

ENL 3251: Victorian Literature: The Sensation Novel

Instructor: Sarah Lennox

Meeting Time: MTWRF 5th period

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Office Hours: MWF 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The sensation novel, which emerged in Britain around 1860, was both an intensely popular and widely criticized genre of fiction. In 1863, critic H.L. Mansei famously condemned the genre for “preaching to the nerves instead of the judgment.” In other words, Mansei objected to the sensation novel because he believed its shocking, fast-paced plots worked upon the reader’s body rather than his or her mind. Indeed, many critics worried that readers would become addicted to these “unhealthy” plots, which frequently involved sensational crimes, such as bigamy, adultery, murder, and false imprisonment; stolen or mistaken identities; and characters who transgress traditional class and gender norms. This scandalous content was all the more troubling because of its cross-class appeal: the sensation novel was popular not only in the working-class home, but also amongst middle-class, female readers.

In the first half of this course we will read the three sensation novels that ushered in the beginning of this genre in Britain: Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1860), Ellen Wood’s *East Lynne* (1861), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862). In the second half of the course, we will read fiction from other genres, including the realist novel, adventure novel, New Woman fiction, detective fiction, and gothic horror story in order to trace the sensation novel’s lasting influence in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

In addition to questions of genre, we will pay special attention to issues surrounding the mind, body, and identity in the Victorian period. In particular, we will discuss the ways in which fictional bodies are used to challenge or reinforce traditional notions of race, class, gender, and national identity. We will also examine the scientific and pseudoscientific theories sensation novelists drew upon to understand the relationship between the mind and body. Finally, moving beyond the fictional bodies of characters to the actual bodies of readers, we will study the rhetoric and argument of contemporary sensation novel reviews in order to better understand Victorian anxieties surrounding the effect of this “unhealthy” literature on the reader’s mind and body.

By the end of this course, students will gain a better understanding of not only the sensation novel, but also a range of other genres. They will, moreover, begin to interrogate the notion of genre itself: they will observe the overlap between texts from different genres as well as the differences between texts from the same genre. Students will also become more aware of how

our reading of a text is, at least in part, shaped by our expectations of that text's genre. In addition, students will leave the course with a greater knowledge of Victorian culture, including key legislation, scientific and technological advancements, and cultural debates regarding the mind, body, and identity.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Please buy new or used copies of the required texts in the edition indicated. By shopping around online, you should be able to find these texts at significantly reduced prices.

Wilkie Collins's *The Women in White* - ISBN: 1551116448

Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* - ISBN: 1551112345

Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* - ISBN: 1551112345

H. Rider Haggard's *She* - ISBN: 0199536422

Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* - ISBN: 1551114437

We will read excerpts from a number of other texts, but said texts will be accessible online.

Please see the course Sakai site for links to all e-texts.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation	100 points	10%
Quizzes	150 points	15%
Wiki Entries	150 points	15%
Presentation/Short Paper	200 points	20%
Final Paper	300 points	30%
Creative Project	100 points	10%
TOTAL	1000 points	100%

A: 940 points or higher	C: 730 points or higher
A-: 900 points or higher	C-: 700 points or higher
B+: 860 points or higher	D+: 660 points or higher
B: 830 points or higher	D: 630 points or higher
B-: 800 points or higher	D-: 600 points or higher
C+: 760 points or higher	E: less than 599 points

EXPLANATION OF LETTER GRADES

A: This is a fantastic paper! You presented a complex, argumentative thesis statement and supported it with strong evidence from both the primary text(s) and relevant critics. Your ideas were well-organized, well-developed, and moved beyond class discussion. You have properly cited all of your sources and your paper is free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors. This paper shows initiative in completing the assignments and goes above and beyond the “bare minimum.”

For an A in the class, students will also make consistent contributions to class discussions and have regular and punctual attendance.

B: This is a great paper! You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Your paper needs some revision; however, it is complete in content, it is well-organized, and it shows special attention to professional style. B work shows excellent scholarship and some initiative. Like the A paper, it also to some degree goes beyond the “bare minimum” in quality/effort.

For a B in the class, students will also make regular contributions to class discussions and have regular and punctual attendance.

C: This is an okay paper. You did what the assignment asked of you. Your paper needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward, but unremarkable. You demonstrated an adequate grasp of the subject matter and followed the instructions for the assignment. You may have been able to improve this paper if you had spent more time refining your argument and revising your prose. You should seek help from the instructor on your next paper.

