a ship in the Middle Passage bearing its human cargo from Africa to the Americas and then brought to England, Sancho might serve as an emblem of most of the writers discussed in *Genius in Bondage*. (5)

**Works Cited:**

**Students with disabilities**
If you have a disability (physical or learning) which you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of term so that we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.
Schedule

Week 1

Mon 3 Jan – Introduction.

Week 2

Mon 10 Jan – Pykett, Lyn. “The Subject of Woman” and “The subject of Woman the subject of women’s fiction” & George Eliot, “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists” – in Packet.
Wed 12 Jan – Villette 7-52 (end chap 5)
Fri 14 Jan – Villette 53-109 (end chap 10).

Week 3

Mon 17 Jan – Martin Luther King Day
Wed 19 Jan – Take-home midterm due in class
   Villette 110-168 (end chap 14).
Fri 21 Jan – Villette 169-230 (end chap 19).

Week 4

Mon 24 Jan – Villette 231-309 (end chap 24).
Fri 28 Jan – Villette 372-427 (end chap 33).

Week 5

Mon 31 Jan – Villette 428-483 (end chap 37).
Wed 2 Feb – Villette 484-end.
Fri 4 Feb – Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”

Week 6

** Paper one due in class on Mon **
Mon 7 Feb – Lady Audley’s Secret 1-89 (end chap 11).
Lyn Pykett on “Fiction, the feminine and the sensation novel” (Packet)
Wed 9 Feb – Lady Audley’s Secret 90-180 (end Vol 2, chap 3)

**Week 7**

Mon 14 Feb – *Lady Audley's Secret* 262-342 (end Vol 3, chap 2).
Fri 18 Feb – *Lady Audley's Secret* 417- end.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own* -- in Packet.

**Week 8**

Mon 21 Feb – *East Lynne* chaps 1-5 (41-89).

Appendix F: The Sensation Novel (720-26).
Wed 23 Feb – *East Lynne* chaps 6-12 (89-168)

**Week 9**

Mon 28 Feb – *East Lynne* chaps 20-26 (245-311).


**Week 10**

Mon 7 Mar – *East Lynne* chaps 41-45 (471-525).

Ann E. Kaplan, “Mothering, Feminism and Representation” -- on Blackboard.
Wed 9 Mar – *East Lynne* chaps 46-54 (525-614)
Fri 11 Mar – *East Lynne* chaps 55-end (615-691).

Read selections from Appendix E: Contemporary Reviews (705-19).

**Finals Week**

Wed 16 Mar – Final essay due, 6 pages, in my office (106 PLC) by 10am.