

## LIT 4931: A Woman's Place: Home, Work, and the Nation in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Literature

When Victorian writers described “the home,” they evoked a host of contested ideas about the material and imagined space where self and society meet. Emerging as a fully developed ideology by the middle of the 19th century, domesticity organized beliefs about the family, gender identity, sexuality, socioeconomic class, work, and empire. As an ideology, Victorian domesticity relied on two concepts: the separation of spheres and the figure of the domestic woman. The separation of spheres was a binary logic that asserted the existence of two social spaces: a private domain occupied by femininity, leisure, feeling, and an ethic of care, and a public domain where masculinity, work, industry, endurance, and an ethic of achievement preside. Governing the private sphere, the idealized middle-class domestic woman was expected to exercise moral authority characterized by a naturally self-sacrificial spirit and the socioeconomic knowledge to managing a labor-intensive household. However, daughters were often not provided with an education to prepare them with adequate economic knowledge. In many ways, then, the Victorian home marked social categories, economic forces, and gendered expectations. The image of the family home’s status as a haven in a heartless world—and consequently, women’s status as the protector and custodian of that haven—monopolized the Victorian imagination despite evidence of domestic violence, sexual transgression, gender subordination, racism, and socioeconomic coercion.

This course will develop students' critical and analytical reading and writing skills through an interdisciplinary study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century British literary representations of gender, the home, and domesticity. The “domestic space,” or the “home,” has always been a contentious issue for both women's literary traditions as well as feminist criticism. On the one hand, domestic space was viewed as a site of subjugation and oppression, one which bound women to an endless cycle of housework – cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing – thus preventing them from participating fully and meaningfully in the “world outside,” i.e. the world of social, political, and artistic engagement. Yet, others wrote about domestic spaces as a site where women successfully exert power and agency. In this class, we will read British literature from the nineteenth century, with a specific focus on how Victorian writers create complex representations of women’s lived experience within the public/private separation of spheres. In this model, domestic space was considered the responsibility, the goal, and even the “career” for women, but it could also be their burden. Together we will explore how literature enables us to ask questions about the relationship between public and private spaces and their respective relationship to class, race, gender, sexuality, and the nation.

### Some guiding questions for the course include:

- How do these writers represent the relationship between domestic space and the broader political world (in other words, the “private” and the “public”)?
- What is the relationship between the “private” space of the home and the “private” spaces of the body?
- How did Victorian writers represent women’s work, place, and lives within and beyond domestic spaces?
- How can we open up the domestic space to class-based and racial analyses?
- Where and how do the “domestic” and the “political” overlap for these writers?

Professor: Dr. Amy Kahrmann Huseby

Email: [ahuseby@fiu.edu](mailto:ahuseby@fiu.edu)

Class: Tues. 2:00-4:45 p.m., SIPA 103 (MMC)

Office: DM 458A      Office Hours: Mon. 5-6 p.m. and by appointment

## COURSE TEXTS:

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park* (1814), Penguin Classics, ISBN 9780141439808  
Bronte, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre* (1847), Norton Critical 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, ISBN 9780393975420  
Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford* (1853), Oxford UP, ISBN 9780199558308  
*Eliot, The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Oxford UP, ISBN 9780198707530  
George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893), Oxford UP, ISBN 9780199538300  
Other texts as assigned will be available digitally and free of charge on Blackboard.

### Course Requirements

• Group Discussion Leader	10%
• Attendance, discussion boards, and participation	15%
• 1 <sup>st</sup> Paper (5-6 pp.)	20%
• Proposal for Final Paper OR Project (4-6 pp.)	25%
• Final Paper OR Project (7-8 pp.)	30%

### Learning Outcomes

- to gain familiarity with different genres of 19<sup>th</sup>-century writing;
- become a better **critical reader**, noticing subtle details and uses of language, connecting ideas and texts, asking questions, and identifying assumptions and values;
- become a better **critical writer**, learning to make analytical arguments that are original, persuasively argued, clear, and well written;
- become a more **active listener** by taking good lecture notes, listening to your peers in discussion sections, and asking questions;
- understand how even the most entertaining stories carry **cultural and social values that emerge out of their historical contexts**;
- become a more **thoughtful and knowledgeable citizen** by learning about the experiences of people both like and unlike you, thinking through questions of injustice and intolerance; and,
- becoming better able to interpret, argue, and communicate ideas about your world.

