ENG 4973-006: Sr. Seminar: The “Other” Woman
Topic: Regulating and Representing Female Bodies

This senior seminar is devoted to examining the idea of gender and difference in a range of works from the sixteenth through twentieth centuries. The period that we study was one of global and imperial expansion. In particular, the nineteenth century was known as the great age of British imperialism, a time when “the sun never set on the British empire.” Colonialism abroad determined the ways British society worked at home, and British attitudes changed as the century progressed. We will explore the ways colonialism reflected and, in many ways, determined British ideas about race, gender, and class.

In this course we begin with the assumption that literature plays a crucial part in the construction of gender norms. In our study, we will examine treatments of gender and race in works such as William Shakespeare’s Othello, Aphra Behn’s Oroonoko, several late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels written by women, as well as key Gothic novels, slave narratives, and postcolonial rewritings of some of beloved canonical novels. A central focus of the course will be on the literary representation and regulation of women—as ideal mothers, sisters, and wives; as threatening, sexualized “others”; as hysterics; as “unfeminine” Amazonian figures, and as property. Our area of inquiry will be the elaborate textual meditations on what it meant to be normal, as well as on what it meant to transgress the bounds of “decency.”

The course is organized as a seminar that both enables and requires students to be active participants. The main goals of the course are to strengthen students’ analytical skills and expository writing abilities, with special attention given to deepening the theoretical sophistication of students’ literary explications.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MATERIALS

• William Shakespeare. Othello  [find online and print or purchase/borrow any edition]


COURSE POLICIES

1. Attendance

Nothing is more vital for success in this class than keeping up with, and actively engaging in, the weekly reading assignments and class discussions. As with any other college course, you are expected to be in attendance and prepared every time this class meets, regardless of your other coursework, work schedule, family obligations, dorm/frat/sorority/team commitments, extracurricular activities, and parking/transportation situation.

All unexcused absences will result in a lower final grade. The first two will only be slight dings to your participation grade. Once you reach 3 unexcused absences, however, your final grade may come down by 1/3 of a grade (A– to B+, B+ to B, and so forth) for each additional one.

Excused absences (such as medical emergencies, authorized university activities, religious holidays) must be either cleared with me in advance or accompanied after the fact by written, verifiable documentation from a doctor or other authorized person. Missing more than two weeks of class (which is just four classes), unexcused, may result in a non-passing grade. Habitual tardiness will be treated in the same manner as unexcused absences. Keep in mind that there is no partial credit for attending half a class.

If you find yourself in a situation where prolonged absence is likely (e.g., extended illness, family emergency, etc.), please come speak with me—in advance, if at all possible.

If you are absent, you are responsible for making up all material covered in class, within a reasonable timeframe. You should also inform yourself of any changes or additions to the reading/assignment schedule. I strongly advise checking in with a classmate for notes and updates before you return to class.

2. Participation and Civility

Make sure to bring a copy of each text that we will be discussing to class. You will be expected to have read the assigned material, and have it on hand, when I call on you in class or when we do group work, which will be often.

I’m sure you are aware of the following policy, drawn from the Provost’s statement on “Civility in the Classroom”:

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. To assure all students have the opportunity to gain from time spent in class, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request to leave class.

Some examples of unacceptable behavior listed in the Provost’s statement are: leaving or arriving during the middle of class, prolonged chatting, sleeping, rude or hostile comments or questions, etc.

Maintaining an environment that fosters mutual respect for all opinions requires common courtesy on all our parts. In order to maintain a positive learning environment, cellular telephones, beepers, and other electronic gadgets must be turned off during class. (This means that the power should be off or set to “silent” mode only:
no cell phones or pagers on “vibrate,” please.) I also expect that you will arrive on time, avoid any distracting behaviors during class time, focus only on reading and written work for this class, participate in any small-group or in-class writing assignments, and be respectful of other people’s opinions and experiences.

The key to handling any necessary deviations from the rule is communication. Come talk to me if you must be late, leave early, are having trouble with a deadline, feel concerned about the classroom atmosphere, or don’t understand some aspect of the course.

3. A Statement on Plagiarism

There is nothing wrong with using the words and thoughts of others or getting their help, but you must always explicitly acknowledge your debt. That means you must (1) cite your sources and (2) use that material as a building block for your own thinking rather than as a substitute for it.

