

ENGL 321/ WGSS 301: Victorian Sexualities

Dickinson College, Fall 2021
TF 1:30-2:45, East College 301
<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/victorianlit>

Professor Sarah E. Kersh

kershs@dickinson.edu

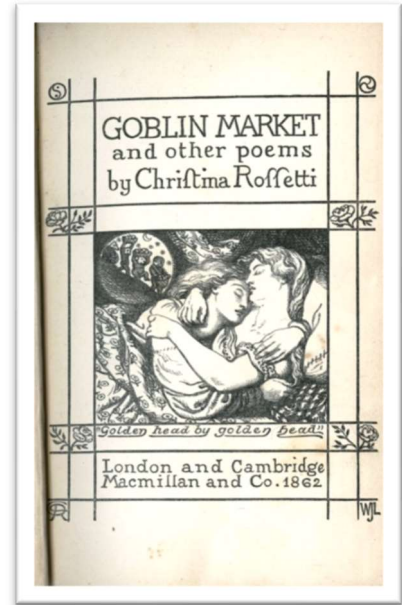
sarahkersh.com

Office phone: 717-254-8952

Office: East College 413

Office Hours: 1-2 Wed, 11:30-12:30 Fri, & by appt

Zoom [link](#) and ID: 486 206 4937 (Passcode: zt85F2)



* see course website for image credits

Course Description and Objectives

Often the Victorian era (1832-1901) is depicted as a period rigid in its attitudes toward morality, gender, and sexuality. However, nineteenth-century literature saw an array of “dangerous” people inhabit its pages: effeminate men, political women (also known as the New Woman), prostitutes, and hysterics to name a few. Victorians lived during a time of new emphasis on democracy and equality, scrutiny of marriage and property law, and, at times, openness to diversity in gender and sexuality. While our course will pay special attention to changing conceptions of the individual, sexuality, and gender, we also will look at the ways in which gender and sexuality intersect with race, class, nationality, and other social factors. This course is an upper-level seminar in Victorian literature of many genres—poetry, drama, the novel, and non-fiction prose— by a variety of authors.

The learning objectives for this class, and all other English 300-level courses, are as follows. By the end of this course, students will understand and be able to:

1. make a cogent and controvertible argument that relies on literary evidence and demonstrates familiarity with the relationships between primary and secondary sources;
2. use library databases, construct an annotated bibliography, and cite sources properly, through successful completion of the Literary Studies Research (LSR) laboratory;
3. use the knowledge gained from class assignments, presentations, and discussion to locate individual works in wider contexts and traditions as well as to develop a specific, original literary thesis;
4. evaluate arguments and sources and to identify and employ methodologies in critical arguments.

Course Materials*

The following texts are required for the course and are available at the college bookstore. In addition, you will need to be able to access various other texts on our class website.

- 1) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll (Bantam Classics) ISBN: 0553213458
- 2) *The Importance of Being Earnest and other Plays* by Oscar Wilde (Oxford Classics) ISBN: 9780199535972
- 3) *The Lifted Veil & Brother Jacob* by George Eliot (Oxford Classics) ISBN: 0192832956
- 4) *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins (Penguin) ISBN: 0141439610
- 5) *Writing Analytically*, 8th ed by David Rosenwasser and Jill Stephen (ISBN: 978-1337559461)*. If you have another edition, it is imperative you let me know.

NOTE: There is a copy of *Writing Analytically* on reserve at the library and I will post PDFs. If you choose to use one of those copies, please be prepared to print the pages assigned so that you can have them with you in class.

Class Participation and Attendance:

This class will be heavily discussion based and therefore depends on the participation of its members. Failure to attend undermines the class as a whole. Attendance, therefore, will be a substantial part of your participation grade. **However, if you feel sick please DO NOT come to class.** If you miss the class for any reason, you are responsible for what went on in the class, including changes of assignments. I will not answer emails asking me to describe what went on in class. You are responsible for contacting one of your classmates to find out what went on, including changes of any assignments. If you have extenuating circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible.

