

Professor Francus  
English 386: *British Women Writers*  
Woodburn G-10  
Spring 2011  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:15  
Office: 227 Colson Hall  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 – 4:00 and by appointment.  
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January 11	Introduction
January 13	Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i>
January 18	Woolf, <i>A Room of One's Own</i>
January 20	Kempe, selections
January 25	Elizabeth I, selections
January 27	Astell, <i>A Serious Proposal to the Ladies</i>
February 1	Behn, <i>The Rover</i>
February 3	Burney, <i>Evelina</i>
February 8	Burney, <i>Evelina</i>
	<b>Passage Analysis Due</b>
February 10	Burney, <i>Evelina</i>
February 15	Burney, <i>Evelina</i>
February 17	Wollstonecraft, selections, <i>The Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>
February 22	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
February 24	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
March 1	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
March 3	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
	<b>Contemporary Review Analysis Due</b>
March 8	Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i>
March 10	Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i>
March 15	Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i>
March 17	Class Cancelled
March 22-24	Spring Break
March 29	Bronte, <i>Jane Eyre</i>

### **Research Proposal Due**

March 31 19<sup>th</sup>-Century British Women Poets (handout)

April 5 Gaskell, *North and South*

April 7 Gaskell, *North and South*

April 12 Gaskell, *North and South*

April 14 Gaskell, *North and South*

### **Scholarship Analysis Due**

April 19 Smith, *White Teeth*

April 21 Smith, *White Teeth*

April 26 Smith, *White Teeth*

April 28 Conclusion

### **Research Essay Due**

Course Description: The title of this course includes three categories that are challenging to assess individually, and daunting together: “British,” “women,” and “writers.” Nevertheless, the project of English 386 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 386 fulfills 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.

### Expected 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 Requirements:

- Passage Analysis Due (2 pages) – You will be given a choice of passages from Kempe, Elizabeth, Astell, and Behn. You will choose one passage, and write a brief analysis in which you determine whether a feminist, Marxist, or psychoanalytic interpretation is the most illuminating, and state your reasoning.
- Contemporary Review Analysis Due (2 pages) - You will be given a selection of contemporary reviews of Burney, Wollstonecraft, and Austen. You will be asked to choose one, and write a brief essay in which you analyze the review in light of what the review reveals about the contemporary audience of Burney, Wollstonecraft, or Austen.
- Scholarship Analysis Due (3 pages) – You will be given a selection of academic articles on Bronte and Gaskell. Choose one and write a brief analysis of the article, focusing on the author’s thesis, argument, evidence, and style.
- Research 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 Essay (8-10 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.

### Grading:

- Passage Analysis 15%
- Contemporary Review Analysis 15%
- Scholarship Analysis 20%
- Research Proposal 15%
- Research Essay 35%

Class participation will be taken into consideration for students with borderline grades.

### Submission of Assignments:

1. Your papers and take home final should be typed (11 or 12 point font), with one-inch margins for comments. Papers should be double-spaced, stapled, and paginated.

2. Please keep a photocopy or a back-up disk 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).

#### 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.

#### Professional Responsibility:

1. Students who attend classes regularly tend to earn higher grades and have higher passing rates. 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 six absences (excused and unexcused), an absence rate of 20%, you will not be able to earn more than a “B” for this course. If you accumulate nine absences (excused and unexcused), an absence rate of 33%, you will not be able to earn more than a “C”.
2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Please check your University e-mail daily.

Professional Responsibility (cont.):

5. 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.

6. Please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices during class.

7. Please note that in addition to yours truly, there are resources available at the University to help you with your writing skills. The Writing Center—a free tutoring service for WVU students—is located in G02 Colson Hall. Hours: Monday-Thursday 10:00 am -5:00 pm; Friday 10:00 am -3:00 pm. Call 293-5788 for Evansdale and evening hours. The Center's website is [http://english.wvu.edu/centers\\_and\\_projects/wcenter/writing\\_center\\_home](http://english.wvu.edu/centers_and_projects/wcenter/writing_center_home).

Social Justice Policy:

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran 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 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.

- c - 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.

The following definitions of academic dishonesty are taken from the West Virginia University Student Handbook, the Code of Student’s Rights and Responsibilities, Article III, Section B, available online at <http://www.arc.wvu.edu/rightsa.html>:

Acts of dishonesty, including but not limited to the following:

a. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined in terms of proscribed acts. Students are expected to understand that such practices constitute academic dishonesty regardless of motive. Those who deny deceitful intent, claim not to have known that the act constituted plagiarism, or maintain that what they did was inadvertent are nevertheless subject to penalties when plagiarism has been confirmed. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Submitting as one's own work the product of someone else's research, writing, artistic conception, invention, or design; that is, submitting as one's own work any report, notebook, speech, outline, theme, thesis, dissertation, commercially prepared paper, musical piece or other written, visual, oral or electronic/computerized material that has been copied in whole or in part from the work of others, whether such source is published or unpublished;

ii. Incorporating in one's submission, without appropriate acknowledgment and attribution, portions of the works of others; that is, failing to use the conventional marks and symbols to acknowledge the use of verbatim and near-verbatim passages of someone else's work or failing to name the source of words, pictures, graphs, etc., other than one's own, that are incorporated into any work submitted as one's own.

b. Cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and projects including, but not limited to:

i. Obtaining help from another student during examinations;

ii. Knowingly giving help to another student during examinations, taking an examination or doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his/her own;

iii. The unauthorized use of notes, books, or other sources of information during examinations;

iv. Obtaining without authorization an examination or any part thereof.

c. Forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud:

i. Forging or altering, or causing to be altered, the record of any grade in a grade book or other educational record;

ii. Use of university documents or instruments of identification with intent to defraud;

iii. Presenting false data or intentionally misrepresenting one's records for admission, registration, or withdrawal from the university or from a university course;

- iv. Knowingly presenting false data or intentionally misrepresenting one's records for personal gain;
- v. Knowingly furnishing the results of research projects or experiments for the inclusion in another's work without proper citation;
- vi. Knowingly furnishing false statements in any university academic proceeding.

Cases of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of "F" for the course and appropriate academic discipline. If you have any questions about academic dishonesty, and how to avoid it, please contact me.