You are guilty of PLAGIARISM, a form of academic dishonesty, when

* you purchase, download, cut and paste, steal, borrow, or otherwise acquire a paper and turn it in with your name on it;

* you copy passages word for word from someone else’s writing without citing your source (as though you had come up with these words and ideas on your own);

* you get information or research data from a published or unpublished source (this includes Internet, web, CD/DVD, and other electronic sources) without acknowledging where it came from;

* you falsify or make up sources, page numbers, or information included in an essay;

* you paraphrase or summarize without acknowledging the original;

* you co-write a paper that each person turns in as her/his exclusive work;

* you “recycle” work from another class (turn it in as though it were new work written specifically for the class in which you turn it in); or,

* you use someone else’s ideas, structure, evidence, or argument without changing it substantially (this includes swapping synonyms for words in the original passage but leaving the sentences otherwise intact).

Plagiarism of any sort is theft and will not be tolerated. The academic and scientific world depends on people using the work of others for their own scholarship. Dishonesty destroys the possibility of working together as colleagues in the pursuit of knowledge. Faculty and researchers don’t advance knowledge by passing off others’ work as their own. Students don’t learn by copying what they should think out on their own.

Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. Thus, “I didn’t know it was wrong” is not an excuse.

If you are not certain that you’re not plagiarizing, you probably are plagiarizing. When in doubt, cite your sources. You can also check with me, the Writing Center, a reference librarian, or a reliable writer’s guide (such as Diana Hacker’s A Writer’s Reference) if you have questions about using or citing sources.

Plagiarism is grounds for failing the assignment and/or the course and, in extreme cases, for expulsion from the university. Continued enrollment in this course beyond the drop/add period indicates your acceptance of and compliance with this policy. For more information see the Student Code of Conduct.
4. Disability Services

Support services, including registration assistance and equipment, are available to students with documented disabilities through the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS), MS 2.03.19. Students are encouraged to contact that office at 458-4157 prior to starting classes to make arrangements, though they can contact the office at any time.

ASSIGNMENTS

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation on Primary Text</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation on Secondary Text</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Analytical Papers (10% each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical Essay</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini Research Paper</td>
<td>25%</td>
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Two 7-12-minute in-class presentations. A sign-up sheet for these presentations will be passed out in the second week of class. These presentations will be critical summaries of one primary text from the assigned readings as well as one secondary text related to the scheduled readings. For the presentation on the primary text, which is intended to introduce class discussion of the work, students are to (1) provide a critical synopsis of at least one particular scene, character, or issue that clearly identifies the significance of the scene, character, or issue to the overall text; (2) include in or after the summary the student’s own interpretive judgments, that is, opinion—referencing at least one example from the primary text to illustrate your point, and (3) provide a list of three (or more) questions for class discussion. For the presentation on a secondary text, students must briefly summarize an article or book chapter related to a given text or body of texts. The summary must also include a concise discussion of why the student agrees or disagrees (or both) with the argument made in the secondary text. Thus, this summary should include three parts: (1) a brief synopsis of the argument; (2) a concise discussion of why the student agrees or disagrees (or both) with the argument made in the secondary text; and (3) three questions related to the essay for the class to consider.

For both presentations, you should turn in your write-up, or the text of the talk that you orally presented. For the presentation on a secondary text, you should also turn in a photocopy of the article or chapter that you selected, which will be returned to you after I evaluate your work.

Please note that the secondary text that you present to the class should not be one of the required or recommended texts that are printed on the syllabus; rather, students are expected to independently research, locate, and present on a different secondary text. Moreover, these secondary texts should be selected in consultation with your instructor.

Short analytical papers must be a minimum of 2 pages long (approximately 600 words), typed or word-processed in a standard-sized font such as Times New Roman, and proofread. Except where noted otherwise, these short papers should always be on the reading assigned for the day that they are due. These short papers are to be thoughtful engagements with one or more of the readings aimed at exploring connections among texts and issues, taking our class discussions a little farther, or otherwise contributing to the continuing conversations about the works and time period. Although there is room for personal experience and likes/dislikes in this kind of assignment, I expect the bulk of your response papers to be analytical and focused on the text(s). Short analytical papers do not need a Works Cited section, but it should be clear which text(s) you are engaging.

See the class schedule below for due dates. All short papers are due at the start of class, by which I mean no later than 5 minutes after the hour. You may, however, always turn in work early if you’re worried that you
might not make the deadline. Please note that late short papers will not be accepted, nor will papers submitted by e-mail. If you must miss class on a due date, make arrangements to submit your work early, or for someone else to turn in your paper for you.

A 5-7 page analytical essay. This short essay can be an expansion of the short analytical papers. The expository essay should have a clearly defined thesis and at least three examples as supporting evidence. In addition, the expository essay should engage at least two secondary sources. Secondary sources are scholarly critical essays or book chapters as opposed to simple book reviews from an Internet web site. The essay should clearly identify and argue a position on the topic at hand. Due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, November 10.

