

English 491: Senior Seminar in Literary Studies

Women and the Gothic: Gender and Genre

Professor Meg Russett

Taper 105, Thursdays 2-4:20

Office hours M, W 10-11, 2-3; Thursday mornings by appointment

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Texts (to purchase online):

Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey* (Penguin, ISBN 978-0141439792)

Collins, Wilkie. *The Woman in White* (Penguin, ISBN 978-0141439617)

Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca* (Avon, ISBN B01M23QO5L)

Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan. *Carmilla* (Syracuse UP, 978-0815633112)

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved* (Vintage, ISBN 978-1400033416)

Oates, Joyce Carol. *First Love* (Ecco, 978-0880014571)

Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford, ISBN 01995371419)

Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Norton, ISBN B00BPO3JC)

Vine, Barbara (Ruth Rendell). *The House of Stairs* (ISBN 978-0140114461)

Walpole, Horace. *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford, ISBN 987-0198704447)

Requirements:

- 1) Your presence, in body and spirit—no walking dead, please! “Presence” means being prepared by completing all readings (primary and secondary) before the corresponding class meeting. Informed participation (not just talking off the top of your head) can substantially improve your grade for the course, but more than **one** unexcused absence over the course of the term will lower it. 10%
- 2) One-page blog-style responses on the weekly readings, submitted to the instructor by email no later than Wednesday evening before the corresponding class meeting. Due every single week, beginning with the second week of class. 15%
- 3) One short (c. 5-page) descriptive and evaluative paper on a critical work assigned for the class (see schedule below for examples). Circulated to all class members by Wednesday evening before the corresponding class meeting. A template for this assignment will be circulated by the instructor. 15%
- 4) One short (c. 10-minute) oral report on a historical/contextual/theoretical topic suggested by the instructor (see provisional list below the schedule of readings). 10%

- 5) A final “seminar paper” in lieu of a final exam. Seminar papers address a substantial interpretive topic with the aid of secondary research. They should be approximately 15 pages long; cite appropriate critical, theoretical, or historical material; and observe professional standards of documentation. Due at the end of the semester. 50%

Schedule of readings and assignments:

- August 30: Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto (1764); Emma Clerj, from The Rise of Supernatural Fiction
- September 6: Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “The Character in the Veil”
- September 13: Jane Austen, Northanger Abbey; Eugenia Delamotte, from Perils of the Night
- September 20: Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre; Diane Hoeveler, from Gothic Feminism
- September 27: Jane Eyre, continue; secondary reading TBA
- October 4: Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White; Ann Cvetkovich, “Ghostlier Determinations: The Economy of Sensation and The Woman in White”
- October 11: The Woman in White, continue; D. A. Miller, “Cage Aux Folles: Gender and Sensation in Wilkie Collins’s The Woman in White”
- October 18: Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “Christabel”; Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”; Sheridan Le Fanu, “Carmilla”; Karen Swann, “‘Christabel’: The Wandering Mother and the Enigma of Form”; Patrick O’Malley, “The Blood of the Saints: Vampirism from Polidori to Stoker”
- October 25: Jean Rhys, Wide Sargasso Sea; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism”
- November 1: Daphne Du Maurier, Rebecca; Michelle Masse, In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic
- November 8: Toni Morrison, Beloved; secondary reading TBA
- November 15: Ruth Rendell/Barbara Vine, The House of Stairs; Margaret Russett, “Three Faces of Ruth Rendell: Feminism, Popular Fiction, and the Question of Genre”

November 29: Joyce Carol Oates, First Love: A Gothic Tale; no secondary reading

Seminar papers due December 6

Suggested oral report topics:

Sigmund Freud et al, "The Uncanny"

Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror

Imperial Gothic (empire, race, monstrosity)

Vampire lore

Zombie lore

Marriage and divorce law, 18th-19th century

Women and property law, 18th-19th century

Concepts and treatments of insanity, 19th century

Hysteria before psychoanalysis

Hysteria and/after psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis and paranoia

Paranoia and homosociality

Gothic political theory: English common law, 18th c.

Gothicism and the medieval revival in 18th c. literary criticism (Hurd, Warburton, Young)

Gothic and neo-gothic architecture

20th/21st century rewritings of Jane Eyre

Gothic spectacle: 19th century drama and visual technology