

Professor Francus  
English 387W: Early British Women Writers  
Fall 2014  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45, G-11 Woodburn Hall  
Office: 227 Colson Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00-11:15 and by appointment.  
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- August 19 Introduction  
August 21 Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe* (ca. 1436-1438), “The Proem,” “The Preface,”  
Book I, Chapters 1-10 (pp. 33-58, Penguin edition)
- August 26 Kempe, Book I, Chapters 11-29, 46-54 (pp. 58-109, 148-173, Penguin edition)  
August 28 Kempe, Book I, Chapters 88-89; Book II, Chapters 1-10 (pp. 257-297, Penguin edition)
- September 2 Elizabeth I, Selected letters as a princess; first speech as queen, first speech to  
Parliament; response to the commons’ petition that she marry (ca. 1545-1563)  
[pdf]  
**Close Reading Essay Due (two copies)**
- September 4 Elizabeth I, selected letters and speeches regarding Mary, Queen of Scots (1567-  
1586) [pdf]
- September 9 Elizabeth I, the Queen’s prayers; the Armada Speech, the Golden Speech, the final  
speech before Parliament (1588-1601) [pdf]  
**Peer Review of Close Reading Due (two copies)**
- September 11 Scholarship Analysis Day
- September 16 Hoby, Margaret. Excerpts from *The Diary*, January-April 1600, pp. 50-79 [pdf]  
September 18 Hoby, Margaret. Excerpts from *The Diary*, May-September 1600, pp. 80-109 [pdf]
- September 23 Research Methods Day  
**Draft of Scholarship Analysis Essay due**
- September 25 Class Cancelled
- September 30 Cary, Elizabeth. *The Tragedie of Mariam* (1613), Dedication, Argument, Acts I- III, pp.  
65-114  
October 2 Cary, Elizabeth, *The Tragedie of Mariam*, Acts IV-V, pp. 114-149

- October 7 Osborne, Dorothy. *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple, 1652-1653*  
Letters 1-15 [pdf]  
**Scholarship Analysis Essay Due (two copies)**
- October 9 Class Cancelled
- October 14 Fall Recess
- October 16 Osborne, Dorothy. *The Letters of Dorothy Osborne to William Temple, 1653*, Letters  
16-25 [pdf]  
**Peer Review of Scholarship Analysis Due (two copies)**
- October 21 Developing a Paper Topic and Strategy
- October 23 Cavendish, Margaret. *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*  
(1666) (pp. 119-160, Penguin edition)
- October 28 Cavendish, Margaret. *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (pp.  
160-202, Penguin edition)
- October 30 In Class Peer Review of Paper Proposals  
**Research Paper Proposal Due**
- November 4 Cavendish, Margaret. *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (pp.  
203-225, Penguin edition)
- November 6 Writing Day
- November 11 Philips, Katharine. Selected Poems
- November 13 Behn, Aphra. *The Rover* (1677) Prologue, Acts I-III (pp. 3-48, Oxford edition)
- November 18 Behn, Aphra. *The Rover* (1677) Acts IV-V, Epilogue (pp. 49-87, Oxford edition)
- November 20 In Class Peer Review of Drafts  
**Draft of Research Paper Due**
- November 25 – Thanksgiving Recess
- November 27 – Thanksgiving Recess
- December 2 Writing Days/Student Conferences
- December 4 Writing Days/Student Conferences
- December 9 Course Conclusions/**Research Paper Due**

Changes in the course schedule at the instructor's discretion.

Course Description: The title of this course includes categories that are challenging to assess individually, and daunting together: “Early” “British,” “women,” and “writers.” Nevertheless, the project of English 387W this semester is to explore these terms separately and in conjunction, in order to excavate the traditions of British women writers, the subjects that preoccupied them, and the material and social conditions that affected their writing. In the process, we will complicate the traditional canonical readings of British literature and history, and develop a more elaborate and accurate vision of British history, gender politics, and literature as a cultural phenomenon.

English 387W fulfills the University’s Writing requirement, the diversity requirement for the English major, and elective requirements for the English minor, and for the Women’s Studies major and minor.

Course Objectives:

- To identify and evaluate the major themes, topics, and issues of British women writers.
- To evaluate British women writers within their historical and cultural contexts, to assess the effect of society and culture on women’s writing.
- To learn about the status of women in British history, and especially the status of (and resistance to) British women writers.
- To apply and test critical and theoretical models, in order to develop critical thinking and analytical ability.
- To practice formal and stylistic conventions of literary criticism and analysis.

