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ENG 3807-002: Victorian Literature "The Woman Question"

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Course Description: In this course we will be reading a variety of literary genres of the Victorian period: poems, novels, and non-fiction prose by a representative sampling of authors such as Barrett Browning, R. Browning, C. Brontë, Eliot, Gissing, the Mills, Nightingale, C. Rossetti, Ruskin, Tennyson, and others. Many of the texts that we will read take on a topic of great interest to the Victorians: the so-called "Woman Question." If the literature of this period is any indicator, the question of "What is a Woman to do?" was in everyone's mind and on everyone's lips. In a century of tremendous social and political change, the natures, roles, and conditions of both women and men were scrutinized, discussed, and contested. A great deal of this interrogation was carried on in print. Essays, sermons, legal documents, as well as poetry and fiction, addressed these concerns. The objectives of this course include gaining a strong sense of the formal features and aesthetic affects that characterize Victorian literature, as well as the social and political concerns with which literature of that time creatively engages. While as a class we will be looking at the Victorian period through the lens of "The Woman Question," you will be free to choose any subject of interest in this era on which to write your final research paper.

Texts: Elizabeth Barrett Browning *Aurora Leigh*
John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill *Essays on Sex Equality*

Longman Anthology of British Literature
Course Packet
Supplemental: Richard Altick, *Victorian People and Ideas*
Course Assignments: To achieve the goals described above students will need to keep up with the rigorous reading schedule and actively participate in the class discussion. The following assignments will foster the active engagement necessary to make this a productive and exciting learning experience.

I. Exams and Quizzes:
* There will be a mid-term and a final examination (15% and 20%)
* There will be reading quizzes on Middlemarch, plus optional quizzes on other texts if deemed necessary (10%)

II. Papers:
* A five to seven page essay based on the readings of the first six weeks (15%)
* A final research paper and portfolio on any topic of interest in the Victorian period (25%)

III. Discussion Partnerships: (15%)
Discussion Partners are one more way of ensuring that everyone has a chance to be heard and play a role in shaping the directions of our classroom conversations. Students will work with each other to present for discussion a given text. As a team, you will prepare in advance for your discussion date. Together you should generate a list of possible issues to explore, topics to discuss, and passages worth close analysis.

In preparation for your discussion partnership you will need to 1) read and familiarize yourself with your assigned text...you are the experts! 2) Do some research to gain either a biographical context (find out about the writer: when were they born? What else did they write? What were they known for or distinguished by? Did they have significant influences? Most importantly, can you relate any of this information to the text in question?) OR, Historical Contexts (identify some historical information that would illuminate our understanding of the text). Whatever research you do should be presented in a handout that will serve as a useful reference tool to your classmates. NOTE: If you want me to photocopy your materials for class, I will need to have them by noon on the day you are presenting.

Since you will have a handout to distribute to other students, you should only briefly explain the information and how this knowledge enhances our understanding of the literary text, then, lead us in a discussion of the text itself. If you are guiding the discussion of one of the essays, your team will need to prepare an outline of that essay and take the lead in starting the discussion. Whether you are leading the discussion on the literary text (poetry or fiction) or on a contemporary Victorian essay, you should prepare a short set of observations/questions that might help get discussion going, and be sure to have follow-up questions as well. You can draw on your research in the discussion, but do not prepare a formal presentation.

Discussion Partnership Evaluation Criteria:
5 Excellent—demonstrates levels of critical thinking, reading, and writing that are beyond expectations for a 3000-level literature course (rarely given).
4 Very Good—work that demonstrates a solid foundation in critical thinking, reading, and writing. Strong work that demonstrates a detailed attention to language, a strong ability to read a text closely, and/or an ability to analytically relate a literary text to its historical, biographical, or cultural context.
3 Good—work that demonstrates a basic level of understanding of the critical process, and a real investment in the assignment. However, it may not yet reveal the same comfort with the analysis of the language or the context of a literary text.
2 Satisfactory—work that meets requirements, but does not yet demonstrate a strong understanding of the critical process. May indicate that you are still in the process of learning what it means to think “critically” about a literary text, or are working from a set of assumptions about literature or language that are different from the discipline of English.
1 Below expectations—does not demonstrate a clear understanding of the requirements of the assignment or of the process of critical reading, writing, and thinking.
0 No Credit
Course Schedule:
Please note this schedule is provisional and subject to change. Also, students should read assigned text(s) prior to the class in which the text(s) will be discussed.

