

Carleton University
Winter 2015
Department of English

ENGL 4550A: Studies in Victorian Literature 1: Jailbirds: Women, Crime, and the Prison

Fridays, 8:35 am – 11:25 am

Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

Instructor:	Jan Schroeder
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Office:	1924 DT
Office Hours:	Mondays, 1:30 pm – 3 pm

COURSE BASICS

Course Description

This course explores the cultural production of female criminality and practices of imprisonment in the Victorian period. As we will discover, literary and popular writing helped shape understandings of crime, violence, and criminal identity, giving social meaning to crime and incarceration statistics and policy debates on prison reform and anti-crime legislation. Questions arising from the reading material might include but are not limited to the following: How did Victorian literary texts construct the female “outlaw” and how did they participate in the normalization of emergent, “progressive” technologies of incarceration and rehabilitation? How do neo-gothic and recent historical novels, such as *Fingersmith* and *Alias Grace*, and contemporary confinement narratives such as *Orange is the New Black*, rewrite the female criminal and/or prisoner as, variously, victim, vixen, and feminist heroine in the tradition of Wollstonecraft? How and why are prisons shaped as an alternative domestic space, both in nineteenth-century and in contemporary confinement plots? How is “madness” dramatized in these texts as both a reason for and a response to crime? How do literary texts participate in the construction of criminals and convicts as human, and prison systems as corrupt and morally deficient?

If there is time and interest, we will tour the Ottawa Jail Hostel in downtown Ottawa, a Victorian-era prison (now a youth hostel) that first opened in 1862.

Course objectives:

- To explore in depth a set of issues within Victorian literature and culture;
- To develop an understanding of the social and cultural debates that structured Victorian everyday life, and how these debates informed the literature of the period;
- To read a range of Victorian literary genres
- To develop skills for analysing and writing about Victorian literature;
- To improve your skills and confidence in oral discussion and presentation;
- To improve your research and essay writing skills.

Text List

Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (Broadview)

Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Broadview)

Collins, *The Moonstone* (Broadview)

Waters, *Fingersmith* (Riverhead)

Atwood, *Alias Grace* (McClelland and Stewart)

Kerman, *Orange is the New Black* (Random House)

Other required course readings are posted on Carleton Library's ARES system.

Required texts are available at Haven Books, 43 Seneca (at Sunnyside). Please ensure that you bring the ARES texts to class, either on your laptop or other electronic device, or in hard copy.

Assignments

Weekly written 1-2 page commentaries & discussion groups (30%)

Oral presentation (15%)

Research paper proposal (5%)

10-page research essay (40%)

Participation and attendance (10%)

All assignments are mandatory. You cannot complete the course without fulfilling all of the assignments.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly written commentaries (30%)

The purpose of this assignment is to provide a space for you to formulate your thoughts and questions about the reading material before coming to class, to stimulate discussion in class, and to give you frequent practice with analyzing texts.

You are responsible for bringing a written response on the assigned reading to each class. These will be shared in small groups in the seminar. Some weeks I may assign discussion questions ahead of time around which you can orient your commentary; other weeks I will ask you to write your response on a topic or question that you devise. These are not formal essays but they should be written in complete sentences and paragraphs, not point form notes. They should engage specifically with the text and demonstrate your familiarity with it. They may also include questions for discussion that you can raise with your small group. If you have time during the week to do any secondary reading on the text, you can incorporate your findings into your commentary.

I will collect the commentaries at the end of every class. I will grade these in two batches, at the middle of term and at the end of the term. Both batches of essays will be worth 15% of your final grade.

I will not accept hand-written response papers. I will not accept papers submitted electronically before or after class, unless you have a legitimate reason for missing class.

In-class group discussion

The seminar will be divided into smaller discussion groups that will meet in class to discuss the commentaries you bring to the seminar. Each group should designate a recorder for your discussion, and the recorder should be prepared to take a few minutes to present your group's discussion to the class. Do not let the role of recorder fall to the same person each week but take turns. I will make note of the recorder from week to week to ensure there is equity within your group.

Oral presentation (15%)

Each week there will be one or two presenters who will read a short response paper out loud to the class. On the week you are presenting a paper you do not need to bring a commentary to class but can use your response paper to contribute to your small group discussion that week. These response papers should be no more than about three pages in length, and they should introduce us to **one** secondary critical article on the text.

Your oral presentation may be used as a draft towards your final essay.

