

Fall 8-15-2003

# ENG 3903-001: Women, Language, Literature: Women Under Cover/ Under Cover Women

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**English 3903 "Women, Language, Literature"**  
**Title: Women Under Cover/Under Cover Women**

**Autumn 2003/Coleman Hall 3139**

**Dr. Dagni Bredesen**

**Office Hours: M/W 2.00-3.00pm or by appointment**

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**Course Description:**

From bridal veils to mourning veils, from Sunday bonnets to headscarves, from the legal doctrine of coverture to the practice of Purdah, one can trace a cross-cultural and trans-historical mandate to get women under cover. In this course we will examine this cultural obsession in a variety of texts—literary and legal, verbal and visual—as we ponder the material and metaphorical significance of the figure of the veiled woman. The class will end with a consideration of women who manipulate social expectations and deliberately go “undercover.”

**Expectations:** Lively, student-driven discussions resulting from careful reading and consideration of assigned texts.

**Assignments:**

**2 papers (5pp each)**

**20% each**

**Due Dates:**

**October 15<sup>th</sup>**

**November 5<sup>th</sup>**

**15” Presentations (1 person) or**

**30” Discussion Partnerships (2 person)**

**20%**

**\*Must include handout with copies for class.**

**Research project/paper**

**20%**

**Due Date: December 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Exam**

**Thursday, December 17<sup>th</sup>**

**20%**

**Attendance Policy:** You may miss four classes no questions asked, no excuses needed. After four classes you will drop a grade level, for example, if you were earning a B, you would be dropped to C. If you miss six or more classes you will receive a failing grade for this class.

**Provisional Schedule:**

**Week One**

M/25 Introduction: Assignment pick up packet begin reading *Veil* (packet)

W/27 *Veil* (course packet)

F/29 *Veil*

**Week Two**

M/1 Labor Day/ No Class

W/3 **Hijab, Chaddor, and Burka**

F/5 **Purdah, Harems and Seraglios**

**HMWK** *Dreams of Trespass* (electronic reserves)

**Week Three**

M/8 *Dreams of Trespass* (electronic reserves)

W/10 Dr. Anne Zahlan, Guest speaker

F/12 "Farewell, Betrothal, Wedding" by Huda Shaarawi; "Eyes" by Nawal al-Saadwi  
"Veiling and Unveiling" by Nazira Zain al-Din (packet)

**Week Four**

M/15 **Head Coverings in Judaism**

W/17 *On the Veiling of Virgins* (packet)

F/19 **The Virgin's Veil—The Bride**  
**Taking the Veil—The Nun**

**Week Five**

M/22 The Covering of Marriage (excerpts from *Gender and Law*—packet) \*start reading Mary Poovey essay.

W/24 Coverture / "A Brief Summary of the Most Important Laws..." (packet)

F/26 Coverture Contested

**Week Six**

M/2 Poovey, "Covered but Not Bound: Caroline Norton and the 1857

**Matrimonial Causes Act" from *Uneven Developments* (1988) (in packet)**

W/Oct 1 "One of our Legal Fictions" from *Household Words* (handouts)

F/3 The Covering of Widowhood/**Widow's Weeds**

**Week Seven**

M/13 Introduction to *Barchester Towers* pp1-47

W/15 Paper One Due; *Barchester Towers* pp 48-154  
F/17 **Reading Break/No Class**

Week Eight

M/20 *Barchester Towers* Volume II  
W/22 *Barchester Towers* Volume III  
F/24 Bredezen, "An Emblem of All the Rest"

Week Nine

M/27 Intro to *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* \* **Research Proposal Due**  
W/29 Under the Cover of Widowhood/ *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*  
F/31 **Eastern Illinois University Literature Conference on John Donne**

Week Ten

M/Nov 3 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*  
W/5 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* **Paper #2 Due**  
F/7 TBA

Week Eleven

M/10 **The Gothic Veil** Sedgwick  
W/12 **Salome and the Dance of the Seven Veils: Showalter "The Veiled Woman" from *Sexual Anarchy* (1990)**  
F/13 **The Veil of Gender: The Transvestite**

Week Twelve: Undercover Woman

M/17 **Mata Hari**  
W/19 **Female Spies**  
F/21 The Veil of Race: W.E.B. DuBois

Thanksgiving Recess: November 24<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>

Week Fourteen:

M/1 *Blanche on the Lam*  
W/3 *Blanche on the Lam*  
F/5 Final Research Paper Due/ Presentations

Week Fifteen:

M/8 Presentations  
W/10 Presentations  
F/12 Last Class