



Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers

Spring 2009

Dr. Monica Smith

I heard an angel speak last night,
And he said 'Write!
Write a Nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word:
'Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

[. . .]

'Not so,' I answered once again.
'To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels), night and day.

'And thou shalt take their part to-night,
Weep and write.

*A curse from the depths of womanhood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'*

~ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *A Curse for a Nation*

Dr. Smith's Contact Information:

Office: 115 FAC

Office Phone: 651-2477

Email: Please use WTClass Course Mail

Office Hours:

Tuesday 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. CST and 1:30-2:30 p.m. CST

Thursday 1:30 – 3:30 p.m. CST

or by appointment

Class Meeting Time: Tuesday and Thursday 4:00 – 5:15 p.m.

Class Location: FAC 145

Course Description

Critical commonplaces over most of the twentieth century held that the Romantic and Victorian era were dominated by a handful of writers: all white, all male, and all English. Names like Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, Dickens, Hardy, Arnold, and Browning dominated the literary landscape. But does this limited picture with its finite selection of writers give us a true sense of British literature during these years? Does it accurately represent the literary culture of the period? Far from it, actually.

Over the past thirty years, such tidy summations of almost 130 years of British writing have been subjected to intense scrutiny. We have discovered that limiting Romanticism to “The Big Six” and the Victorian era to the Arnold-Browning-Tennyson / Dickens-Eliot-Hardy trinities limits our understanding of the nineteenth century dramatically. By focusing our attention only on this handful of writers, we have missed numbers of artists who were *profoundly* influential during their own time period and are thrillingly rewarding to study during our own.

Course Student Learning Outcomes

Upon satisfactory completion of ENGL 3392: Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers, students should:

- Understand the contributions of women writers to Romantic and Victorian literary culture;
- Appreciate the literary text's relationship with social and historical context;
- Discuss and write critically about genre, period, and authors;
- Employ literary terminology correctly;
- Independently develop a narrative that accounts for the variety, scope, and relative importance of different writers, texts, forms, and modes across the period.

Classroom Performance

This is an active, discussion-oriented class with considerable daily reading assignments. Most assignments will require multiple readings; thus, students should budget their time accordingly and responsibly. Each day, students should come to class prepared to articulate and defend their own readings, both on paper and in person, both in large group and small group discussion. Students who are unprepared for class discussion and/or activities may be dismissed for the day

and counted absent. Although not specified by page number on the syllabus, students are expected to read and should anticipate quizzes over the introductory sections on each author we study.

Required Texts

Purchase the editions specified below. Other editions of the novels are unacceptable, for they will not contain necessary introductions and appendices. Take the syllabus to the bookstore and verify that you have the correct edition before purchasing. I'd certainly check online for price deals, but be careful to check shipping costs and delivery times (sometimes up to three weeks if shipped via media mail).

- *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*. Ed. Paula Feldman.
- *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*. Eds. Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds.
- Abrams, M. H. *Glossary of Literary Terms*.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. Broadview.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. Broadview.
- Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford*. Oxford.
- Levy, Amy. *Romance of a Shop*. Broadview.
- Strunk and White. *Elements of Style*.

Optional Texts

- Bronte, Charlotte. *Villette*.
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. *Aurora Leigh*. Norton Critical.
- Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. Norton Critical.
- Radcliffe, Ann. *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.
- Smith, Charlotte. *Emmeline*. Broadview.
- Shelley, Mary. *The Last Man*.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Mary and Maria*. / Shelley, Mary. *Mathilda*.
- A reliable anthology of the period: I'd suggest the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume II, the *Broadview Anthology of British Literature*, Volumes 4 and 5, or the *Longman Anthology of British Literature*, Volume II. If you don't own one, you can order a used one via amazon.com (for prices sometimes as low as \$5 and sometimes as high as \$45; check around on abebooks.com and other used book sites to find the best deal).

Assignments and Requirements

Daily Readings are substantial and demanding. All readings should be completed before coming to class. Do not come to class without your books and/or copies of any assigned supplementary readings.

Quizzes and In-class Writings will vary from a quick, four or five line response to a question or prompt to a short reading comprehension quiz to a detailed analysis of a particular passage. These writings will be assessed according to the degree of engagement the student demonstrates with the question or assignment. Quizzes and in-class writings cannot be made-up and may be administered at any point during the class period.

Memorization Projects: Twice during the semester students will select 14-20 consecutive lines of verse recite them to me. Students may not choose two sets of lines from the same poem or two poems by the same author. Selections must be from our course anthologies.

Response Papers will be due four times during the semester.