Research Paper Proposal (5%)

These will be delivered orally on the last day of the seminar. Each member of the class will come prepared to talk about the essay they are writing. Your proposal should include a preliminary thesis statement or set of goals for the essay, a draft paragraph, an outline or list of questions to be explored, and a list of secondary research sources you have gathered for the final essay and should take no more than a few minutes to present to the class.

Research paper (Value: 40%)

Length: 10 pages

Due date: To be negotiated

This assignment helps you practice your research, analytical, and writing skills. You will devise the topic of your essay. You should consult at least **four secondary research sources** for the assignment and include them in your works cited list. Failure to engage effectively with your research sources will affect the grade on this assignment.

If you need help choosing an essay topic, I am happy to discuss this with you. My advice is to choose a topic that excites and interests you. If you are having difficulty finding a focus or feel stuck, please come and see me well before the essay is due.

Essay Format:

Please prepare and submit your essays as follows:

- No duotangs or covers;
- Pages stapled in upper left corner;
- Double spacing, 12 point Times New Roman font;
- All pages numbered, suppress page numbering on first page;

- No title page; first page contains heading information as per MLA guidelines;
- Use MLA citation style;
- Provide Works Cited section according to MLA guidelines;

Please keep a copy of your paper.

Late assignments will be penalized **one grade per day**. Extensions on essays will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and must be negotiated with me well before the deadline.

Participation

Class attendance is mandatory and I take it seriously. An attendance sheet will be sent around at the beginning of every class. Frequent, unexplained absences will result in a grade of zero on the participation assignment and will also affect your grade on the commentaries and group discussion assignment. Participation is one of the course assignments, and attendance is a component of the participation grade. If you don't attend class you are not participating in the seminar and are therefore not completing one of the course assignments. All assignments are mandatory.

Class participation will be evaluated as follows:

- Did you attend class regularly?
- Have you read the assigned texts?
- Did you arrive with questions and comments about the reading?
- Did you respond to or engage with other students in class discussion?
- Did you participate effectively in your small-group discussions?
- Did other students and/or the professor learn from your contributions?

Using laptop computers and other electronic devices in class

When you use laptops and other electronic devices in class for non-course related activities you become a distraction to the others in the room. Please respect the classroom space and refrain from texting, surfing, playing games, etc. during class. I will speak to you directly if I notice problems.

Contacting me

I am available during my **office hour on Mondays from 1:30-3:00 in 1924 Dunton Tower** to discuss any aspect of the course. If this time conflicts with your schedule, I would be happy to schedule an appointment. You can also send me a message by e-mail and I will do my best to respond promptly. **Please use your Carleton e-mail account when contacting me.** University policy stipulates that we discuss course-related matters using university accounts.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Plagiarism

Carleton University defines plagiarism as “failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks” and “submitting any work written, in whole or in part, by someone else.” Another definition of plagiarism is “presenting, *whether intentional or not*, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This applies to material from books, articles, websites, etc. I am required by the University to report all cases of plagiarism. Do not hesitate to come to me with any questions about how to cite material in your written work. Please consult the following website for more details on instructional offences. <http://www.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity/>

Accommodations

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows.

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the Student Guide.

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details see the student guide.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides service to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the PMC, 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam.

READING SCHEDULE (subject to slight changes)

January 9

Course introduction and orientation

January 16

Grass, Introduction and Chapter 1 from *The Self in the Cell* (ARES)

Trodd, "The Guilty Home" (ARES)
McLennan, "Why Prison Stories Matter" (ARES)

January 23

Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman*

Presenter:

Presenter:

January 30

Carpenter, from "Our Convicts"

Dickens, "A Visit to Newgate" & "Philadelphia and its Solitary Prison"

"A House of Mercy"

Presenter:

Presenter:

February 6

Collins, *The Moonstone*

Presenter:

Presenter:

February 13

The Moonstone and the Road Murders

Presenter:

February 20

Reading week; class suspended

February 27

Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*

Presenter:

Presenter:

March 6

Waters, *Fingersmith*

Presenter:

Presenter:

March 13

Atwood, *Alias Grace*

Presenter:

Presenter:

March 20

Ottawa Jail Hostel tour, 9:30-11:00.

Read before the tour:

Walby and Piché, "The polysemy of punishment memorialization" (ARES)

Miron, from *Prisons, Asylums, and the Public* (ARES)

March 27

Discussion of Jail Tour and Walby & Piché and Miron articles
and

Kerman, *Orange is the New Black*

Presenter:

Presenter:

April 3

Episode 1, Season 1, *Orange is the New Black*

Ciasullo, “Containing ‘Deviant’ Desire” (ARES)

No commentaries required for this class; bring essay proposals instead.