Week One:
1/13 Introduction to course, topic, and class members
   Excerpts from Coventry Patmore’s “Angel in the House”
   Blackstone on the Common Law Doctrine of Coverture

   Introduction to Charlotte Bronte and Jane Eyre
   HMWK: Read “The Victorian Age” Longman Anthology pp1009-1031
   Jane Eyre chapters I-IX.
   Barbara Bodichon “A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the
   Most Important Laws Concerning Women” (handout)

1/15 JE I-IX
   Barbara Bodichon and the Langham Place Group
   HMWK: Read Jane Eyre chapters X-XIX
   “Cassandra” by Florence Nightingale, Longman pp1497-1515
   Altick, chapters I and II

Week Two:
1/20 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day/ NO CLASS
1/22 JE X-XIX
   DP: “Cassandra”
   DP: England’s political and economic relations with Jamaica
   HMWK: Read Jane Eyre, chapters XX-XXVII and Harriet Taylor’s “The
   Enfranchisement of Women” (in Essays on Sex Equality)

Week Three:
1/27 JE XX-XXVII
   DP: The Madwoman in the Attic/Lunacy and the Law
   DP: Taylor Essay
   HMWK: Jane Eyre XXVIII-XXXIV
   Altick, chapter V “The Evangelical Temper” and section 1 of chapter VI

1/29 JE XXVIII-XXXIV
   DP: India, England’s Jewel in the Crown: Monetary and Missionary Interests
   HMWK: Jane Eyre XXXV-XXXVIII

Week Four:
2/3 Jane Eyre wrap-up
   HMWK: Aurora Leigh First Book and Ruskin’s “Of the King’s Treasuries” and
   “Of the Queen’s Garden’s” (packet)

2/5 DP: “Of the King’s Treasuries”
   DP: “Of the Queen’s Gardens”
   Aurora Leigh First Book
   HMWK: Aurora Leigh, Second, Third, and Fourth Books
   Altick, chapter IV The Utilitarian Spirit
Week Five:
2/10  * AL Second, Third and Fourth Books  
      DP: Philanthropy in the Victorian Era  
      HMWK: *Aurora Leigh* Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Books

2/12 * AL Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Books  
      HMWK: *Aurora Leigh* Eighth and Ninth Books  
      Altick, chapter VIII “The Nature of Art and Its Place in Society”  
      Introduction to the First Paper: Due Friday, February 28th

Week Six:
2/17 * AL Eighth and Ninth Books, Wrap Up  
      Midterm Exam Prep  
      **Bring Longman Anthology to class  
      HMWK: Excerpts from Tennyson’s “The Princess” (packet)  
      Introduction to Victorian Women by Freedman and Hellerstein (packet)

2/19 Tennyson’s “The Princess” and Freedman and Hellerstein

Week Seven:
2/24 Midterm Examination
      HMWK: Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market” in Longman Anthology p1618

2/26 “Goblin Market”  
      DP: The PreRaphaelites

2/28 Friday: First Paper Due

Week Eight:
3/3 Introduction to George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and “The Prelude”  
      HMWK: Read *Middlemarch* Book I

3/5 * MM, Book I  
      HMWK: Read *Middlemarch* Books II-V  
      John Stuart Mill’s “The Subjection of Women” in *Essays on Sex Equality*  
      Altick, chapters III, VI, VII

Spring Break: March 10-14

Week Nine:
3/17 Mill’s “The Subjection of Women”  
      * MM, Book II

3/19 * MM, Book III  
      *Middlemarch* Quiz Books I-III

Week Ten:
3/24 Introduction to the Final Research Paper and Portfolio  
      Book IV  

3/26 Book V

Week Eleven:
3/31 Book VI  
      *Middlemarch* Quiz Books IV-VI

4/2 Book VII
Week Twelve:
4/7 Book VIII
Middlemarch Quiz Books VII-VIII
HMWK: “Why are Women Redundant?” by W.R. Gregg and “What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids” Frances Power Cobbe (packet) Choose One
Research Proposal with Working Bibliography Due: 4/9

4/9 DP: Gregg essay
DP: Cobbe Essay
Introduction to George Gissing’s The Odd Women
Due: Research Proposal and Bibliography
HMWK: Read Odd Women Volume I
Bessie Rayner Parkes’ “Employment of the Female Population” (packet)

Week Thirteen:
4/14 Odd Women volume I
HMWK: Read Odd Women, volume II
Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon “Women and Work” (packet)

4/16 Odd Women volume II
HMWK: Read Odd Women volume III

Week Fourteen:
4/21 Odd Women volume III/ Wrap Up
Final Paper Presentations Begin
4/23 Final Paper Presentations

Week Fifteen:
4/28 Final Paper Presentations
4/30 Final Paper Presentations and Tea at Dr. Bredesen’s
5/2 Final Research Portfolios Due: Proposal/Papers/Supplemental Materials

Examination: Monday, May 5, 2003, 5:15-7:15 pm