**ENGLISH 225**

**NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN’S LITERATURE:**

**NOT SO SECRET – VICTORIAN WOMEN WRITE THE EROTIC**

**Professor Ryan Fong**

**Winter 2015**



Time: MWF 2:40-3:55

Location: ULC Room 311

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Office: Humphrey House 209

Office Hours:

M 10:00-11:00 (in office)

W 4:00-5:00 (in Biggby)

and by appointment

**Required Texts:**

* Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights
* Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*
* Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Lady Audley’s Secret
* Harriet Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
* Christina Rossetti, Goblin Market and Other Poems
* George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss
* Olive Schreiner, The Story of an African Farm
* Readings on course blog: 19centurywomensliterature.wordpress.com

**Course Description:**

One of the most powerful and pervading notions that our culture has about the Victorian era is that it is period utterly devoid of (or at least hostile to) sexuality and the erotic.  Indeed, we have created powerful myths about this construction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with the most famous being that the mere sight of a woman’s ankle could send a person into apoplectic fits.   In this course, we will not only be following Michel Foucault’s now-famous rebuttal of these presumptions by looking at a range of texts that represent women’s sexuality in often subversive and even graphic ways, but we will also be looking at how women writers negotiated and contested the norms around gender and sexuality that were circulating around them.  Furthermore, we will be spending significant time exploring how these representations of female eroticism were shaped by and helped to shape the structures of social class, race, and imperialism in the Victorian period.  In so doing, we will read works of fiction and poetry by a range of female authors who were writing in the mid- to late-nineteenth century in Great Britain, the United States, and South Africa.  Throughout, we will interrogate how these works support or disrupt our received understandings about Victorian sexuality.

**Course Goals:**

This course is a 200-level English course and, as such, is designed to help you deepen and expand the knowledge you gained about the scholarly study of literature in your Reading the World course. Furthermore, it aims to improve the skills central to the English major and to a liberal education. These skills include:

* *Critical reading*: the ability to make connections between literary form and content, and between literary text and historical context.
* *Critical discussion*: the ability to take part in a thoughtful, provocative discussion of a text through pertinent questions/comments and thus help enlarge our collective understanding of a text.
* *Critical writing and research*: the ability to construct an argument with a thesis, to build that argument by synthesizing textual and contextual evidence with scholarly sources, to locate credible sources, and to write clearly and persuasively.

**Course Responsibilities and Final Grading:**

Your final grade in the course will be determined as follows:

* Comparative Close Reading Paper 25%
* Critical Lens Paper 25%
* Historical Lens Paper 25%
* Pecha Kucha Presentation & Facilitation 10%
* Participation 15%

(Includes: daily reading responses, six of which will be collected at random)

\*\*All paper prompts will come with formatting instructions and grading rubrics.

\*\*You can expect all assignments to be graded and handed back within two weeks.

**Due Dates and Reading Schedule**

**Week 1:**

**Monday, January 5**

Introduction to the course

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Part I

Audre Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” (Reader)

**Wednesday, January 7**

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Parts II and II

**Friday, January 9**

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality,* Parts IV and V

**Week 2:**

**Monday, January 12**

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 37-125 (Chs. 1-10)

**Wednesday, January 14**

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 126-224 (Chs. 11-21)

**Friday, January 16**

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 224-312 (Chs. 22-34)

**Week 3:**

**Monday, January 19**

NO CLASS—MLK DAY

**Wednesday, January 21**

Charlotte Brontë, *Villette,* 71-193 (Chs. 1-13)

**Friday, January 23**

Charlotte Brontë, *Villette,* 193-323 (Chs. 14-22)

**Week 4:**

**Monday, January 26**

Charlotte Brontë, *Villette,* 323-469 (Chs. 23-34)

**Wednesday, January 28**

Charlotte Brontë, *Villette,* 469-568 (Chs. 35-42)

**Friday, January 30**

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 1-83 (Preface – Ch. 17)

**Week 5:**

**Monday, February 2**

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 83-167 (Chs. 18 – Appendix)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “Runaway Slave at Pilgrim’s Point” (Handout)

**Wednesday, February 4**

Christina Rossetti, *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1-45)

**Friday, February 6**

**NO CLASS—MID-QUARTER BREAK**

**Week 6:**

**Monday, February 9**

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret,* 43-180 (Volume I)

**Wednesday, February 11**

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*, 181-320 (Volume II)

**Friday, February 13**

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret,* 321-446 (Volume III)

**Week 7:**

**Monday, February 16**

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 51-168 (Book First)

**Wednesday, February 18**

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss,* 169-291 (Books Second and Third)

**Friday, February 20**

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss,* 292-372 (Books Fourth and Fifth)

**Week 8:**

**Monday, February 23**

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss,* 373-518 (Books Sixth and Seventh)

**Wednesday, February 25**

Selected Poems by Michael Field and Amy Levy (Reader)

**Friday, February 27**

Selected Poems by Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu (Reader)

**Week 9:**

**Monday, March 2**

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 1-93 (Part I, Chs. 1-7)

**Wednesday, March 4**

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm,* 94-136 (Part I, Chs. 8-13)

**Friday, March 6**

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 137-216 (Part II, Chs. 1-7)

**Week 10:**

**Monday, March 9**

Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm*, 217-283 (Part II, Chs. 8-14)

**Wednesday, March 11**

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” and Vernon Lee, “Oke of Okehurst”

**Friday, March 13**

Final Synthesis

**HISTORICAL LENS PAPER DUE**

**IN MY OFFICE ON**

**TUESDAY, MARCH 17 BY 5:00 PM**