

Comparative Literature 476 **REVISED**

Narrative and the Law

Fall 2013 M-W 10- 11:50

MRF 229

Professor Schor

Office hours: Wednesday 12:30 – 2:00 (exceptions to be noted in advance) and by appointment

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## CONTRACT NARRATIVES AND ROBBER BRIDES

### **Course description:**

This class begins with a simple supposition: that there is a powerful relationship between not only the ideas and content of law, but the formal structure of law, and the realist novel. We will enter this arena through any number of areas (property, inheritance, criminality or confession, evidence) but we will take a particular interest in contracts: in the “promises” or “covenants” made between people, and what follows from the yoking of two interests that a contract always represents. The primary form of contract in our culture is of course one that we hesitate to discuss as such, the marriage act, but as every court in the land (and most legislatures and many voters) are forced to ask themselves what is a marriage?, why shouldn’t we do so we as well?

So we will make our way with extravagant good humour through the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel and a wide array of narratological approaches (narratology: the science of narrative; utterly bogus but completely fascinating, and the best way ever [as in any science] of finding the amazing exceptions!) and some attention to historical detail and more attention to the formal and narrative elements of law itself. But mostly, we will allow ourselves to be curious – and that is where the class shall begin....

### **A few notes about requirements:**

You will do four things in this class. First, you will read like crazy – and I mean it. Not reading is horrible and it makes everyone around you miserable. Especially moi! Please do the reading!!!

Second, you will come to class and discuss with energy and enthusiasm and kindness. Please. If you don’t speak I will ask you to contribute and you’ll gradually get used to it and then chatter like a magpie, but please come to every class with something to say! And of course, come every week? More than two absences will lower your grade. (That’s one law.)

Third, you will write. You will write a short paper (2-3 pages) on most of the texts we study (six papers in all) focusing on a tiny but significant element in the texts, and you will take a brief written final exam and participate in a group oral final examination. Your papers should be tightly argued and textually based – and boy, will you become a better writer by the end of class! All papers are due in class on the date given in the syllabus; no late papers will be accepted.

Finally, you must love the books. Not all of them and not all of the time. But if you are not prepared to love the literature and if you are not fascinated by what law does to us and what we want law to do for us, you should take a class you'll like better! Law, love, literature – this is the contract of desire, and if you have never known literature to make you out of your head happy, this is probably not the class for you! I expect ecstasy, and my promise is to come to class thrilled every week... That, dear readers, is my contract.

Further notes on the contract:

Class participation will count for 10% of your grade  
Your short papers will count for 60% of your grade  
Your seminar presentation will count for 10%  
Your final will count for 20% of your grade.

**What the university wants you to know:**

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY is essential to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. SCampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>.**

**Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.**

In short, please do your own work? I would rather read haphazard and excited work by you than the most perfect piece of someone else's work – and I trust you to come to me in an emergency before you turn to "PapersRUs" on line. (Remember, if you can find it on line, I can find it on line!) Two more pieces of information for you, both courtesy of the administration: translated briefly, they say **If you need help, ask for it** and **Be very nice to each other, please**. But what follows is the official language:

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES** who request academic accommodations based on a disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.--5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**STUDENT BEHAVIOR** that persistently or grossly interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior and may be subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior inhibits other students' ability to learn and an instructor's ability to teach. A student responsible for disruptive behavior may be required to leave class pending discussion and resolution of the problem and may be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs for disciplinary action. These strictures may extend to behaviors outside the classroom that are related to the course.

**Reading Schedule:**

August 26: Kafka, "Before the Law," Dickens, David Copperfield, "Bluebeard"

August 28: Dickens, Great Expectations

September 2: NO CLASS (Labour Day)

September 4: Dickens, Great Expectations (Part2)

September 9: Great Expectations (finish)  
Peter Brooks, Reading for the Plot  
Ian Watt, Rise of the Novel

**PAPER A DUE**

September 11: Pride and Prejudice (Books 1 & 2)

September 16: Pride and Prejudice (Book 3)  
Tony Tanner, Adultery and the Novel  
Jesse Molesworth, Chance and the Eighteenth Century Novel

September 18: Pride and Prejudice; Barthes, S/Z;

September 23: S/Z

September 25: Balzac, Pere Goriot

**PAPER B DUE**

September 30: Pere Goriot

Walter Benn Michaels “The Masochist’s Contract”  
Clare Dalton, “Deconstruction and Contract”.

October 2: Jane Eyre

October 7: Jane Eyre

Walter Benn Michaels, “The Contracted Heart”  
Barbara Bodichon, “A Brief Summary of the Laws of the Laws  
Concerning Women”

October 9: Jane Eyre

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One’s Own (excerpts)  
Adrienne Rich, “Confessions of a Motherless Child”

October 14: Jane Eyre; begin The Scarlet Letter

#### **PAPER C DUE**

October 16: Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter

Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints  
Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel

October 21: Dickens, Bleak House Chapters 1-4

October 23: Bleak House

Blackstone’s Commentaries;  
John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

October 28: Bleak House

Nancy Miller, “Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in  
Women’s Fictions”

October 30: Bleak House

D.A. Miller, The Novel and the Police

November 4: Bleak House

Sandra MacPherson, Harm’s Way: Tragic Responsibility and the  
Novel Form

November 6: Bleak House

#### **PAPER D DUE**

November 11: Tolstoy, “The Kreutzer Sonata”  
MacPherson, continued.

November 13: Tolstoy, Anna Karenina  
Peter Brooks, Troubling Confessions

November 18: Anna K

November 20: Anna K

November 25: Anna K

**PAPER E DUE**

November 27: NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

December 5: Anna K

December 7: Final Examination: Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 8-10 a.m.