

Professor Francus
English 387W: Mamma Mia! Mothers and Monsters in Western Culture
Spring 2014
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:15, 106 Woodburn Hall
Office: 227 Colson Hall
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:15 and by appointment.
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January 9	Introduction
January 14	Biblical Images of Mothers and Motherhood Genesis, Chapters 1-4, 16-22 Available at http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/
January 16	Biblical Images of Mothers and Motherhood Genesis, Chapters 23-38; Judges 13:1-25; 1 Samuel 1:1-2:36; Lamentations 4:1-22; Matthew 1:1-25; Luke 1:1-2:24 Available at http://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/ Worksheet for Image Analysis Essay Due
January 21	Classical Images of Mothers and Motherhood Euripides, <i>Medea</i>
January 23	Mothers Breeding Monsters Selections from Spenser's <i>The Faerie Queene</i> ; Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> ; and Aristotle's <i>Masterpiece</i>
January 28	Impoverished Motherhood Swift, "A Modest Proposal" Image Analysis Essay Due
January 30	Abandoning Mothers Defoe, <i>Moll Flanders</i> Worksheet for Old Bailey Sessions Essay Due
February 4	Defoe, <i>Moll Flanders</i>
February 6	Defoe, <i>Moll Flanders</i>
February 11	Defoe, <i>Moll Flanders</i> Old Bailey Sessions Essay Due
February 13	Birth without Mothers Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Worksheet for Frankenstein Manuscript Analysis Essay
February 18	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>
February 20	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>

February 25	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Frankenstein Manuscript Analysis Essay Due
February 27	Wicked Stepmothers Disney, <i>Snow White</i>
March 4	Haunted Motherhood Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Worksheet for Scholarship Analysis Essay
March 6	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
March 11-13	Spring Break
March 18	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i> Scholarship Analysis Essay Due
March 20	Writing Day
March 25	Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>
March 27	Writing Day
April 1	Surrogate Motherhood Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
April 3	Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
April 8	Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>
April 10	Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Final Essay Draft Due
April 15	Writing Day
April 17	Mothers Gone Wild Lloyd, <i>Mamma Mia!</i>
April 22	Class Canceled
April 24	Last Day of Class
April 28	Final Research Essay Due via email

The course schedule may change at the instructor's discretion.

Course Description: Motherhood is one of the most contested roles in society, past and present. In English 387W we will discuss the myths and realities about the biology and psychology of motherhood in the West: murderous mothers and loving mothers; excessively fertile mothers and mothers who have problems conceiving; virgin mothers, and men who become mothers; stepmothers and surrogate mothers. In doing so, we will excavate the issues and debates that characterize motherhood as represented in literature and culture—and illuminate one of the most commonplace and complex roles in society.

Course Objectives:

- To introduce students to the academic study of motherhood.
- To introduce students to teratology, i.e. the study of monsters and monstrosity.
- To evaluate representations of gender across time and cultures.
- To introduce students to literary research methods.
- To practice critical thinking and writing about literature and culture, with an emphasis on multiple interpretations and theories.
- To provide practice in academic writing, with an emphasis on writing as an intellectual process, and the integration of research into writing.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Analyze representations of gender in different times and cultures.
- Develop a thesis about a literary or cultural text, and support that thesis with evidence.
- Engage in primary research on literary and cultural topics.
- Draft, edit, and write an extended analysis of a literary or cultural text.
- Analyze scholarship, and integrate research into writing, according to the conventions of academic discourse.
- Recognize and develop multiple analyses for a single literary or cultural text.

English 387W fulfills the elective requirements for the English major and minor, the Women's Studies major and minor, and the "W" writing requirement for the University.

Course Texts:

Medea, *Moll Flanders*, *Frankenstein*, *Beloved*, and *The Handmaid's Tale* are available at the WVU Bookstore. All other materials are available online (as noted above) or will be handed out in class.

Course Writing Requirements:

-- Image Analysis Essay. For your first assignment, you will write a short essay (3 pages) on a visual representation of a classical or Biblical narrative that features mothers. Based on your knowledge of the source text, develop a thesis and argument about the way(s) the artwork represents and interprets mothers and motherhood. This assignment provides practice in interpreting visual evidence, and analyzing modes of cultural interpretation and circulation.

-- Old Bailey Session Papers Analysis. For your second assignment, you will write a short essay (3 pages) on a court case involving of mothers, motherhood, and monstrosity from the Old Bailey Session Papers, the documents from the British legal system, which are available online at <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/>. Based on your knowledge of the historical period and/or motherhood in the text, develop a thesis and argument about the way(s) the text represents and interprets mothers, motherhood, and/or monstrosity. This assignment provides practice in working with archival materials and non-canonical data, and providing a close reading of a literary text.

-- *Frankenstein* Manuscript Analysis. For your third assignment, you will write a short essay (3 pages) on a page from one of the early, drafted versions of the novel. The various manuscript versions of *Frankenstein* are available at <http://shelleygodwinarchive.org/contents/frankenstein>; you will choose a page, and analyze Mary Shelley's edits (and if relevant, Percy Shelley's edits) and develop a thesis about authorship, editing, and meaning. This assignment provides practice in working with archival materials, close reading, and developing a sense of writing as a process.