For a C in the class, students will also have a cooperative attitude toward class work, attend class, and sometimes participate.

D: This is a poor paper. Your paper needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic and typos are abundant. Work is unsatisfactory and the assignment expectations are barely met. You should seek help from the instructor on your next paper.

For a D in the class, students may also fail to participate in class/group discussions or frequently miss class.

E: An E is usually reserved for people who do **not** complete reading assignments, prepare for class, turn in assignments, or attend class. However, if your work is shoddy and shows little understanding of the needs of the assignment, you will receive a failing grade.

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

Participation: You will receive credit for participation if you contribute anything to the discussion: a complex thought, a clarification, an observation, a question, etc. Each time you participate, you will receive two points towards your participation grade. You may also earn participation points outside of class by submitting extra posts on the course Wiki (see below). Your total number of participation points will be your participation grade for the course, so if you earn 86 points you will receive an 86%, if you earn 100 or more points, you will receive a 100%, etc.

Quizzes: Any quizzes will cover the reading assigned for that day. Quizzes are not announced beforehand and cannot be taken or retaken at a later date.

Wiki Entries: You must post **one entry per week** on the course Wiki. Please see the course Wiki home page for detailed instructions and requirements. You may access it here: <http://victorianlit.wikispaces.com/> If you post more than one entry per week, you will receive 1-4 points on your course participation grade for each additional entry.

Presentation & Short Paper: During the first week of class, you will sign up for a presentation and paper on a particular literary, cultural, or historical topic relevant to the class discussion and readings for that day. Topics will include various genres (the melodrama, gothic romance, Penny Dreadful), legislative acts (the Matrimonial Causes Act, Married Women's Property Act, Reform Acts), sciences (mesmerism, physiognomy, phrenology), technologies (the railroad, telegraph, photograph), and cultural debates (regarding crime, insanity, domesticity). You will research this topic using trustworthy, scholarly sources.

For the presentation: You will present a well-researched, organized, and useful **mini-lecture** on your topic. During this **10 minute** presentation, you will provide your classmates with a **handout** that highlights the key points of your lecture.

For the paper: You will submit a **900 word** paper on your topic by 9:00 p.m. the night before your presentation. I will grade this paper based on the quality of your research and writing.

Final Paper: You will submit a **3,000 word** textual analysis and/or synthesis paper that integrates at least five critical, peer-reviewed sources. Topic TB A based on class interests.

Creative Project: You will demonstrate your understanding of the course texts, a specific genre, and/or an aspect of Victorian history and culture by generating a creative project that in some way responds to the course. Your project can be serious or comical. You are welcome to use technology but you are not required to do so. Here are a few ideas to get you started, but feel free to move beyond these suggestions:

*a poem or short story

*a parody

*a wanted poster, classified ad, or obituary

*a painting, collage, or drawing

*a commercial

*askit

*a YouTube video

*a trial transcript

You will have five minutes to share your project with the class on either June 20th or 21st.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE COURSE POLICIES

Academic Honesty:

All UF students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own. **Any student who plagiarizes all or any part of an assignment will receive no credit for that assignment.** Remember, you are responsible for understanding the University's definitions of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, which can be found here: <http://web.uflib.ufl.edu/msl/subjects/Physics/StudentPlagiarism.html>

Sexual Harassment:

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more information about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

Students with Physical Disabilities:

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation.

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see:

<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

OWL: Online Writing Lab:

Please make use of the Online Writing Lab (<http://web.cwoc.ufl.edu/owl>). The OWL gives students one-on-one assistance with their papers, but they will not edit or proofread for you; instead, you must ask them specific questions, and they will get back to you within 24 hours.

The password to log on to OWL is ufwl.

ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Behavior:

This is a discussion-based class, and some of the texts we will discuss engage in controversial topics. It is essential for everyone to respect one another. You may disagree with your peers at some point during the semester, but if you voice your opinion, always do so respectfully, avoiding insults and personal attacks.

Please silence all cell phones and other electronic devices before entering class. You may not use cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices during class unless otherwise specified.

