English 5344: Studies in Victorian Literature and Culture (British Literature 1830-1900)

The Brontës

Spring 2018
Mondays, 7:00-9:30pm
ECDC 238

In this course, we will undertake a close study of two major Victorian authors, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and a significant minor one, their sister Anne, reading their works in relation to one another and to Victorian culture more broadly. We will develop an intimate understanding of the Brontës’ virtuosic but often willfully obscure literary style, paying particular attention to how their work addressed issues that defined Victorian culture: realism, romance and supernaturalism, gender and sexuality, class and nation, race and empire. The texts we will read in this course—which will include *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Villette*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and the Brontës’ poetry—together represent one of the signal literary achievements of the nineteenth century.

Yet writing of Charlotte in 1916, Virginia Woolf argued, “When we think of her we have to imagine some one who had no lot in our modern world; we have to cast our minds back...to a remote personage upon the wild Yorkshire moors. In that parsonage, and on those moors, unhappy and lonely, in her poverty and her exaltation, she remains for ever.” In response, we will grapple with the myth of female genius that began to take shape around the Brontës even in their own lifetime and that lives on in the modern literary and critical imagination. How do the Brontës address the issues of embodiment, theatricality, spirituality, psychological interiority, labor, and authorship that were central to conceptions of female artistry, and how has their treatment of these categories shaped the ways we think about gender, self-consciousness, and literary style? Drawing on nineteenth-century biographical, literary and historical sources alongside a range of critical approaches, this course will explore the Brontës’ work alongside the many interpretations that have secured the Brontës’ indelible place in literary history.

**Required Texts**


Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Penguin)


Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard
Course Calendar

Note: All assignments and due dates are subject to change with advanced notice at instructor’s discretion.
Readings posted to Blackboard are listed with a (*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading and Assignments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 22</td>
<td>*Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë; *Virginia Woolf, selected critical essays</td>
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<td>Jan. 29</td>
<td>Charlotte Brontë, <em>The Professor</em></td>
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<td>Feb. 5</td>
<td>Emily Brontë, <em>Wuthering Heights</em></td>
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<td>Feb. 12</td>
<td><em>Wuthering Heights</em> and Emily Brontë’s poetry</td>
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<td>Feb. 19</td>
<td>Anne Brontë, <em>Agnes Gray</em></td>
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<td>Feb. 26</td>
<td>Charlotte Brontë, <em>Jane Eyre</em></td>
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<td>*Critical Readings: Victorian Gender</td>
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<td>March 5</td>
<td><em>Jane Eyre</em></td>
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<td>*Critical Readings: Victorian Empire</td>
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<td><strong>Practice Exam Due</strong></td>
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<td>March 19</td>
<td>Anne Brontë, <em>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</em></td>
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<td><strong>Final Research Essay Proposal Due</strong></td>
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<td>March 26</td>
<td><em>The Tenant of Wildfell Hall</em></td>
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<td>April 2</td>
<td>Charlotte Brontë, <em>Shirley</em></td>
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<td>*Critical Readings: Class and Victorian Industrialism</td>
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<td>April 9</td>
<td><em>Shirley</em></td>
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<td>April 16</td>
<td><em>Shirley</em> wrap up; <em>Villette</em> introduction</td>
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<td>April 23</td>
<td>Charlotte Brontë, <em>Villette</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Critical Readings: Victorian Sexuality</td>
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<td>April 30</td>
<td><em>Villette</em></td>
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<td>May 7</td>
<td><strong>Final Research Essay Due at 7:00pm</strong></td>
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**Required Assignments:**

**Weekly Discussion Postings (15%)**
**Weekly Discussion Leader Presentation (15%)**
**Practice Exam (25%)**
**Final Research Essay Proposal (10%)**
**Final Research Essay (35%)**

**Attendance and Participation Adjustment:** Students’ final grade in the course may be increased or lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B or from a C to a C+) based on their attendance and participation in the course.

**Weekly Discussion Postings (15%, 300-400 words):**
Each week, students will write a response (300-400 words) to the week’s readings and post it to our discussion forum by 7:00pm the night before our class meets (i.e. 7:00pm Sunday nights). Most often, these postings will introduce a critical question or problem that arises from the week’s readings and a discussion of at least one specific passage from the text that you can analyze in relation to that question or problem. From time to time, however, I may provide more specific prompts for these postings.
Weekly Discussion Leader Presentation (15%):
Once during the semester, each member of the course will be responsible for guiding our class discussion by preparing a brief presentation about the week’s material and then leading a discussion of that material.