Learning Outcomes:

- At the end of this course, students should be able to:
- Identify and analyze the emerging characteristics of a tradition of British women writers.
  - Locate and evaluate a text in social, economic, political, and/or literary history.
  - Develop a thesis about a literary text, and support that thesis with textual evidence.
  - Recognize and develop multiple analyses for a single literary text.
  - Analyze a text in light of other literary and/or cultural texts.

### Course Assignments:

Close Reading Essay (2-3 pages) – You will be given a selection of chapters from Margery Kempe’s biography, and you will be asked to choose one, and develop a thesis-driven analysis of the chapter.

Peer Review of Close Reading Essay (1-2 pages) – You will be given a copy of a classmate’s close reading essay, and you will write an evaluation of the essay, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the essay, and providing suggestions for improvement.

Scholarship Analysis Essay (draft, 2-3 pages; final version 3-4 pages) – You will be given a selection of academic articles relevant to early British women writers. Please choose one, and write a brief analysis of the article, focusing on the author’s thesis, argument, evidence, and style. You will be required to submit a draft before submitting the final version of this essay.

Peer Review of Scholarship Analysis Essay (1-2 pages) - You will be given a copy of a classmate’s scholarship analysis essay, and you will write an evaluation of the essay, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the essay, and providing suggestions for improvement.

Research Paper Proposal (1-2 pages) - You will be asked to submit a proposal for your final research essay, which should include your thesis, the parameters of your project, your postulated argument.

Research Paper (draft, 5-6 pages; final version, 9-10 pages) – A research paper on the work of a British woman writer of your choosing. The goals of this assignment include providing practice in choosing a topic (and setting parameters of analysis), thinking critically and analytically about British women writers, integrating research into your writing, and practicing writing skills according to the conventions of academic writing. You will be required to submit a draft before submitting the final version of the paper.

Please Note: Quizzes at the instructor’s discretion.

### Grading:

1.	Close Reading Essay	15%
	Peer Review of Close Reading Essay	10%
	Scholarship Analysis Essay	20%
	Peer Review of Scholarship Analysis	10%
	Research Paper Proposal	15%
	Research Paper	30%

Please Note: The Scholarship Analysis Essay Draft and the Research Paper Draft are required, but not graded. If you do not submit drafts, then the grade for the final version of these respective essays will be lowered one full letter grade.

2. Class participation will be taken into consideration for students with borderline grades. If a student’s final grade falls between a B and a B+, and the student has been an active, insightful class participant, the student will receive a B+ for the course. This policy only holds for final grade calculations, and only raises the student’s borderline grade to the next immediate grade level (so a B will not be raised to an A- or an A based on class participation).

Grading Criteria:

A (90-100) – Excellent work; the assignment has been completed in a professional and timely manner. The assignment has a clear, relevant thesis and organization, 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 assignment has a viable thesis and shows substantial engagement with the subject at hand, but the analysis is partially incomplete, involving weak evidence, or manifests some difficulty with organization. Written work requires 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 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 assignment shows a lack of effort on the part of the student, and a lack of engagement with the assignment. Written work lacks analysis, evidence, and organization; extensive substantive and stylistic revisions are needed.

F (<59) – Inadequate work; the assignment has not been completed. Work, when submitted, shows a significant lack of effort on the part of the student, 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.

Submission of Assignments:

1. All papers should be typed (11 or 12 point font), with one-inch margins for comments. Papers should be double-spaced, stapled, paginated, and include your name.
2. Please keep a back-up copy (electronic or paper) of every assignment that you hand in.
3. Hand in assignments 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 notifies me in advance. Your grade will be lowered a fraction for every day your work is late (ex. B to B- for one day late).
4. Do not summarize the plot of a work or rephrase your class notes in your assignments. The assignments require external research. They require knowledge of the course texts, clear, careful thinking, and writing.
5. Please use the Editing Guidelines and Stylesheet attached to this syllabus. They will help you hone your critical thinking and writing skills, and strengthen your essays. Please keep in mind that in addition to yours truly, there are resources at the University to help with your writing, including the Writing Center in Colson Hall.

### 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 seven absences (excused and unexcused), you will automatically fail the course. It is your responsibility to attend, and participate in class discussion.
2. It is your responsibility to keep up with the course readings and assignments, and to submit your work on time.
3. It is your responsibility to check your course email (via MIX) on a regular basis.
4. It is your responsibility to contact me regarding your absences. If you disappear—if you miss class for three or four sessions in a row, or more—it is not my responsibility to find you.
5. If you send me an e-mail, I will respond within 24 or 48 hours. If I have not responded in that time, I have not received your posting. Please e-mail me again.
6. 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.
7. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class.
8. 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.

**Inclusivity Statement.** “The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. 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 Accessibility Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

## 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.”