### PROFESSIONALISM AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES

In addition to course requirements, for each of our meetings:

- 1) Please be aware that **this course is reading intensive**. Reading ahead is always recommended. Taking notes as you read is also recommended. In this class, the text is your evidence to back up your argument and claims. You must be prepared to discuss the assigned reading and provide examples. You will need to *cite specific textual evidence* in our discussions and in your writing. During discussion in class, when we work to interpret the most complex points in the reading, you will be expected to contribute to discussion, and also to help others think rigorously and responsibly through textual problems. Think of our conversations as an exercise in critical analysis, reasoning, and persuasion. Our duty with what we read is to interpret, objectively, the most meaningful and valuable points *in* the text, and to then compare and evaluate differing interpretations to formulate an analytical payoff *for* the text.
- 2) Please be aware that **your participation grade (including short writing assignments) is 15% of your total grade**, which is sufficient to either pull your grade up slightly or pull your grade down depending on your active participation. Everyone contributes to the success of this course. Speaking up during class is

easier for some than others. I can help out if you are unsure how to enter the conversation—talk to me after class or send me an email. While I have no desire to make anyone feel uncomfortable, participation is an unavoidable and necessary component of your overall grade. If you have any concerns about participation in this course, please speak to me about options. A good place to start is to prepare at least one comment or question about the week's reading for each discussion session. Write it down and come prepared to raise your idea in discussion. When you talk, please address your comments to the whole class, not just to me. I'm looking forward to hearing your ideas and insights during the semester and I welcome suggestions for things you would like to discuss (e.g., confusing passages, key terms). Feel free to ask questions if something is unclear.

- 3) Come to class prepared to think critically and carefully about difficult problems. Argument is not always about fighting over what you “know” is right. Rather, argument is often about helping others explain an important point, entering a conversation, or helping others *help us* to understand this point. Argumentation is a way to illuminate important ideas that we have in common, to challenge received wisdom, and to rethink a world view. To this end, come to class with a positive attitude, respect for your class-mates and our discussions, a sincere desire to understand, and a willingness to work towards common goals. I emphasize and require an **environment of mutual respect** in our classroom. While we might address controversial, and occasionally even uncomfortable, subject matter, it is crucial that we speak to one another respectfully and endeavor to listen attentively to the ideas of others. Listening attentively is an active form of learning, not passive reception.

### **Course Pebble Economy**

Our course operates within a pebble economy. Each student begins the course with 4 virtual pebbles -- 2 grey and 2 pink -- and can earn more. You may exchange pebbles for opportunities to resubmit assignments considered incomplete, submit certain assignments past their deadlines, or discount an absence or a late attendance. You may earn pebbles by attending an event and submitting a reflection on your experience, completing additional assignments, or submitting certain work early. For complete rules, regulations, and details see the **Course Pebble Economy Ordinance** (Course Menu > Guidelines).

### **Extenuation**

An important benefit of our Course Pebble Economy is that it renders much of extenuation unnecessary. For example, you are not required to explain why you have submitted a Discussion assignment after it is due or why you cannot make it to class on time or at all on a certain day, and I am not required to determine which circumstances constitute extenuating circumstances. As long as you have pebbles to exchange, you may exchange them -- no questions asked.

However, since, according to the Ordinance, pebble exchange is not applicable to our three big assignments – First Essay, Second Essay, and Final Project -- extenuation may come into play. There are situations both expected and unexpected that constitute extenuating circumstances. Here are examples of different situations:

#### *Valid excuses:*

- o Religious holiday (look through all of the term's due dates and let me know well in advance);
- o A mental health crisis;
- o A medical emergency that pertains to you, an immediate family member, or a grandparent.

#### *Excuses that are not valid:*

- o The Internet went out or your laptop doesn't work (create a hot spot with your cell phone, go to an establishment that offers WiFi, go to a library and use a computer there);
- o Your course materials have yet to arrive (order your materials well in advance and locate library copies as backups);
- o You're very busy and you forgot (set up a schedule with reminders);

- You didn't submit an assignment on time because of technical difficulties (make sure to read through Technical Requirements & Skills, below, and attempt to submit your assignment well in advance of its due time so that you can deal with any difficulties that may arise).