- Papers should be typed, one full page, single spaced (using Times New Roman 12 pt. font and 1" margins). Please include the appropriate header with your name, my name, class, and date on the upper-left-hand corner.
- Papers should be uploaded as attachments to the appropriate dropbox on WTClass before class time on the due date.
- Responses may cover one work in detail, or the response may address compelling connections between several texts.
- Responses will earn points for demonstrating the following: the student's significant and close engagement with the reading(s); detailed, notable textual analysis; original thought and critical reaction grounded in the text; observations that build on and go beyond class discussion.
- Responses will be penalized for the following: weak, sloppy, or insubstantial analysis; repetition of class discussion; lack of engagement with work; analysis based on vague assertions rather than close reading; remarks off-topic or not grounded in the text.
- The only materials that should be used in preparing the response papers are the assigned readings and a dictionary. No secondary sources of any kind, whether from journals, books, or the internet, should be used. I am interested in your interpretations, not someone else's.

The Critical Essay will be an in-depth treatment of one woman writer (from nineteenth-century Britain) of the student's choosing. The critical essay should adhere to all the conventions of formal academic prose, following the guidelines specified by MLA. The essay must be your own original work and must be written specifically for this class. If you have questions about the ethics or mechanics of acknowledging another person's writings or ideas, please see me. Details will be available via WTClass.

Examinations will consist primarily of identifications; short answers and objective questions may also appear. Alternate testing dates are not available, and make-ups will only be allowed under the most extreme circumstances—circumstances documented and verified by the Office of Student Services.

The Final Exam will be a 5-7 minute presentation over the writer selected for critical essay. Details will be made available via WTClass.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential; flawless attendance is expected. I will take roll every day. All absences will be treated the same, i.e. no differentiation between "excused" or "unexcused" absences. Two tardies will count as an absence. Excessive absences (more than three) will be reflected in the final course grade. I reserve the right to fail any student who misses more than four class periods.

Submitting Assignments

Assignments are due in class and are to be delivered in person unless prior arrangements have been made with me. Any assignment that does not adhere to this requirement is considered late. Late assignments will lose one letter grade per business day, not class day. Assignments are not considered submitted until I receive them. To be safe, then, papers should never be left in my mailbox or sent via email attachment. Each student is held responsible for all assignments, regardless of her/his class attendance on the day the assignment is made. If a previously scheduled event coincides with an exam or due date, a written request for an extension or make-up date will be considered. All such requests must be submitted prior to the date in question. Any requests for extensions based on illness or family emergency must be accompanied by written documentation verified by the Office of Student Services. All make-ups and extensions are at the instructor's discretion.

Computer Access

Students are expected to check email daily and the course webpage several times a week or as indicated on the daily schedule. Students are responsible for securing working computer equipment; labs are available on campus.

**** Please note** that since “The printer wouldn’t work,” “Something’s wrong with my disk,” and “I don’t know what happened—I saved it but now it’s not there” have become the 21st century versions of “The dog ate my homework,” computer, software, or printer malfunction/failure of any kind will not constitute a valid excuse for missed, late, or incomplete work. **Remember:** save early, save often; print early, print often.

Conferences

Office hours are listed above under Contact Information. You are always welcome to drop by during office hours.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. Any instance of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported to the Head of the English Department and the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Students are responsible for informing themselves of all university regulations concerning academic honesty. For more information, please see the Code of Student Life, Appendix III (<http://www.wtamu.edu/administrative/ss/code/index.htm>)

Access Statement

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (i.e., physical, mental, psychological, learning), have emergency medical information to share with me, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. West Texas A&M University seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity.

Grading

Response Papers	20%
Memorizations	5%
Quizzes, In-Class Writings	15%
Critical Essay	15%
Exams (2 exams at 15% each)	30%
Final Exam	15%

Grading Scale

Excellent work will earn an A (90-100).

Good work will earn a B (80-89.99).

Average work will earn a C (70-79.99).

Fair work will earn a D (60-69.99).

Poor work will earn an F (0-59.99).

A = 95

C+ = 78

D- = 60

A- = 90

C = 75

F = (as marked; work not submitted assessed as a 0)

B+ = 88

C- = 70

B = 85

D+ = 68

B- = 80

D = 65

A note about grade reporting: I will record your grades on WTClass. It is your responsibility to check that I have recorded your grade accurately; therefore, you should keep copies of all graded work until the end of the semester. If I enter something incorrectly, I will correct it—as long as you have the original graded work for me to verify. Without that original graded copy, the grade stands as entered.

