

**ENL 4303.8SG1, Major Figures in British Literature and Culture: The Brontës  
Fall 2025**

**Professor Sean Grass / [sean.grass@ufl.edu](mailto:sean.grass@ufl.edu) / (352) 294-2831**

Course Meets: MWF 1:55-2:45 p.m., 115 Matherly Hall  
Office Location: 4336 Turlington Hall  
Office Hours: M 3:00-4:30, F 10:00-11:30, and by appointment  
Required Texts: *Tales of Glass Town, Angria, and Gondal: Selected Early Writings*  
by the Brontës, Ed. Christine Alexander (Oxford)  
Brontë, Anne, *Agnes Grey* (Oxford)  
Brontë, Anne, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Oxford)  
Brontë, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre* (Penguin)  
Brontë, Charlotte, *Villette* (Penguin)  
Brontë, Emily, *Wuthering Heights* (Penguin)

### **Course Overview**

It is hard to imagine a literary family who had a greater impact on the Victorian period than the Brontës, even though they all died relatively young—some of them very young—and even though they wrote at a time when it was still difficult for women to be taken seriously as literary artists. Between 1847 and 1855, three extraordinary sisters, Anne, Emily, and Charlotte, produced a stunning body of literature, including such classics as *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Yet they lived shockingly quiet lives, these daughters of a country clergymen, and sad ones, too. They drew for their novels mainly upon their stereotypical experiences as lower middle-class women, the tragedies of trauma and loss that characterized their short lives, and—most importantly perhaps—their extraordinary creativity. Their novels are often simultaneously tragic and fierce, telling especially (though not exclusively) the stories of young women struggling toward and demanding independence from the constraints of their Victorian world.

During the course of our semester, we will do our best to come to an understanding of the enormous and fascinating body of literature these women left behind, and we will do so by reading not just the “classic” titles we’re familiar with but also the lesser-known works—*Agnes Grey*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, *Villette*, the “Angria” and “Gondal” tales, the poems—that flesh out and fill the spaces around them. The Brontë sisters were among the most important British women writers of the nineteenth century. Spending the semester reading their work will help to demonstrate why.

### **Learning Principles**

#### ***Expected Learning Outcomes***

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to: (1) express a complex understanding of the Brontë sisters and their works by referring to a broad array of primary texts; (2) demonstrate specific and detailed mastery of literary texts written by the Brontë sisters; (3) articulate a sense of the Brontës’ relation to history and culture, past and present; and (4) complete a critical essay and a final exam that demonstrate a capacity for critical reflection on one or more literary works by the Brontës.

### ***Assessment Methods***

Assessment methods include: (1) class participation, by which I mean consistent participation in cogent, intelligent classrooms conversations about our primary and secondary readings and the ideas they engage; (2) a group presentation, which you prepare with 1-2 partners and which provides historical, bibliographic, and/or interpretive details respecting one short work or poem on our syllabus; (4) a critical essay in which you analyze a suitable and complex theme or idea within one or more works; and (5) a final exam, in which you demonstrate the ability to make broad connections among multiple texts.

### **Course Policies**

#### ***Handouts and PDF Readings***

Handouts, class lecture slides, and PDF readings will be made available via Canvas, which I intend to use sparingly (more on this below). Since you must have handouts and readings with you during our class time, you should download and print copies to bring to class or bring an electronic device that will allow you to access them during our class time. Additional information about my policy on electronic devices appears below.

#### ***Email***

For the purposes of our class, you must use your university-issued email account ending in ufl.edu. From time to time, I may need to contact the class as a whole (for instance, to send a newly updated handout or notify you if I'm ill) or I may need to contact you individually to discuss a particular concern. My only real means of contacting you outside of class time is via email, and that method *must be reliable*. Consequently, you are responsible for any messages I may send to your ufl.edu account and for observing all guidelines and information provided in those messages. Also, though I will certainly respond to any email messages I receive, there is no way to be sure that messages you send me from other accounts might not get filtered to "Junk." So I will be accountable *only* for those messages you send from your ufl.edu account. One further note: \*please email me directly rather than through Canvas, as IT has not yet solved the difficulty of how to make Canvas deliver email messages to me\*.

#### ***Submitting work***

For principled reasons, I will ask you this semester to submit your written work for this class in one of two ways: either by emailing it to me at sean.grass@ufl.edu as an attached Word or PDF file, or by printing it and handing it to me in hard copy. This is not an effort to be "old school"; rather, it is an acknowledgment that Canvas was this past year bought out by KKR, who is now "partnering" with OpenAI to, in effect, make every word of both faculty and student work posted to Canvas available for AI-mining. You have not agreed to that, nor have I. We will not be paid. But billions of dollars will be made from the collective intellectual work of students and faculty all over the country as a result. I simply refuse to put you in a situation in which your intellectual property is made available for such shameless profiteering.

