

Summer 2019

***AP/EN 3150 6.0A
(SU)***

Women in Literature: A Comparative Analysis

Course Director:

Ila Goody
Office 301F Stong College
Office Hours: TBA

Delivery Format:

Seminar

Time:

Mondays and Thursdays 5:30-8:30pm

Description:

This course explores the changing social and familial roles of women as they have been reflected and popularized in fiction from the 18th century to the present. The approach is comparative and historical, drawing on documents to complement the fiction.

We will compare the limited social and sexual agency of women depicted in popular male 18th century Gothic fiction with the transgressive portrayal of more fully sexualized women in female Gothic romance and vampire narrative. We will also consider the restricted marital options for women in several later 18th and 19th century narratives, such as *Evelina*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Wuthering Heights* and compare some later 20th century counter-narratives that parody and satirize the limited choices of women in these earlier "family romances". In addition, we will examine and compare the revisionist social mythologies of Angela Carter, as well as the transgressive portrayal of the female detective in Laurie R. King's contemporary novel, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* (a satire on and social critique of Sherlock Holmes' patriarchal attitudes to women). A selection of letters, biographical and socio-historical documents will also provide comparative contexts for these fictional works.

We will consider a variety of critical approaches, such as Marxisms, gender/feminisms, reader-response theory, rhetoric, and close textual analysis. The objectives of the course will be to enable students to engage with fiction dealing with the changing social and historical roles of women, and to acquire the skills to analyze, compare, and interpret those texts.

Writers to be considered will include: Jane Austen, Charlotte Dacre, Horace Walpole, Fanny Burney, Seth Graham-Smith, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, Jean Rhys, Daphne du Maurier, Sheridan Le Fanu, Angela Carter, and Laurie R. King.

Category: B

Historical Requirement: Period II (1700-1900) 3 credits

Requirements:	Bibliographic Assignment	10%
	1st Essay (2000 words)	20%
	2nd Essay (2500-3000 words)	30%
	2nd Essay Proposal (500 words)	15%
	Seminar Presentation	15%
	Class Participation	10%
	Total	100%

Reading List:

Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*
Charlotte Dacre, *Zofloya, or The Moor*
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Seth Graham-Smith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*
Fanny Burney, *Evelina*
Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*
Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca*
Sheridan Le Fanu, "Carmilla"
Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*
Laurier R. King, *The Beekeeper's Apprentice*

First three texts to be read: Walpole, Dacre, Austen

Open To: YR 3, 4

Essays, the bibliographic assignment, and the essay proposal are to be submitted in hard copy to the course director. The seminar is to be submitted one week after presentation in hard copy. Late assignments will be penalized at 2% per business day unless prior permission has been granted. Extensions will be granted only for valid reasons and with appropriate documentation.

Students are reminded of the University policies regarding academic honesty. Please see here for more details:

<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>

- | | |
|----------|---|
| April 29 | Introduction: Syllabus; major issues and ideas; seminar sign-up |
| May 2 | <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> : traditional gothic horror and female stereotypes: Hippolyta, Isabella, Matilda
documents |
| May 6 | <u>Otranto</u> : the (un)just resolution to the “family romance”; socio-political allegory; the idea of virtue |
| May 9 | <u>Zofloya, or The Moor</u> : Female gothic: Victoria, the transgressive anti-stereotype; female sexuality, agency and the criminal protagonist; terror vs. horror; self-creation |
| May 13 | <u>Zofloya</u> : the problematics of rigid class, gender, racial categories; the choice of life and utopian wish-fulfilment |
| May 16 | <u>Pride and Prejudice</u> : social satire; Elizabeth as focalizer; does Elizabeth mature?
document : Wollstonecraft, <u>Vindication of the Rights of Women</u> (education)
Bibliographic Assignment due in class |
| May 20 | Victoria Day – no class |
| May 23 | <u>Pride and Prejudice</u> : Charlotte Lucas and other foils to Elizabeth; mothers and other “role models” (Lady Catherine) |
| May 27 | <u>Pride, Prejudice and Zombies</u> : The counter-narrative; parody and satire on satire; female agency; why zombies?; differing historical audiences |
| May 30 | <u>Pride, Prejudice and Zombies</u> : role of the illustrations; critique of the class-conscious landed gentry; cf. Dacre’s Victoria |
| June 3 | <u>Jane Eyre</u> : Victorian female gothic; social realism and/or fantasy? “myth domesticated” or the myth of female empowerment
documents
Essay #1 due in class |
| June 6 | <u>Jane Eyre</u> : “role models” for Jane: the female choice of life and employment (e.g. governess/housekeeper, etc.); Jane vs. Victoria vs. Elizabeth |

- June 10 Wide Sargasso Sea: “the empire writes back”; Bertha/Antoinette vs. Jane Eyre/Blanche Ingram
- June 13 Wide Sargasso Sea: the end of choice; Evelina; “role models” for Evelina: (Madame Duval; her late mother; Mrs. Selwyn; Mrs. Mirvan)
documents
- June 17 Evelina: “the parental injunction”: does she have no “parents” or too many? the roles of female “modesty” and virtue
- June 20 Wuthering Heights: the “family romance”: Who controls Heathcliff (cf. Rochester in Jane Eyre)? Is Cathy 1 as powerful as H?
documents
- June 24 Wuthering Heights: female focalizers/narrators vs. male: reliable? conventional or not?
- June 27 Reading Jane Eyre through Wuthering Heights: comparisons & contrasts
Final Essay Proposal due in class
- July 1 Canada Day – no class
- July 4 “Carmilla”: Victorian gothic horror: lesbian sexuality and vampire narratives. Cf. “Christabel” (Coleridge), Christabel and Geraldine as Romantic lovers; ambiguities
- July 8 Carter, “the Bloody Chamber” (title story): Revisions of traditional fairy tale: female “innocence” and the mother rescuer
- July 11 Carter, “Mr. Lyon”, a reprise of “Beauty and the Beast”; “Lady of the House of Love”, end of the female vampire and modernism
- July 15 Rebecca: a reprise of Jane Eyre, similarities/differences in characters, plot; the role(s) of memory
- July 18 Rebecca: The gothic housekeeper, Mrs. Danvers; Rebecca vs. the narrator; presence vs. absence
documents
- July 22 The Beekeeper’s Apprentice: character of Mary Russell; Russell vs. Rebecca as the transgressive focalizers
- July 25 The Beekeeper’s Apprentice: female apprenticeship/employment; modernist critique of the patriarchal model (cf. Jane Eyre)
- July 29 Summary