I also expect you to read the assigned material and prepared to ask questions and offer opinions about it during class. Attendance alone with little or no contribution will only earn you approximately a C in participation. I recognize that some students are hesitant to speak in front of class. If this is the case, please come talk with me during office hours early in the semester and we can create a participation strategy. As a general rule of thumb, if you are struggling in some way, please see me as soon as possible.

“How can I know what I think until I see what I say?” – E.M. Forster

Papers

Papers will go through the invention, drafting, feedback, and revising process. The process of revision and the ultimate success of the paper depend upon a thoughtful first draft as well as a polished final draft. For each

* **Content Note:** Some of the texts presented in this course are explicit in their treatment of sex, of bodies, and of violence. Reading and discussing these texts can be demanding in ways that are often unexpected, and your success in this class will require an open engagement with the material. I will make every effort to work with students who have difficulty; however, if you feel you are not inclined or able to work with explicit material, I encourage you to think about other course options.

longer paper, you will have ample time for writing the first version and for revising after receiving feedback on the draft. All papers (first and final versions) must be word-processed and meet standard format practices (either double-spaced, 12 point font, pages numbered in the right hand corner, title and name on first page, and date of submission OR an online equivalent). Throughout the paper, the citations and documentation style should be consistent. Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade.

Requirements and Grading

Beyond participation, your grade will be based on regular short writing assignments and two more formal essays. The relative weight of each component is as follows:

Attendance and Participation	10%
Blog Posts, Comments, and other short writing	50%
Trout Gallery visits and peer review	10%
Final Paper	30 %

NOTE: If this is **your first 300-level literature course** in the English Department, you will be required to complete ENGL 300, the Literary Studies Research Lab. This P/F research course allows students to apply their work in English 220 into research and writing expectations for 300-level courses, ultimately in preparation for their senior theses. More information to come.

Final letter grades will be assigned in the following way:

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D = 60-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79	F = 0-59
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76	
B = 83-86	C- = 70-72	

Deadlines:

Deadlines are firm. Unless you have asked for and received prior permission to extend the deadline or you have a signed medical excuse, late assignments will lose one grade increment per day late. I cannot accept assignments more than one week late.

Grade Calculations:

I use an excel worksheet to calculate my grades. If you would like to discuss graded work, please take at least two days to review my comments, along with the grading criteria for the assignment. While I don't negotiate grades, I am happy to discuss strategies for improving your writing and therefore your grade.

Extra Credit:

If you attend any Dickinson College screening, workshop, or lecture and write a 1-2 page reflection stating how the event related to this class and what was interesting about it for you, I will award 1 point extra

credit. You may complete up to 5 extra credit reflections. These points will be added to your final exam grade at the end of the semester. I will reject any reflection I feel is insufficient or unsuitable.

Lateness, Cell Phones, and Other Disruptions:

Please make an effort to be on time. Class begins promptly and if you are more than ten minutes late, I will record you as absent. If you have a reason that may cause you to be late from time to time, please let me know. Please remember to turn OFF all cell phones unless otherwise directed. If you are a student athlete or member of a student group that requires you to miss class for a university-sanctioned event, please let me know as soon as possible.

Electronics:

- This class may be recorded for accommodation purposes
- Laptop use is by permission only
- Tablets for textbooks are fine, as long as you refrain from surfing the web, etc.

Blog Posts:

You will complete a number of blog posts over the course of the semester as well as comment on other posts made by your classmates. These posts will be in response to prompts handed out in class or of your own direction. Over the course of the posts, I expect you to engage with the readings and discussions and not simply summarize them. I also expect you to make connections to other sources, media, and class texts so please add quotations, images, links, videos, etc. that relate to the week's topics and your interpretation of them. We will explore these skills in class.