#### ***Grades***

Grades for this course depend upon these major areas: class participation (15%); brief reading quizzes (15% each); a group presentation (15%); a 6-8 pp. critical essay (25%); and a final exam (30%). We will discuss each formal assignment during class time, and I will give you guidance (e.g., handouts, review opportunities) regarding each.

For now, just know that I encourage you to complete them all to the best of your abilities. Your class participation score will depend upon your coming to class prepared with the reading and prepared also to help us make sense of it in discussion. The brief quizzes will likewise assess your preparation day to day. Your critical essay will allow you to explore an issue in the Brontës' work that interests you. The take-home final exam will be cumulative and will ask you to address one of several possible questions in essay form.

Other policies related to grading are:

1. You must *complete* all major assignments (presentation, critical essay, final exam) and 60% of the reading quizzes to be eligible to pass the course.
2. Late critical essays will be penalized one grade per day (i.e., a paper that would otherwise be a B+ will first become a B, then a B-, etc.).
3. Critical essays turned in more than one week late—though you still *must turn them in to be eligible to pass the course*—will receive an F unless we have discussed, and I have approved, the late submission in advance, or there are extraordinary circumstances covered by the University's policy on attendance.
4. Presentations must be delivered and the final exam submitted by *the due date/time designated for the assignment*. Rearranging your presentation date when there are ten other presentations has too great a domino effect; the final exam is due on the last possible day, leaving me little/no time to evaluate the work before grades are due. These two assignments particularly must be completed on schedule.
5. Grades (except on the reading quizzes) will be given as letter grades and will be converted to this numerical scale for final semester calculations:

A	100	B	86	C	76	D	65
A-	93	B-	82	C-	72	D-	60
B+	89	C+	79	D+	69	F	55

### ***Attendance***

You should do what you can to attend every class. In English, we come together to discuss what we read because we begin from a basic assumption that these works of art do not tell us freely and openly exactly what they want us to know. Gathering in class to discuss—to struggle and sift for meaning—is at the heart of our work. So every minute of our class time is valuable. You will always “miss something” when you miss class, and with the exception of some mini-lectures or a few slides here and there, what you will miss cannot be recreated because we can't always know where the discussion will go. You're all going to think and say brilliant things. That said, we're in a new world of non-vaccination, measles outbreaks, cases of polio, and god knows what else, and we don't need to share *those* things.

So here is what I'll say. I hope and expect to see you all, healthy and well, every class day. But if you feel sick, please stay at home. We want to see you, but we'd rather miss you temporarily than resent you for spreading some thousand-year plague. You can always catch me in office hours to discuss the reading or anything else if you feel left behind.

It's also important to keep this in mind: while there will be no automatic penalty for particular numbers of absences, you really do need to be present as often as possible. You must take at least

60% of the reading quizzes, which will not be announced ahead of time. I expect to administer at least eight such quizzes, which means that you'll need to take at least five. If you miss no more than three classes all semester, you'll be fine with regard to this policy as a matter of course. More than that, and there is some risk. You'll also, I think, want to be present for advice about assignments and effective writing and participate in discussions and occasional group activities in class for the sake of your participation grade.

### ***Academic Integrity***

You should adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty, as described in UF's [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#). We will discuss those standards, and we will review guidelines for identifying and citing sources as appropriate. *Ignorance* of academic integrity standards is not *innocence* of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism or other dishonesty—**intentional or not**—will result in an F for my course, a report to the Dean of Students, and possibly disciplinary action by the university. Your purpose in my class is to learn. You can't do that if you are stealing others' ideas. And, just so that you are aware, I expect the work that you turn in for this class to be HI-generated, not AI-generated. Use your own human intelligence. Abuses of ChatGPT and other engines, if detected, will be prosecuted to the utmost extent. Your writing for this course should reflect *your* thoughts and understanding, not an algorithm's.