*This applies only to our three big assignments. In matters of attendance and Discussion assignments, the following is not necessary: if extenuating circumstances have prevented or will prevent you from submitting any of the three big assignments on time, you must email me as soon as possible so that we can figure out a solution such as an extension schedule. If you are not sure whether your situation constitutes extenuating circumstances, email me anyway and describe your situation.*

**Absences & Sick Policy:** If you are feverish or come down with the flu or a nasty cold (are coughing, sneezing, or vomiting prior to class), notify me of your absence by email, and please do not attend class. The absence will count toward your three (3) allowed absences. You do not need to detail your symptoms or provide a doctor's note. If you anticipate that your illness will last longer than the three (3) allowed absences, please email me so we can consider your options. If you are out of absences, you can choose to exchange a pebble for that absence.

**Late work:** You will do a lot of writing in this course. All work must be turned in on the date specified. No late work is accepted unless you have spoken with me prior to the deadline (in the case of the three big assignments) or chosen to exchange a pebble. A half-grade deduction for each day late after the due date will be applied. If you have an emergency, I understand that. Emergencies happen. Please communicate with me as soon as possible so that we can plan together how you might complete your assignment. I am always open to and generous with allowing extensions IF you contact me in advance of the deadline. Once the deadline passes, then rules for late work will be applied. You must turn in all work for this course by the end of the term to pass the class.

**Assignments:** There will be short writing assignments in addition to reading and essay assignments. See the Short Weekly Assignment Instructions handout for details. For these and the longer essays, you will be informed of the expectations and instructions for the assignment well in advance of the due date. We will also work together to peer review each assignment in advance of the due date. Doing so not only helps you to think about writing as a process (not something you do the night before!), but it will also teach you to provide constructive criticism to colleagues, a valuable skill both in college and in your future professions. You are always welcome to ask me questions about assignments in class, by email, or in office hours. I'd rather have you ask a question than be confused or spend time working on the wrong assignment.

**Technology:** In keeping with my comments above about an environment of mutual respect, the use of cellular phones is not allowed in my class without prior permission. Please turn off your phone when you come to class. We have 2+ hours together each week. Let's make the most of that time! If I have to speak with you about texting, I will ask you to leave class and count you absent for the day. Since this course involves reading many texts online, laptops or tablets needed for note taking or reading texts are allowed. However, as with the cellular devices, if I see that you are on social media or any other website not associated with our discussion, you will be asked to leave and counted absent that day.

**Emails:** Often assignments and instructions will be delivered via email. Reading my emails and coming prepared to class with any handouts you receive is your responsibility. Weekly assignments and coming prepared to class (this includes bringing your book or laptop for reading the texts) count toward your participation grade. If you have questions about the class, I always recommend checking your syllabus and assignment first or asking a classmate! The answers to your questions can frequently be found in this way. If you still need to email me with a question, feel free to do so. I'm happy to help!

### ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT STATEMENT

Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and honestly to demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed

by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Misconduct includes: **Cheating** – The unauthorized use of books, notes, aids, electronic sources; or assistance from another person with respect to examinations, course assignments, field service reports, class recitations; or the unauthorized possession of examination papers or course materials, whether originally authorized or not. **Plagiarism** – The use and appropriation of another’s work without any indication of the source and the representation of such work as the student’s own. Any student who fails to give credit for ideas, expressions or materials taken from another source, including internet sources, is responsible for plagiarism.

In order to avoid plagiarism, please follow these procedures in all your assignments:

- If you reproduce statements verbatim, place them in quotation marks and explicitly state the author’s name and cite your source. In the case of a block quotation, forego quotation marks (per MLA guidelines) but make sure to indent the quotation and clearly cite your source.
- If you reproduce or rephrase the general idea (not verbatim), forego quotation marks but still explicitly state the author’s name and cite your source.

Learn more about the [academic integrity policies and procedures](#) as well as [student resources](#) that can help you prepare for a successful semester.

## RESOURCES

**Access Statement:** I am committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students who I recognize may learn, participate, and engage in different ways. The Disability Resource Center collaborates with students, faculty, staff, and community members to create diverse learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and sustainable. The DRC provides FIU students with disabilities the necessary support to successfully complete their education and participate in activities available to all students. If you have a diagnosed disability and plan to utilize academic accommodations, please contact the Center at 305/348-3532 or visit them at the Graham Center (GC) 190. Please also notify me of any DRC accommodations as soon as possible. We can then work together to best coordinate your accommodations for this course. Whether or not you have a DRC plan for academic accommodations, if you anticipate any issues related to the requirements, structure, or format of this course, please reach out to me so we can discuss ways to ensure your full participation and success in this course.

