ENG 3601-001: Inventing the Brontes

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Inventing the Brontës

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Office Hours: T, R, 9:30-10:45; 12:30-1:45
and by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will study the works of the Brontë sisters (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne), perhaps the most famous sibling writers in literary history. While we will look closely at their writings as literary and historical documents (around a central question of what does it mean to be a women writer in England in 1847?), we will also examine the Brontë’s rich legacy, through the so-called Brontë Myth—or how their work, their biography, and their legend has moved beyond the novel and the Yorkshire moors and has become an industry unto itself (in film, stage, television, music, and in a variety of other pop culture media).

The Brontë sisters produced extensive juvenilia, poetry, and seven novels. We’ll be using four of the novels as our focus, supplemented by biographical excerpts, critical responses (old and new) to their work, and film. You’ll be completing three projects, each of which will ask you to probe and work with the Brontë Myth from different and widening perspectives—sharpening your understanding of this phenomenon and increasing your ability to engage in meaningful cultural studies.

"‘Do you like him much?’
‘I told you I liked him a little. Where is the use of caring for him so very much: he is full of faults.’
‘Is he?’
‘All boys are.’ ”
— Villette

This is not a lecture course. While you will write frequent short response papers—designed to provoke class discussion—you should be prepared to promote and engage in our class conversation.

I will hand out a detailed reading schedule on our second class meeting.
Conferences ~
With the importance of the final paper for this course, you should meet with me early and often to discuss your project as well as any other reading or writing concerns you have.

Attendance Policy ~
- I abide by the University’s definition of an excused absences, and I generally allow two unexcused absences—no questions asked. On the third absence—and for every absence thereafter—I will deduct 5% from your final grade.
- Five or more absences equate to an automatic “F” for the course.
- For any day that you are not in class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered, new assignments given, changes in the syllabus, or any homework due for the next meeting. Unless the absence is excused, any homework due on a day you were absent may not be turned in late or made up.
- It is also your responsibility to provide the appropriate documentation to verify an excused absence, preferably within a week of the absence.
- Please do not email me to tell me you were not in class or why. This is best done in person either after the next class or during my office hours.

“Reader, I married him.”
— Jane Eyre

Academic Honesty ~
Students are of course responsible for knowing Eastern Illinois University’s regulations and policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism, even if unknowing or accidental, can result in your failing the course and in further action by the university. Please note the English Department’s statement on plagiarism. Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—“The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/ or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignments, of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask me to clarify.

Computer & Classroom Etiquette ~
You’re welcome to bring your notebook computer to class. However, I ask that you observe common rules of etiquette and decorum when you use it. In brief, you may use it to take notes or complete an in-class writing activity. You may not use it for anything not directly related to class work. Also, please turn off (or mute) cell phones. Out of respect for the class and the integrity of class activities, absolutely no text messaging during class is allowed.

Electronic Writing Portfolio ~
This course is a writing-intensive course and, as such, your papers satisfy the requirements for the Electronic Writing Portfolio. If you plan on using work from this course for your EWP, I ask that you complete this before the last two weeks of the semester.

Students with Disabilities ~
If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.