-- Scholarship Analysis Essay. This assignment is an exercise in scholarly reading and response. You will be given a set of academic articles on mothers and motherhood; you will be asked to choose one, and write a short (4 page) analysis of its argument. (Please do not summarize the article in your analysis; develop a thesis and argument about it). This assignment provides practice in reading and evaluating academic arguments and prose, as well as practice in developing your own position vis-à-vis scholarship.

-- Research Essay. You will write an extended essay (10 pages) in which you analyze motherhood and monstrosity. You will be expected to develop a thesis, and support your thesis with evidence, and engage in research. You will be asked to submit a paper proposal, a draft of your paper (5 pages), and a final research paper. The goals of this assignment include providing practice in choosing a topic (and setting parameters of analysis), thinking critically and analytically about motherhood and monstrosity; integrating research into your writing, and practicing writing skills according to the conventions of academic writing.

Grading:

Image Analysis Essay: 15% (Worksheet required, not graded)

Old Bailey Sessions Papers Essay: 15% (worksheet required, not graded)

Frankenstein Manuscript Analysis Essay: 15% (worksheet required, not graded)

Scholarship Analysis Essay: 15% (worksheet required, not graded)

Research Essay: Draft: 15%; Final Version: 25%

Quizzes at the instructor's discretion.

Please note: if you do not submit the worksheets for the first four assignments, your grade on the related essay will drop one full letter. For example: if a student does not submit the image analysis worksheet, and earns a B+ on the image analysis essay, that B+ will be turned into a C+.

Submission of Assignments:

1. Your papers should be typed (11 or 12 point font), double-spaced, with one-inch margins.
2. Your papers should reflect careful reading and thinking about your subject. Do not summarize the plot of a work or rephrase your class notes in your course assignments.
3. Please keep a photocopy or a back-up disk of every assignment that you hand in.
4. Hand in papers on time. Late submissions will receive a lower grade unless the student has a viable reason (such as illness, familial emergency) for his/her lateness, *and* has notified me within 24 hours of the original due date. Your grade will be lowered every day your work is overdue (ex. B to B- for one day late).

5. Please use the Editing Guidelines and Stylesheet on this syllabus. They will help hone your critical thinking and writing skills, and strengthen your essays. Please note that the Writing Center, a free tutoring service for WVU students, is also available in G02 Colson Hall.

Grading Criteria:

A (90-100) – Excellent work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The written assignment is clearly organized, chooses compelling evidence to substantiate the analysis, and engages with the subject at hand in a thoughtful and thought-provoking manner. Written work requires no substantive or stylistic revisions.

B (80-89) – Good work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The written assignment shows substantial engagement with the subject at hand, but the analysis is either partially incomplete, involving weak evidence, or manifests some difficulty with organization. Written work requires some substantive revisions, but few or no stylistic ones.

C (70-79) – Average work; the assignment has been completed, but not necessarily in a professional or timely manner. The written assignment shows effort by the student, but the analysis is incomplete, includes inappropriate evidence (or a lack of evidence), or shows significant difficulties with organization. Written work requires significant substantive or stylistic revisions.

D (60-69) - Less than average work; the assignment has not been completed in a professional or timely manner. The written assignment shows a lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment. Written assignments lack analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive substantive and stylistic revisions are necessary.

F (<59) – Inadequate work; the assignment has not been completed. Written assignments show a significant lack of effort, and a lack of engagement with the assignment and the subject matter of the course. Such work is marked by the absence of analysis, evidence, and organization; engagement with the course materials is necessary before extensive revisions are even possible.

General Resources:

<http://www.libraries.wvu.edu/databases/>. For databases that provide downloadable versions of scholarly articles, go to JSTOR and Project Muse; see also Academic Elite, which has some works online, and provides easy access to request those not immediately available). The WVU Database system also has ACLS Humanities E-Book, for online access to scholarly books, which supplements the WVU Libraries' holdings, and databases (like *The New York Times* and British Periodicals) that provide full images of newspaper and periodical articles.

The WVU Library Database also provides access to Early English Books Online (EEBO) and Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO), which provide full texts and images of British works from 1500 to 1800, including pamphlets about the birth of monsters and misbehaving mothers, along with conduct manuals for women, books on fertility and reproduction, etc.

<http://www.wga.hu/>. *The Web Gallery of Art*, a database of European art, 1000-1850.

<http://www.imdb.com/>. *The Internet Movie Database*. The gateway resource for information about film: cast and crew lists, production information, budgets, release dates, profit, and so on.