Please visit our [ADA Compliance](#) webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course. Please visit [Blackboard's Accessibility Commitment](#) webpage for more information. For additional assistance please contact FIU's [Disability Resource Center](#).

**Crisis Resources:** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, sexual orientation, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can file a complaint through FIU’s Equal Opportunity Programs & Diversity Office. You may file a complaint with one of the Title IX coordinators listed below. Alternatively, you may file an anonymous complaint using our Ethical Panther Reporting Line, Convercent by calling 844-312-5358 or online at <https://compliance.fiu.edu/hotline.html>

You can also find the appropriate resources at the Dean of Students Office (305-348-2797). If you are in crisis, you can find the appropriate resources at Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Counseling & Psychological Services provides free and confidential mental health services to students that will facilitate and enhance their personal learning, emotional well-being, and academic skills development, contributing to their success at Florida International University.

CAPS Modesto Maidique Campus  
UHSC 270  
305-348-2277

CAPS Biscayne Bay Campus  
WUC 320  
305-919-5305

**LOOKING FORWARD TO A GREAT TERM!**

## LIT 4931: Schedule of Discussions and Readings

Aug. 22 Introduction, Syllabus, “19<sup>th</sup>-Century Gender and Domesticity”

Aug. 29 Poovey, “The Ideological Work of Gender” from *Uneven Developments* (pp. 1-15, 21-23)  
W. R. Greg, “Why Are Women Redundant?” (1862)  
Patmore, “The Angel in the House” (1854) (excerpt from Canto V “The Violets”, pp. 79-83)  
D. G. Rossetti, “Jenny” (1870)  
Webster, “A Castaway” (1870)

**Optional reading:** further excerpts from Patmore’s “Angel”

Sept. 5 Austen, *Mansfield Park* (1814) (Vol. 1)  
Cohen, “Stabilizing the Family System at Mansfield Park”

Sept. 12 Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Vols. 2 & 3)  
Said, excerpt “Jane Austen and Empire” from *Culture and Imperialism*

**Optional reading:** Introduction to Austen, *Mansfield Park*

Sept. 19 Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847) (Chs. 1-20)  
Poovey, “The Anathematized Race: The Governess and *Jane Eyre*” from *Uneven Developments*

Sept. 26 **Due: First Paper Thesis & Introduction for Peer Workshop (bring 2 copies to class)**

Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Chs. 21-End)  
Bennett and Royle, “Racial Difference” from *Introduction to Literature Criticism and Theory*  
McKee, “Racial Strategies in *Jane Eyre*”

**Optional reading:** Contexts & Criticism sections in Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Oct. 3 **Due: First Paper uploaded to Blackboard by 2:00 p.m.**

Gaskell, *Cranford* (1853)  
Beeton, “The Mistress” from *The Book of Household Management*

**Optional reading:** Introduction to Gaskell, *Cranford* (1853)

Oct. 10 Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) (Book First & Second)  
Banerjee, “Maggie Tulliver and Victorian Girls’ Education”

Oct. 17 Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Book Third, Fourth, & Fifth)  
Fearon, “Girls’ Grammar Schools” (1869)

Oct. 24 **Due: Proposal Draft for Final Paper/Project for Peer Workshop (bring 2 copies to class)**

Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Book Sixth & Seventh)  
“What Women Are Educated For” (1861)  
Levy, “Xantippe”

**Optional reading:** Introduction to Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)

Oct. 31 **Due: Proposal for Final Paper/Project uploaded to Blackboard by 2:00 p.m.**

H. W. H., “How to Choose a Wife” (1855)  
John Ruskin, “Of Queen’s Gardens,” from *Sesame and Lilies* (1865)

Nov. 7 Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893) (Chs. 1-15)  
“On the Adoption of Professional Life by Women” (1858)  
Review for discussion: W. R. Greg, “Why Are Women Redundant?” (1862)

Nov. 14 Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893) (Chs. 16-End)  
Amy Levy “The Ballad of Religion and Marriage”  
Annie Besant, “Marriage As It is, As It Was, and As It Should Be” (1879)

**Optional reading:** Introduction to Gissing, *The Odd Women* (1893)

Nov. 21 Presentations (if any)  
Augusta Webster, *A Housewife's Opinions* selections (1879)  
Augusta Webster, “The Happiest Girl in the World”

Nov. 28 **Final Paper OR Project due uploaded to Blackboard by 2:00 p.m.**  
Presentations (if any)  
Course Wrap-Up, Goodbyes, and Survey