The Brontës: Self and Society (#35175)

This course will critically examine the literary outpourings of the Brontë sisters, comparing and contrasting their works from a variety of different viewpoints. We will begin by studying the two most popular novels, Emily's Wuthering Heights and Charlotte's Jane Eyre (we will see film versions of these two classics as well). Then we will move on to Anne's Tenant of Wildfell Hall, which should illustrate some of the strengths and weaknesses of the story-telling impulse. Finally, we will read Villette, adjudged by many modern critics as Charlotte's masterpiece, and Jean Rhys's Wide Sargasso Sea. At each point, we will try on different readings of the novels, primarily psychological (sometimes auto/biographical and hence likely to be family systems oriented), Marxist, and feminist.

The course will conclude with a series of oral reports based on independent reading: each student will select for study a complete work or collection by or about the Brontës and relate it to the overall concerns of the course. Representative "works" include: primary readings--poetry by Emily, Charlotte, and/or Anne; reprinted juvenilia (many of the originals are here at UT's Humanities Research Center); Anne's Agnes Grey; Charlotte's Professor or the unfinished Emma (both published posthumously) or her "historical" novel, Shirley; the poetry and/or sermons of their father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë; possible sources in the Romantic poets and journals such as Blackwood's and Fraser's; secondary readings—the controversy surrounding Elizabeth Gaskell's "life" of Charlotte; various other biographical accountings of the sisters and their unpublished (in his lifetime) brother, Branwell; recent critical/theoretical studies, such as Helene Moglen's Charlotte Brontë: The Self Conceived, Terry Eagleton's Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës, Robert Keefe's Charlotte Brontë's World of Death, Cynthia A. Linder's Romantic Imagery in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, and Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's Madwoman in the Attic.

N.B. The Brontës and their creations have acquired an almost mythical status in the Anglo-American literary tradition. As a result, they can also be studied through a fascinating array of works for which they apparently served as "models." Our extended reading list may well include such titles as May Sinclair's The Three Sisters, Rachel Ferguson's The Brontës Went to Woolworths, Daphne DuMaurier's Rebecca, and Robert Barnard's The Case of the Missing Brontë.

Requirements: two short papers (3-5 pages each)—20% each of course grade
prospectus (1-2 pp.) plus seminar paper (10-12 pages)—35%
two oral reports (about 10 minutes each)—15%
active participation in class discussion/regular attendance—10%

N.B.: This class will meet the requirements of a substantial writing-flag course.
Meeting/reading/writing schedule:

1. Jan. 20--Introduction
   22--Begin WH
2.   25--WH
    27--WH
    29--WH
3. Feb.  1--WH
    3--Emily's poetry (WH films Feb. 4, 5, 7)
    5--Finish WH; criticism
4.   8--WH films; begin JE
    10--JE
    12--JE
5. [15]--President's Day
    17--JE
    19--JE (Welles film Feb. 21)
6.   22--Finish JE; film/criticism
    24--Begin TENANT
    26--TENANT; assign #1
7. Mar.  1--TENANT
    3--TENANT
    5--HRC Mss. Seminar (2nd Floor)
8.   8--HRC Photography Seminar (2nd Floor; TENANT film Mar. 9)
    10--Finish TENANT
    [12]--#1 due by 5 p.m.

   [Spring Break: March 15 - 19]

9.   22--Gaskell; begin conferences
    24--Finish Gaskell
    [26]--Interdisciplinary 19th-Century Studies Conference
10.  29--Begin VILLETTE; assign #2
    31--VILLETTE
    Apr. 2--VILLETTE; assign #2
11.  5--VILLETTE
    [7]
    [9]
12.  12--VILLETTE
    14--Finish VILLETTE; criticism (c/c PROFESSOR & EMMA)
    [16]--#2 due by 5 p.m.
13.  19--Begin WSS; begin conferences
    21--WSS
    [23]--Prospectus re final paper due by 5 p.m.; WSS film April 25
14.  26--Finish WSS; film/criticism
    28--Other "adaptations"
    30--Course review; reports begin
15. May  3--Reports continue
    5--Reports continue
    7--Reports conclude

Final paper: Wednesday, May 12, by 5 p.m.
Oral Reports
Over the course of the semester you will deliver two oral reports, the first drawn from our reserve list readings, the second at the end of the semester when you will present a progress report on your seminar paper. Detailed guidelines for the presentations will be distributed and discussed two weeks in advance of their delivery.

Writing
Although there will be some ungraded in-class writing, the primary writing will be three analytic papers; their due dates and length requirements appear on the first page of this syllabus. All paper assignments will be made with detailed instructions a full two weeks before they are due. Although I accept late papers up to a week after the deadline, they will be returned to you without the extensive commentary you will need to revise and improve your writing (the exception is the final paper, which must be turned in on time during finals week).

The Undergraduate Writing Center
The UWC is a resource available to you free of charge. Highly trained graduate and undergraduate consultants are available to assist you at any stage of the writing process from brainstorming to final editing. They also have numerous books and handouts available on grammar, format, and citation form. The location is FAC 211, and the hours are M-Th 9 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Walk-ins are accepted but appointments can reduce waiting time (call 232-2730 to reserve a time).

Grading Policy
The grading breakdown appears on page 1 of this syllabus. It stipulates regular class attendance, by which I mean not more than three absences over the course of the semester (preferably with advance warning or explanation after the fact) unless illness or emergency circumstances arise. Individual paper grades and your final course grade will be subject to the new +/- grading system. I expect that all cell phones will be turned off and that laptop computers will be reserved for the taking of notes.

Plagiarism
If you use words or ideas that are not your own, you must cite your sources; otherwise, you will be guilty of plagiarism. We will be discussing in class what constitutes plagiarism, and please be sure to get any questions about it answered at that time. We will also be discussing how to handle citations and conduct research, and you will be provided with the relevant handouts for future consultation.

Disabilities
Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259.

Office Hours
My office is in Parlin 221, and my office hours are MW 2-3:30 p.m. as well as by appointment. I can be reached by phone at 471-4991 (messages), 471-8970 (during office hours), and 476-8079 (home). My e-mail address is <mackay@mail.utexas.edu>.