Practice Exam (25%, 4-5 pages):
This exam will provide an opportunity to practice and receive feedback for the Written Comprehensive Examinations. This exam will be written on a take-home basis in response to prompts that I will provide about the course material; currently, this exam is set for the weekend of March 2-5; this date may be subject to change before the first day of the semester.

Final Research Essay Proposal (10%, 3 pages):
In this proposal, students will present an overview of the critical question or problem they will pursue in their final essay and the research they will undertake as they work through this question or problem.

Final Research Essay (35%, 8-10 pages):
In this final essay, students will develop an original argument about the texts we have read in this course this semester and their scholarly research on the Brontës’ work. These essays will be written in the style of a conference paper, meaning they will summarize existing scholarship and advance an argument about a new approach to a chosen text or texts by the Brontës with the aim of persuading readers of the importance of this new approach.

Attendance and Participation
Attendance and participation are mandatory for this course. Because this is a seminar, your attendance and participation is crucial not only to your learning but to the learning of everyone in this course. Students’ final grade in the course may be increased or lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B or from a C to a C+) based on their attendance and participation in the course; I will only adjust final grades on the basis of outstanding participation or failure to regularly attend and participate in the course. Students who miss more than 7 course sessions will receive an F for the semester.

Grade Scale

A: 90-100%
B: 80-89%
C: 70-79%
D: 60-69%
F: 0-59%

Course Policies

Writing Assignments

Submission: All writing assignments must be submitted electronically to Blackboard. I will use this submission to mark whether your assignment was turned in on time and to completion. Assignments submitted via email or in hard copy without a copy submitted via Blackboard will not be accepted.
Late Work: All written assignments must be turned in at the start of class. Late assignments will receive a 1/3 of a letter grade penalty for every day that passes after the original deadline (for example, a B+ essay would become a B). Assignments will not be accepted one week (7 days) after the original deadline.

Format: For written assignments, please use a standard 12-point font (such as Times New Roman), 1-inch margins, double spacing, and page numbers. You should include a single-spaced heading with your name, your section number, the assignment number (e.g. Essay 1), and the date at the top of the page. Please staple all hard copies; double-sided printing is fine.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in failure of the assignment and, in some cases, the course, and will be turned over to the appropriate disciplinary bodies.

Plagiarism in any assignment is unacceptable. Here are some examples of plagiarism: plagiarism can include copying writing that is not your own verbatim, copying phrases without citing the original text they were taken from, or paraphrasing a text without citing it. Other forms of unacceptable plagiarism can include presenting others’ ideas as your own without credit, submitting a paper you wrote for another class for this one, or submitting work written by someone else as your own work.

To avoid plagiarism, you should cite any sources you consult when completing assignments for this course, including outside websites, articles, or books. Please use MLA citations for all written work. If you have any questions about proper documentation and citation of sources, I recommend consulting the Purdue Online Writing Lab (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/). You can also contact me at any time with questions about citation, acknowledgment, or academic integrity.

Electronic Device Policy:

Cell phones use is not allowed while class is in session. Please silence ringers (or put them on vibrate if you have concerns about others being able to reach you while you are in class) and put phones away at the start of each class. I understand that from time to time, emergencies or other extenuating circumstances may arise in which it is imperative that you be able to use your phone or receive a call while class is in session; in those rare cases, please leave the room quickly and quietly, so as to minimize the disturbance to your fellow students.

Laptops and tablets are generally not allowed in this class, unless I specifically announce otherwise. If you would prefer to use a laptop for notetaking because of extenuating circumstances, please arrange to speak with me about it ahead of time.
University Policies

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.

Classroom Behavior: Statement of Civility

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

Disability Services

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, Room #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 at (361) 825-5816.

Religious Observances:

If a class meeting conflicts with a religious holiday, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we can make alternate arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence, but, in accordance with the TAMUCC policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.
Grade Appeals Process

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *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 Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, *Student Grade Appeals*. These documents are accessible online at:

http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi, this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.