### ***Classroom Civility and Access***

My goal is to make this class accessible to all students without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation, physical limitation, or any other factor not directly related to classroom performance. I also hope to cultivate a comfortable and lively classroom, where we can exchange ideas freely but with respect for all members of our classroom community. So let's try to observe these guidelines for good conduct:

1. Please voice your opinion on topics in class, but do so in a way that is sensitive to others. Do not interrupt someone else who is speaking. Don't direct derogatory or demeaning language at a person or group. When you disagree with me or a classmate, express your dissent in a way that fosters more dialogue. Besides learning about the Brontës, we're also honing our skills at having civilized discussions and disagreements. Neither hate speech nor personal incivilities will be tolerated.
2. Please turn off cellular phones before class begins. No texting, TikToking, tweeting, tinder-ing, twitching, twaddling, twigging, teeter-tottering, or other technological transgressing. You may use a laptop computer or tablet during class in lieu of printing and bringing hard copies of handouts and reading assignments ... BUT I reserve the right to bar you from using electronic devices in class if you cannot confine yourself to using them for legitimate purposes associated with our class.
3. Food and drink are welcome, but please use common sense. Noisy, crunchy foods and rustling wrappers really annoy everyone. Also, avoid disgusting foods such as monkey jowls, beets, or freshly ground kittens.
4. Please listen respectfully to whoever is speaking. Your classmates have awfully insightful things to say. I do, too, once in a while.

A final note: some of you may have a learning disability or physical limitation that, if unacknowledged, would prevent you from performing as well as you should in my class. I will do my utmost under UF guidelines to accommodate your particular learning needs, but you *must*

first register with campus officials through the [Disability Resource Center](#). By university policy, I cannot accommodate undocumented learning issues. If you've already registered with the DRC, please come by and talk to me at your convenience about how I can assist your learning.

Please let me know if you have concerns about these policies or needs of which I should be aware. Come by my office hours, or contact me for an appointment, which we could conduct in person or via Zoom. I am happy to speak with you about your concerns regarding the Brontës, literature generally, or anything else on your mind.

### ***Online Course Evaluations***

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. For guidance on giving feedback in a professional and respectful manner, see <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>. Now that you have finished reading this syllabus, for extra credit send me an email guessing my favorite band of all time.

### **Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

Aug	22	Introduction to the course
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	25	The Brontës: an introduction; Discussion of Group Presentations
	27	Barker, <i>The Brontës</i> , Chs. 4-6 (PDF in Canvas)
	29	Discussion of Research Resources
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Sep	1	<b>No class: Labor Day holiday</b>
	3	Alexander, "Introduction" to <i>Tales of Angria, Glass Town, and Gondal</i>
	5	Discussion of Critical Essay
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	8	C. Brontë, "Tales of the Islanders: Volume II," "Young Men's Magazine, October 1830," and "The Roe Head Journal [Parts I-VI]"
	10	E. Brontë, "7. A.G.A. to A.S.," "26. To Imagination," and "28. R. Alcona to J. Brenzeida"
	12	A. Brontë, "1. Verses by Lady Geralda," "3. A Voice from the Dungeon," and "18. Weep not too much, my darling"
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	15	B. Brontë, "Ode on the Celebration of the Great African Games," "The Pirate A Tale," and "Mary's Prayer"
	17	Barker, <i>The Brontës</i> , Ch. 18; Gérin, <i>Anne Brontë</i> , Ch. 14 (PDFs in Canvas)
	19	A. Brontë, <i>Agnes Grey</i> , Chs. 1-6
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	22	A. Brontë, <i>Agnes Grey</i> , Chs. 7-15
	24	A. Brontë, <i>Agnes Grey</i> , Chs. 16-end
	26	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 1-6
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	29	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 7-17
Oct	1	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 18-21
	3	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 22-26
	6	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 27-33
	8	C. Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Chs. 34-end
	10	E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Vol. I, Chs. 1-4
	13	E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Vol. I, Chs. 5-11
	15	E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Vol. I, Chs. 12-14 and Vol. II, Chs. 1-2
	17	<b>No class: Homecoming</b>
	20	E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Vol. II, Chs. 3-13
	22	E. Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> , Vol. II, Chs. 14-end; C. Brontë, "Editor's Notice to the New [1850] Edition of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> " (pp. 1-liv of <i>Wuthering Heights</i> )
	24	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 1-8
	27	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 9-21
	29	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 22-29
	31	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 30-36
Nov	3	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 37-47
	5	A. Brontë, <i>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</i> , Chs. 48-end
	7	C. Brontë, selections from letters written in 1849 (PDF in Canvas); Barker, <i>The Brontës</i> , Ch. 24; <b>Critical Essay due</b>
	10	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 1-10
	12	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 11-15
	14	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 16-20
	17	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 21-27
	19	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 28-34
	21	C. Brontë, <i>Villette</i> , Chs. 35-end
	24	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>
	26	<b>EAT TURKEY</b>
	28	<b>AND PIE</b>
Dec	1	Barker, <i>The Brontës</i> , Ch. 26; Miller, <i>The Brontë Myth</i> , Chs. 1-2 (PDFs in Canvas)
	3	Course wrap-up, including evaluations and grading procedures

**Final Exam due Friday, December 12 at 12:00 p.m. (noon)**