DAILY SCHEDULE: Subject to change. The most up-to-date version will be available online. It is the student's responsibility to stay informed and up-to-date with any changes.

RWP = *Romantic Women Poets* (ed. Feldman)

VWP = *Victorian Women Poets* (ed. Leighton and Reynolds)

Abrams = *Glossary of Literary Terms* (Abrams)

WTClass = reading or other material available on WTClass

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week One	January 13 Introduction to class	January 15: Reading the Nineteenth Century “The Romantic Period: Part One” (WTClass); “The Romantic Period: Part Two” (WTClass); “The Victorian Age: 1830-1901” (WTClass); “Periods of English Literature” (Abrams); “Neoclassic and Romantic” (Abrams); “Victorian and Victorianism” (Abrams)

Week Two	January 20 Jane Austen, <i>Pride & Prejudice</i> . Volume One; <i>The Real Jane Austen</i> (documentary, WTClass); “Novel” (Abrams)	January 22 Austen, <i>Pride & Prejudice</i> , Volume Two; “Point of view” (Abrams)
Week Three	January 27 Austen, <i>Pride & Prejudice</i> . Volume Three.	Thursday, January 29 Charlotte Smith, <i>Elegiac Sonnets</i> (RWP 671-688); “Sonnet,” “Lyric,” “Form and structure,” “Formalism” (Abrams) Response Paper One Due (upload to WTClass before class today)
Week Four	February 3 Letitia Elizabeth Landon (RWP 365-385); “Persona, tone, and voice” (Abrams); <i>The Poetess Archive</i> (http://unixgen.muohio.edu/~poetess/)	February 5 Jane West, “On the Sonnets of Mrs. Charlotte Smith” (RWP 795); Elizabeth Hands, “A Poem” (RWP 258 and 260); Helen Maria Williams, “An Address to Poetry”; Christian Milne, “On a Lady” (RWP 448); Mary Julia Young, “To a Friend” (RWP 851)
Week Five	February 10 Anna Letitia Barbauld, “Eighteen Hundred and Eleven” (RWP 70); “Washing Day” (RWP 67); “Poetic diction” (Abrams)	February 12 Mary Robinson, “The Linnet’s Petition” (RWP 595); “Marie Antoinette’s Lamentation” (RWP 608); “January, 1795” (RWP 612); “The Haunted Beach” (RWP 627); “The Alien Boy” (RWP 629); “The Lady of the Black Tower” (RWP 639)
Week Six	February 17 Felicia Hemans, “The Graves of a Household” (RWP 291); “The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England” (RWP 292); “The Last Song of Sappho” (VWP 4); “Properzia Rossi” (VWP 8); “The Image in Lava” (VWP 14) Response Paper Two Due (upload to WTClass before class today)	February 19 Exam One
Week Seven	February 24 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, <i>Aurora Leigh</i> (VWP 92); “Felicia Hemans” (VWP 63); “L.E.L.’s Last Question” (VWP 67); “Genre” (Abrams)	February 26 Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Ch. 1-9); “Gothic novel” (Abrams)
Week Eight	March 3 Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Ch. 10-18)	March 5 Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Ch. 19-26)

Week Nine	March 10 Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Ch. 27-34)	March 12 Christina Rossetti, <i>Goblin Market</i> (VWP 378); "L.E.L." (VWP 377) Response Paper Three Due (upload to WTClass before class today)
Week Ten	March 24 Elizabeth Gaskell, <i>Cranford</i>	March 26 * Christina Rossetti, "Convent Threshold" (VWP); Charlotte Mew, "At the Convent Gate" (VWP 647); Mary E. Coleridge, "The Witch" (VWP 618); "The Other Side of a Mirror" (VWP 613)
Week Eleven	March 31 Ellen Johnston (VWP 406-414)	April 2 Augusta Webster, "A Castaway" (VWP 433); "Dramatic monologue" (Abrams)
Week Twelve	April 7 * Michael Field, "Maids, not to you my mind doth change" (VWP 487); "A Girl" (VWP 495); "Unbosoming" (VWP 496); "It was deep April" (VWP 496); "To Christina Rossetti" (VWP 505)	April 9 Amy Levy, "Xantippe" (VWP 591) Response Paper Four Due (upload to WTClass before class today)
Week Thirteen	April 14 Amy Levy, <i>Romance of a Shop</i>	April 16 Amy Levy, <i>Romance of a Shop</i>
Week Fourteen	April 21 Exam Two	April 23 Critical Essay Workshop
Week Fifteen	April 28 Review for final; Critical Essay Due	

* Classes will be held online on Thursday, March 26 and Tuesday, April 7.

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