



**ENG/WST 356 01X, 02X:
WOMEN WRITERS TO 1900**

Fall 2009
01X: TR 11:00, Webb 317
02X: TR 4:00, Webb 216



INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Marcia McGowan

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OFFICE HOURS: TR 12:30-2:00; W 1:00-3:00; and by appointment

ADDRESS: I prefer to be called "Dr. McGowan" or "Professor McGowan."

REQUIRED TEXTS: Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey. Signet.
S. Gilbert & S. Gubar, eds. The Norton Anthology of Literature
by Women. Vol. 1. **Third** edition.
Mary Shelley. Frankenstein. Bantam (1831 edition).
Harriet E. Wilson. Our Nig. Ed. Henry Louis Gates. Vintage.

RECOMMENDED: The MLA Handbook, 7th edition.

GOALS: This survey course will offer a broad exposure to major works of English and American women writers before 1900. Because we will examine over five hundred years of women's writing, we will be forced to sacrifice depth of analysis to breadth of coverage. We can, however, attempt to discover common themes and images, which we will place in a cultural and historical context. Mindful of the astonishing variety in this literature, we will try to discern whether there is what Gilbert and Gubar call "a strong continuity" in the writing of English-speaking women from the Middle Ages to 1900 and, if so, to what degree, as Virginia Woolf contends, books (particularly books by women) "continue each other." As the Norton Anthology seeks to emphasize authorial diversity in genre, ethnic and geographical traditions, and in the representation of individual authors, we will also assess whether it achieves such diversity. Studying each of the other required texts will further our understanding of cultural conflicts ultimately experienced by nineteenth century women writers.

PROCEDURES:

- Generally, one class per week will be conducted as mini-lecture and discussion and one as focused group discussion. Both formats work effectively only when all participants have done the required reading. This is **not** a class in which you can depend solely on lecture notes. You **must** have the required texts, and you **must** read them in a timely fashion and **bring them to class**, as we will do close textual reading and analysis together. If you do not wish to obtain portable copies of all the texts, you should not take this course.
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are expected to be *both present and on time for class*. *Chronic lateness will not be tolerated*, and like more than 2 unexcused absences, will be counted against your participation grade (a considerable 25% of your final grade). After 2 unexcused absences, there will

- be a penalty of one full grade off of your participation grade for each additional class you miss.
- If class is cancelled, finish the reading for that day. Complete any assigned work. When we return we will simply cover that material at a faster pace.
 - Please be respectful of others and do not speak when they are speaking.
 - **No cell phone use, including texting, in class.** Turn off your cell phone. Do not look at your cell phone while class is in session. Do not finish your homework for another class or study for an exam for another class. Do not sleep during class. All of these behaviors are disrespectful to your classmates and the instructor. They will not be tolerated.
 - Leaving class without notice is also rude and disruptive. Do not leave class at any time except for an emergency and/or by prearrangement. (An ordinary text or cell phone message is not an emergency and is an infringement of the above procedures.)
 - Please notify me as soon as possible if you have to be absent because of an emergency, and I will be happy to help you catch up.
 - If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact the Office of Accessibility Services at (860) 465-5573. To avoid any delay in the receipt of accommodations, you should contact the Office of Accessibility Services as soon as possible. Please understand that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Office of Accessibility Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.
 - Please feel free to consult with me on your progress in the course, your paper topic, and/or questions about or special interests in the course material. If you cannot come during my office hours, I will be happy to arrange an alternate appointment.

REQUIREMENTS:

- You must participate in both class and group discussions. Therefore, you must be up to date on your assignments. Be assured that a substantial portion of your grade will be based upon participation. The more prepared you are to participate, the more lively the discussion. The success of this (or any) class rests largely in the students' preparation for it. I recommend underlining, highlighting, and annotating your text and, of course, re-reading whenever possible. This will help you organize your thoughts for class, papers, and exams and will make you a more critical reader.

- Each student will be responsible for completion of four of the study/essay questions at the end of this syllabus. Directions precede the questions. These assignments may **not** be turned in after the **beginning** of the period in which they are due, except by prearrangement. Please give them to me directly; do not leave them in my mailbox or under my door, except by pre-arrangement. Computer or printer generated problems are not excuses for late assignments. Both study questions and the research paper referred to below should follow guidelines in the current MLA Handbook. Papers should be double-spaced, and margins of at least one inch should be allowed at the top, bottom, and both sides of the page. Essays should include your name, course, professor, and due date in separate lines at the **top, left-hand** margin of your first page. No cover page is necessary, though a **title for your essay** is. Do not underline the title of your essay, and remember that **present** tense is appropriate in literary criticism. Every page should have a header (e.g. Smith 1) in the **upper right-hand** corner. Use **Times New Roman, 12 point font** throughout the paper.
- You will type or word process an 8-10 page paper on the work(s) of an author (or authors) we will study this semester. This paper will involve the use of secondary sources, as well as the text or texts you are analyzing. Please be aware that internet research is often suspect. Later in the semester, I will give you a handout suggesting legitimate databases for research purposes. I will check both your sources and your subject before you write your research paper. You will present a brief topic proposal and bibliography on the date indicated in the syllabus. If you do not own a current MLA Handbook (7th edition), please buy one and familiarize yourself with it, or, alternately, purchase a copy of A Guide to MLA Documentation (Houghton Mifflin). The best papers are those that profit from such familiarity.
- Please remember that **plagiarism**, borrowing the words or ideas of others without attribution, is the academic equivalent of theft and will result, at the least, in failure of the course.

****No paper will be accepted after Dec 3rd, except by prior arrangement.**

- There will be a mid-term in-class essay exam and a final take-home essay exam.
- No incompletes will be assigned in this class, except for documented emergency.
- The course schedule may be subject to change; all changes will be announced in class. Absence is not an excuse for missing a change in assignment or due date.

GRADES:

Mid-term + Final exam = 25% of final grade

Study questions = 25% of final grade

Paper = 25% of final grade

Class participation = 25% of final grade

DR. M'S HELPFUL HINTS FOR EXCELLENT ESSAYS

1. When responding to a study (or exam) question, answer the question directly, preferably making your answer part of the thesis statement in your first paragraph.
2. Use **present** tense consistently in your essay. Do **not**, in general, change the tense within a quotation from an author.
3. Do **not** justify margins. Use **Times New Roman, 12 point font**.
4. Unless you are citing a parenthetical page reference, place periods and commas **before** quotation marks.
5. For a dash, use two hyphens--with **no space on either side**.
6. **a)** Be sure to use a colon before illustrative quotations. **b)** Give a **context** for the quotations. Do not leave your reader guessing about whom you are quoting or when, in the novel, he or she says those words. **c)** Introduce quotations, or incorporate them gracefully into your text. They cannot stand on their own; you must clarify their relevance for your reader. **d)** Do not splice two or more quotations together without intervening commentary of your own.
7. Use proper punctuation and citation for quotations.

Example: Catherine's behavior as a young girl of the eighteenth century is atypical: "She was fond of all boys' plays, and greatly preferred cricket not merely to dolls, but to the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, nursing a dormouse. . .or watering a rose-bush" (Austen 21).
(Note punctuation around the above quotation and citation.)

8. For variety (and to save space), try to quote **parts** of sentences, rather than always including one or several sentences when you quote an author.

Example: Catherine feels that she may have been guilty of a "breach of propriety" (Austen 89) in going on an excursion with John Thorpe.