Professional Responsibility:

1. Class attendance contributes significantly to academic success. Students who attend classes regularly tend to earn higher grades and have higher passing rates in courses. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class. You are granted a maximum of three absences during the course of the semester before absenteeism affects your grade. If you accumulate more than six absences (excused and unexcused), you will automatically fail the course.
2. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding your absences. If you disappear—that is, if you miss class for three or four sessions in a row, or more—it is not my responsibility to find you.
3. If you send me an e-mail, I will respond within 24 or 48 hours. If I have not responded to you in that time, it means that I have not received your posting. Please e-mail me again.
4. Please come to class on time. Do not leave in the middle of class; it is distracting and disrespectful. Do not schedule appointments (medical, advising, etc) during class time.
5. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class.
6. You will be expected to keep up with the course readings and film viewings, attend and participate in class, bring the text(s) that will be discussed to class, and check your MIX e-mail account daily.
7. Should you need assistance during a time of difficulty or crisis, please contact Tom Sloane, Associate Dean, in the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall, 304-293-5611.

Academic Dishonesty:

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the Student Conduct Code at <http://studentlife.wvu.edu/studentconductcode.html>. Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me *before* the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Social Justice Policy. West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veterans status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700).

Editing Checklist

1. Evaluate your thesis.

- is your thesis clearly stated at the beginning of your essay?
- is your thesis appropriate for the writing assignment?
- does your thesis “make sense”?

2. Evaluate your argumentative strategy.

- are you using logical and rhetorical strategies that build the most convincing case for your thesis? (and remember, you may use more than one in an essay; if you choose multiple strategies, make sure that they work together)
- do you have the appropriate data to support your argument? (and if not, can you justify its absence?)
- is the data cited properly? (check the content and the form of your notes)

3. Evaluate your essay structure.

- does your essay structure lead the reader through your argument clearly?
- does your essay structure work with/reinforce your argumentative strategy?
- does your introduction suggest the structure of your argument? If so, does the body of your essay follow through on the structure suggested by the introduction?
- are the transitions between the parts of your argument clear?
- does the conclusion pull your argument together? (try to avoid repetitive, summary conclusions)

4. Evaluate your paragraph structure.

- does each paragraph function as a unit of your argument? (i.e. is each paragraph unified in its purpose?)
- is the topic sentence clear?
- does the body of the paragraph follow through on the subject of the topic sentence?
- are the transitions from paragraph to paragraph clear?

5. Evaluate your sentence structure.

- is each sentence an independent unit of thought? (i.e. avoid repeating yourself in successive sentences)
- does one sentence lead to the next? Are the transitions between sentences clear?
- check the grammar of our sentences
- make sure that every sentence has a subject and a verb (avoid fragments!)
- check for subject-verb agreement
- check for tense consistency
- check that you are varying the grammar of your sentences (so that not every sentence begins with a prepositional phrase, for instance)

6. Check your spelling and punctuation.

- and remember the distinctions between their/their/they're; it's/its; are/our; etc.

Some General Comments on Writing Style and Grammar

- a. Please note that “it’s” is a contraction for “it is” or “it has.” “Its” is a possessive, which makes life confusing, but it is important to learn this distinction.
- b. Please learn the distinctions between possessive, plural, and plural possessive. “knight’s” is singular possessive; “knights” is plural; “knights’” is plural possessive.
- c. Try to avoid wordiness. Phrases like “The point the speaker is making is” or “What this means is that” are generally unnecessary. Such phrases are like long wind-ups before the pitch, and they often clog your prose.
- d. Try to avoid “talking” writing. What “sounds” right to a readerly ear does not necessarily read properly or grammatically to the eye. People do not speak grammatically (and sometimes without even punctuation). Therefore, writers should avoid writing as they speak (unless they are writing dialogue in fiction). Talking writing also frequently leads to tone drops and diction that generally is not appropriate for academic prose. (Ex. “ she doesn’t stick up for herself”).
- e. Please avoid freestanding quotations. Every quotation should be integrated into a text, preferably with a lead-in phrase, rather than placed alone in the middle of a paragraph without any connection to anything around it.
- f. Try to avoid “we” and “you” in your essays. Both terms tend to include the reader in the argument without convincing the reader. (In other words, these terms usually signal strategies of collusion on the part of the writer).
- g. When referring to words as words, please use quotation marks. (I.e. if you are discussing the use of the word “man” in a particular passage, then “man” should be placed in quotation marks).
- h. “It” and “This” are weak sentence starters. Any noun in the previous sentence can serve as a referent for “it” – and if the previous sentence has a number of nouns in it, havoc results. “This” has a similar effect as the first word in a sentence, but if a noun is added after “This,” the problem of reference is usually solved.
- i. “Thing” is a very vague word. Try to find a specific noun whenever possible.
- j. “He himself” is an unnecessary and ungrammatical doubling. “He” will generally do.
- k. Try to avoid using “is” (or “was”) as a main verb. Choose a stronger, more precise word.
- l. “A woman” -- not “A women.” “Woman” is singular; “women” is plural.
- m. Remember that a semicolon connects two highly related sentences.
- n. Avoid “how” and “what” at the beginning of subordinate clauses—depending on your meaning, use “which,” “that,” “who,” or “where.”