Attendance:

ENL 3251 is a discussion-based course, which means that attendance is necessary for your success. The following is the course attendance policy:

- If you arrive more than ten minutes late, you will be counted as absent.
- **Being tardy or leaving early three times will count as one absence.**
- You are allowed **two** absences. I suggest you save these for job orientations, graduate school interviews, sick days, or other instances in which you cannot avoid being absent.
- In addition to your two excused absences, I excuse those absences involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics, band, and religious holidays. Please note that in order to qualify for these excused absences, you must provide prior written notice of your anticipated absence.
- For every absence after your second absence, you will receive a **grade deduction of 50 points** (remember that you have a possible total of 1000 points). Your **sixth** absence will earn you a **failing grade** for this course.
- Quizzes cannot be made up due to absences or tardiness.
- Missed class work due to an absence cannot be made up.
- Assignments are due on the due date, whether or not you are absent. If you are absent on the day an assignment is due, you must email the assignment by the beginning of the class period in order to receive credit.
- If you are absent, you are responsible for finding out what we did during class. I suggest you exchange email addresses with two other students on the first day of class, so you will be able to get updates and notes in the event of an absence.

Preparation:

You are expected to be prepared for every class, including completing all reading and writing assignments on time. Bring your textbooks, notebook, and a pen or pencil to every class meeting. Failure to be prepared for or to contribute to in-class activities and discussion will lower your grade.

Mode of Submission:

All papers must be in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced. Your final drafts should be polished and presented in a professional manner.

For each of your papers, you must submit a hard copy during class and an electronic copy via Sakai. Papers are due at the **beginning** of class. Late papers will not be accepted.

Graded Materials:

Students are responsible for maintaining duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course and retaining all returned, graded work until the semester is over. Should the need arise for a re-submission of papers or a review of graded papers, it is the student's responsibility to have and to make available this material. Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, English Department Program Assistant. Please note that a grade appeal may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower grade.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note that the course schedule may change throughout the semester to accommodate class needs and interests. **Readings will be due on the date they are listed.** Be aware that this is a reading-intensive course and that you must stay on top of the reading assignments. You will have an **average of 425 pages of reading per week** plus assignments. Please plan accordingly.

Week 1: May 13th - May 17th (375 pages of reading)

M - Introduction to the Course (0 pages)

T - Excerpts from Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) (75 pages) **[Last Day to Add/Drop]**

W - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), Preamble; Chapters 1-5 (100 pages)

R - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Chapters 6-10 (100 pages)

F - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* Chapters 11-16 (100 pages)

Week 2: May 20th - May 24th (631 pages of reading)

M - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Chapters 17-28 (206 pages)

T - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Chapters 29-35 (112 pages)

W - Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, Chapters 36-40 (110 pages)

R - Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), Chapters 1-10 (103 pages)

F - Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, Chapters 11-19 (100 pages)

Week 3: May 27th - May 31st (536 pages of reading)

M - **No Class - Happy Memorial Day!**

T - Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, Chapters 20-42 (250 pages)

W - Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, Chapters 43-52 (102 pages)

R - Ellen Wood's *East Lynne*, Chapters 53-62 (98 pages)

F - Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Vol. I, Chapters 1-12 (86 pages)

Week 4: .Tune 3rd - .Tune 7th (477 pages of reading)

M - Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Vol. I, Chapters 13-19; Vol. II, Chapters 1-10 (149 pages)

T - Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Vol. II, Chapters 11-13; Vol. III, Chapters 1-2 (74 pages)

W - Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, Vol. III, Chapters 3-10 (94 pages)

R - H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1887), Introduction, Chapters 1-7 (80 pages)

F - H. Rider Haggard's *She*, Chapters 8-16 (80 pages)

Week 5: .Tune 10th - .Tune 14th (371 pages of reading)

M - H. Rider Haggard's *She*, Chapters 17-28 (92 pages)

T - Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* (1897), Chapters 1-13 (77 pages)

W - Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Chapters 14-22 (66 pages)

R - Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Chapters 23-36 (72 pages)

F - Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*, Chapters 37-48 (64 pages)

Week 6: .Tune 17th - .Tune 21st (170 pages of reading)

M - Selections from George Egerton's *Keynotes and Discords* (60 pages)

T - Selections from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories (60 pages) - **Final Paper Due**

W - Excerpt from Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles* (1891) (50 pages)

R - **Creative Project Presentations Day 1** (0 pages)

F - **Creative Project Presentations Day 2** (0 pages)