Screenames:

I request you all create a screenname under which you blog for our class. Part of our class will be trying out new and different perspectives and positions. I recognize that these positions can change and grow; by using screennames we give ourselves the room to experiment. **I am happy to remove any blog posts at the end of the term and/or you may remove your own writing. I ask that you let me know.**

Norman M. Eberly Writing Center:

Writers of all levels and abilities need feedback in order to develop their ideas and grow as writers. Dickinson's trained writing tutors can help you generate ideas, begin drafting, revise a rough draft, figure out your professor's preferred documentation style, understand and respond to professor feedback, edit your writing – among other things. Make appointments online here: <https://dickinson.mywconline.com/>. For more information about hours and procedures, visit the writing center's website.

Academic Integrity

With respect to all assignments in this course, I expect you to do your own work. You are certainly encouraged to discuss course content and readings with your fellow classmates, but your work in papers must be your own. Regarding outside sources, you will need to cite all of your sources. We will discuss ways of doing this before your first paper is due. If you have any questions about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, please feel free to ask.

Accommodations

I am committed to including all students in this course and am happy to discuss accommodations with students, provided that this conversation happens **early** in the semester and definitely before any papers/projects are due. From Dickinson College's ADS:

“Dickinson values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/ADS, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717) 245-1734, or go to the ADS office in Room 005 of Old West, Lower Level (aka "the OWLL").

If you’ve already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please follow the guidance at www.dickinson.edu/AccessPlan for disclosing the accommodations for which you are eligible and scheduling a meeting with me as soon as possible so that we can discuss your accommodations and finalize your Access Plan. If test proctoring will be needed from ADS, remember that we will need to complete your Access Plan in time to give them at least one week’s advance notice.”

Physical Accessibility

My office is located on the fourth floor of East College, which has an elevator, located in the Classics department. Our classroom is located on the second floor of Denny Hall which has an elevator accessible through the entrance closest to the Social Justice House on West St. If there is ever a malfunction with the elevator, please let me know and I will gladly arrange an alternative location or meet on Zoom.

Other Needs:

If you have a concern or issue regarding this class, your ability to participate in it, or the material we are covering, please stop by my office hours or email me to set up an appointment. **The sooner we can talk about your concerns, the better I will be able to help you negotiate a solution.**

I am committed to providing equal educational opportunity to all students.

NOTE: The policies, procedures, schedules, and requirements in this syllabus are subject to change—should any occur I will make every effort to give you plenty of notice.

ENGL 321/ WGSS 301: Victorian Sexualities

Dickinson College, Fall 2021

T/F 1:30-2:45, East College 301

<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/victorianlit> (Password: Kersh)

NOTE: This COURSE SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE.

Please see our class website for more up-to-date information

Course Schedule: Reading and Writing assignments are due in class on the date they are listed.
(red assignments are writing assignments due in class)

Class Contacts:

If you miss class for ANY reason it is YOUR responsibility to contact another member of the class to see what you may have missed. Please make sure you have at least three contacts:

1. name: _____ cell: _____

2. name: _____ cell: _____

3. name: _____ cell: _____

Note on how to prepare for readings. I will begin *most* classes by simply asking for this information:

- 1) For literary readings come ready with 2-3 passages you think are interesting, revealing, or strange. Mark these in your text and be ready to talk about *why* you chose the passage. These passages will become the basis of our class discussion *and* will appear on our exams. I suggest having a notebook that keeps track of these passages and thoughts.
- 2) For *Writing Analytically* reading come ready to talk about 1-2 tips/tools/tricks that the reading offered to help improve your writing, reading, or thinking.

Week 1

August 31

~Class Introduction

September 3

~ 2 articles from [The Victorian Web](#): “[Victorian & Victorianism](#)” and “[Queen Victoria](#)” (see class blog for live links)

~ George Eliot’s “Brother Jacob” pp 45-87

Week 2

September 7

~ 2 articles from The Victorian Web: [George Eliot](#) and the excerpt from *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* by William Cohen (see class blog for live links)

~ “Why are Women Redundant?” by William Rathbone Greg (1862) (PDF)

Note: For discussion, think about what moments in these texts support our ideas about “Brother Jacob”? What new reading of “Brother Jacob” might be possible in light of these two essays?