First 5 pages and thesis of final research paper. Please turn this work in along with your graded analytical essay. Both are due at the beginning of class on Tuesday, December 1. Reminder: These first five pages should not be simply cut and pasted from the beginning of your analytical essay. You are expected to have done new work.

While you are free to turn in just the first five pages and the thesis; however, if you have a longer version and would like instructor feedback, please turn in all of what you’ve written. This feedback will be emailed to you, since our class will not meet the week of December 8.

There will be no extensions granted for this assignment.

One 15-20-page research-paper revision. This research paper should be a revised and expanded version of the analytical essay. Students also must incorporate two additional secondary sources (for a total of four secondary sources), at least one of which argues a position contrary to the student’s thesis. The goal of this writing assignment is to strengthen the student’s rhetoric by forcing him/her to account for and rebut alternative perspectives as appropriate. This final revision of the research paper draft should incorporate instructor feedback as appropriate.

This final assignment is due by 4 P.M. on Friday, December 11. Please leave your paper with the administrative staff in the main office of the English department. They will date- and time-stamp it and place it in my mailbox at the English department. No extensions.
COURSE SCHEDULE
Note: This syllabus is not written in stone. Please bring it to each class so you can make note of any changes. Also bring your book(s) and/or a copy of all required readings, including secondary texts.

Thursday, August 27
Subject: Introduction to the Course
In-Class Activity: Student Information Sheet

Week of September 1—3
Required Primary Text: William Shakespeare, Othello
Recommended Secondary Text: “And wash the Ethiop white”: Femininity and the Monstrous in Othello” in Fashioning Femininity and English Renaissance Drama. [Hand-Out]
In-Class Activity: Sign up for presentations

Week of September 8—10
Required Primary Text: Aphra Behn, Oroonoko

Week of September 15—17
Required Primary Text: Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass
Assignment Due on Tuesday, September 15: Short Analytical Paper No. 1

Week of September 22-24
Film Viewings: Victor Fleming’s Gone With the Wind and Robert Townsend’s Hollywood Shuffle
In-Class Activity on September 24: Library Workshop with library bibliographer Tara Schmidt (JPL 3.02.32). Note: Please meet Tara in the library's lobby, not the library classroom.

Week of September 29—October 1
Required Primary Text: Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto (in Three Gothic Novels)
Assignment Due on Tuesday, September 29: Short Analytical Paper No. 2

Week of October 6—8
Required Primary Text: Bram Stoker, Dracula

Week of October 13—15
Required Primary Text: Stephenic Meyer, Twilight
Required Secondary Texts: Stephenie Meyer, Twilight
Optional Film: Catherine Hardwicke’s Twilight
Week of October 20—22

**Required Primary Text:** Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

**Required Secondary Text:** Sandra M. Gilbert, “Plain Jane’s Progress” in *Jane Eyre*. 475-501.

**Assignment Due on Tuesday, October 20:** Short Analytical Paper No. 3

Week of October 27—29

**Required Primary Text:** Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*


Week of November 3—5

**Required Primary Text:** Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (in *Three Gothic Novels*)

**Required Secondary Text:** Paul Youngquist, “Frankenstein: The Mother, the Daughter, and the Monster.” *Philological Quarterly* Vol. 70, No. 3 (Summer 1991): 339-359. [UTSA Databases]

Week of November 10—12

**Required Primary Text:** Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

**Recommended Secondary Text:** Susan Reilly, “‘A Nobler Fall of Ground’: Nation and Narration in *Pride and Prejudice*.” *Symbiosis* 4 (2000): 19-34. [UTSA Library—ILL Loan]

**Assignment Due on Tuesday, November 10:** Analytical Essay

Week of November 17—19

**Required Primary Text:** Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith. *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies: The Classic Regency Romance—Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem!*

Required Secondary Text: Edna Aizenberg, The Pleasures and Perils of Postcolonial Hybridity.” *World Literature Today* 73.3 (1999). This essay is also available online for free at this website: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb5270/is_3_73/ai_n28749641/

Tuesday, November 24: Catch-Up Day

**Required Primary Text:** J. M. Coetzee, *Foe: A Novel*


Thursday, November 26: No Class—Happy Thanksgiving!

Week of December 1—3

**Required Primary Text:** Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*


**Assignment Due on Tuesday, December 1:** Thesis and the first five pages of research paper

Tuesday, December 8: No Class—Student Study Day

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Friday, December 11: Final Versions of Research Paper Due by 4 P.M.
These should be turned in to the English department’s main office, where they will time- and date-stamp it and put it in my mailbox.