“My heart beat faster and faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me, and I became unconscious.” (Carmilla)

Queering the Victorians

Masculine/feminine; heterosexual/homosexual; normal/deviant; angel/slut. Such binaries are often attributed to the Victorians, who were voracious readers and writers and used the pen to know men and women along a matrix of difference. In this course we will return to the Victorian period to better understand how gender and sexuality were manufactured in terms of binaries to serve social institutions such as science, religion, nation, and home. We will read poetry, novels, prose, and drama of the period “straight,” meaning in accordance with the conventions of genre; but we will also “queer” the text by reading awry, i.e., off center, paying attention to odd exchanges, strange symbols, unauthorized sex acts and behaviors that challenge normative categories of gender and sexuality. As we read we will consider the usefulness of binaries and gender categories, as well as the constraints they cause. More importantly we will study the slippages between and beyond binary lines that make possible new spaces for being and feeling as humans.

Required texts:
Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. Lady Audley’s Secret
Bronte, Emily. Wuthering Heights
Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester students will:

1) Understand the connection between literary texts and their social, historical, and cultural contexts;
2) Understand the political and social malleability of gender as an identity marker in fiction and culture;
3) Increase skillfulness at critical reading, i.e., reading beyond the authorized text;
4) Develop skills in literary analysis, research, and oral and written argument.

Grade Break Down
Class participation (discussion, quizzes, writing prompts): 10%
Group Presentation: 10%
Writing Assignments: 40%
Midterm: 15%
Research paper: 25%

Course Responsibilities

- **Attendance:** I expect everyone to be in every class. I do realize, of course, that things sometimes happen that compete with academic responsibilities, such as accidents, illness, family emergencies. While I do not “excuse” absences, I have made allowances for you to miss three classes, without penalty, to compensate for that unexpected emergency. After three absences, however, your final numerical grade will be lowered two points for each additional absence—a 95 average with six absences becomes 89, a B; an 80 with four absences becomes an 78, a C. In the event you must miss class, you should make arrangements with a classmate to share notes and relevant information with you. In other words, I will not respond to “what did I miss?” emails.

- **Class Participation:** The seminar will be discussion-based, which means that your active participation is essential for your own success as well as for that of the class. Active participation means completing the reading before class and bringing with you to class insights, ideas, questions to help stir class discussion.

- **Group Presentation:** In groups of two or three, you will make a presentation to the class that enhances and/or complicates our understanding of gender and literature in relation to the readings assigned for that day. Your presentation should be informative, but also critical, meaning that your research should include at least one scholarly argument about your topic that you expand upon or
challenge (I will give you titles of scholarly works to consider). Please no reading of long, involved power points and no tedious lectures; the best presentations are those that are organized, coordinated, and engaging (interesting, creative, and correct). More on this to come.

- **Writing Assignments:** You will write three short essays and a creative essay in which you change the gender of a character in one of our readings and track how the changes affect plot and theme.
- **Exams:** One midterm exam in which you demonstrate knowledge of the texts and contexts studied during the semester and skillfulness at making connections between them, both critically and creatively.
- **Research project:** The research project provides you with the opportunity to extend your learning about gender, sexuality, and the Victorians to the contemporary world. You will choose a social problem or event that is topical, i.e., “in the news,” one that interests you, either personally or professionally. Using outside research and readings/concepts from the class, you will produce an argument about your topic using gender as your frame (or lens, both metaphors work!). While you have freedom in your choice of topics, you must maintain a connection to the readings and concepts from the class, using the latter as evidence to bolster your argument.