September 10

~ *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins (hereafter: *WTW*); pp 9-63

~ [Writing Questionnaire](#) (emailed to me)

Week 3

September 14

~ *WTW*, 63-161 (through the end of Mr. Gilmore’s narrative)

~ also read your assigned section from the *Longman Anthology* (handout)

September 17

~ Freud: “Remembering, Repeating and Working Through” (PDF)

~ [Blog Post #1](#)

Week 4

September 21

~ *WTW* pp161-255 (through section IV of Marian’s story)

September 24

~ *WTW* pp256-356 (through the end of Frederick Fairlie’s story)

~ [2 Blog Comments](#)

Week 5

September 28

~ *WTW* pp357-451 (through section III of Hartright’s story in Epoch 3)

~ selected poems from George Meredith’s *Modern Love* (PDF)

October 1

~ *WTW* pp451-540 (through the end of Mrs. Catherick’s letter)

~ [Blog Post #2](#)

Week 6

October 5

~ finish *WTW*

~ *Writing Analytically* Chapter 4, pp98-115 “Responding to Traditional Writing Assignments More Analytically”

October 8

~ Carolyn Dever, “The Marriage Plot and its Alternatives” (PDF)

~ Pamela Perkins and Mary Donaghy, “A Man’s Resolution: Narrative Strategies in Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White*” (PDF)

~ [2 Blog Comments](#)

Week 7

October 12

- ~ Christina Rossetti, "In an Artist's Studio" (PDF)
- ~ Robert Browning, "My Last Duchess" (PDF)
- ~ Richard Altick excerpt from "The Nature of Art and its Place in Society" from *Victorian Peoples and Ideas* (PDF)
- ~ "[The Femme Fatale as Object](#)" (online article from The Victorian Web)

October 15

- ~ Trout Gallery visit (details TBA)

Week 8

October 19 – FALL PAUSE

October 22

- ~ George Eliot's "The Lifted Veil" pp 2-43
- ~ *Writing Analytically* Chapter 6, pp 148-153 "Reasoning from Evidence to Claims"
- ~ [Blog Post #3](#)

Week 9

October 26

- ~ Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- ~ Michel Foucault, excerpt from *The History of Sexuality: "We 'Other Victorians'"* (Read pp1-13)

October 29

- ~ Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*
- ~ [2 Blog Comments](#)

Week 10

November 2

- ~ Trout Gallery visit (details TBA)

November 5

- ~ Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market*
- ~ [Blog Post #4](#)

Week 11

November 9

- ~ Mona Caird's "[The Yellow Drawing-Room](#)"
- ~ [The New Woman Fiction](#) (online article from The Victorian Web)

November 12

- ~ Vernon Lee's "Dionea" (PDF)
- ~ Michael Field intro to Long Ago (PDF) including poems I-IV
- ~ [2 Blog Comments](#)

Week 12

November 16

- ~ Michael Field's *Long Ago*, poems through XXV (use the online edition linked on website)
- ~ *Writing Analytically*: chapter 3, pp78-84 "Implications Versus Hidden Meanings"

November 19

- ~ *Long Ago*, poems XXVI-L
- ~ **Blog Post #5**

Week 13

November 23

- ~ *Long Ago*, finish poems
- ~ article on Greek art in Victorian culture

November 26 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 14

November 30

- ~ Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Acts I-II; pp 250-294)

December 2

- ~ *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Act III
- ~ plus the Appendix and notes pp308-310 and 356-363
- ~ **2 Blog Comments**

Week 15

December 7

- ~ last class/wrap up
- ~ *Writing Analytically*, Chapter 10, pp 273-281 "What Introductions and Conclusions Do"

December 9

- ~ **in-class peer review for final paper**

Final Paper Due: Friday, December 17th by 5:00 p.m.