**Important Information and Miscellany:**

- **Prerequisites:** You must have successfully completed English 1301 and 1302 to be eligible for this class.
- **Keep copies of your work:** It is your responsibility to keep backup copies of all of your work in the case of an error or misplacement on my part.
- **Notice to Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.
- **Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.
- **Dropping a Class**: I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Friday, November 6 is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

- **Grade Appeal Process**: As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

- **Academic Misconduct**: Plagiarism, “the presentation of work of another as one’s own work,” is only one form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism also includes falsification (the intentional alteration of information), fabrication (the intentional invention of information), multiple submission (using the same material for two separate assignments or courses without permission from the instructors), and abuse of academic materials (the intentional destruction of resource materials.) Sometimes students commit unintentional plagiarism (by not citing sources properly, for example) because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Because plagiarism is such a dirty word on college campuses, please see me if you have a question about violations, however minor. Any incident of academic misconduct will result in a zero on the assignment and a referral to Judicial Affairs. *A second offense will result in an F for the course*, and a referral to Judicial Affairs with a recommendation for disciplinary action.

- **The Writing Center**: The writing center is a free service for students at TAMUCC to improve their writing skills. Writing consultants work one-on-one with writers at all stages of the writing process to help them find ideas, organize their thoughts, and formulate a thesis. You can get help with grammar and general mechanical problems too. The Writing Center is located in the Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA) in the Glasscock Building. Both drop ins and scheduled appointments are welcome. [http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home/](http://critical.tamucc.edu/wiki/WC/Home/)
Reading Schedule: (always subject to change. Works with asterisks (*) can be accessed from my blackboard page. Please print out, read, and bring to class).

Wed, Aug 26: Introductions. Terms and Definition

Femininity and Masculinity
Mon, Aug 31: * from “Queens Gardens” (John Ruskin)
* from Women of England (Sarah Ellis)
* “The Victorian Middle-Class Girl” (Deborah Gorham)

Terms due

Wed, Sept 2: * from Chesterfield’s Letters to his Son
* “What is a Gentleman?” (Newman)
* from On Heroes (Thomas Carlyle)
* “Boys into Men” (Tosh)

Mon, Sept 7: Labor Day, no class

Wed, Sept 9: * “Lady of Shalott” (Tennyson), “Porphyria’s Lover” (Browning)

Writing assignment #1: Short analysis

Sexual Science
Mon, Sept 14: Wuthering Heights
Wed, Sept 16: Wuthering Heights
* Readings from Embodied Selves

Mon, Sept 21: Wuthering Heights
Group Presentation

Wed, Sept 23: Wuthering Heights
* from Less Noble Sex (Tuana)

Mon, Sept 28: * “Goblin Market” (Rossetti)
Group Presentation

Writing assignment #2 due: Close Reading

Gender as Performance
Wed, Sept 30: * Diaries of Hannah Cullwick
Group Presentation

Mon, Oct 5: Lady Audley’s Secret
Wed, Oct 7:  
*Lady Audley’s Secret*

* from "Performative Acts…” (Judith Butler)

Mon, Oct 12:  
*Lady Audley’s Secret*

Group Presentation

Wed, Oct 14:  
*Lady Audley’s Secret*

Writing assignment #3 due: Short study

**Queer Desires**

Mon, Oct 19:  
Jekyll and Hyde

Wed, Oct 21:  
Jekyll and Hyde

* From *Between Men* (Sedgwick)

Mon, Oct 26:  
Carmilla

*From *Between Women* (Marcus)

Wed, Oct 28:  
Carmilla

Group Presentation

Creative project: Gender Matters

Mon, Nov 2:  
**Midterm**

Wed, Nov 4:  
*Dorian Gray*

Mon, Nov 9:  
*Dorian Gray*

Group Presentation

Wed, Nov 11:  
*Dorian Gray*

**Queering Empire**

Mon, Nov 16:  
* Travel narratives by Sir Richard Burton, Mary Kingsley

Wed, Nov 18:  
*King Solomon’s Mines*

Mon, Nov 23:  
*King Solomon’s Mines*

Group Presentation

Research draft due

Wed, Nov 25:  
Thanksgiving, no class

Mon, Nov 30:  
*King Solomon’s Mines*

Mon, Dec 7:  
Research presentations
Research portfolio due