**English 845: “Victorian Marital Models”**

Talia Schaffer Thurs 11:45-1:45, Room 4422

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and by appointment

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ENGL 84500. “Victorian Marital Models”. Talia Schaffer. 2/4 credits. Thursdays 11:45AM-1:45PM. (Cross-listed with WSCP 81000). [CRN 17361].

This course charts the shifting notions of the family, focusing especially on the institution of marriage, throughout the 19th century. We'll start with Austen, using Ruth Perry's influential analysis of 18th century and Regency fictions that mourn lost familial  affiliations in a new era of strictly patrilineal inheritance. Paying attention to changes in marriage law, we'll discuss the changing status of women and family in 1857 and 1870, and we'll look at the new ways marriage was being theorized in 'primitive marriage' discussions in anthropology. The course will use Mary Jean Corbett's, Sharon Marcus's, and Kelly Hager's work to address crucial mid-Victorian marriage plots in the Brontes, Trollope, and Dickens. The course will end with a consideration of Charlotte Yonge as promulgator of an alternative view of marriage, reading important recent criticism on affiliation in Yonge (and its relation to disability) by Tamara Silvia Wagner and Martha Stoddard Holmes. "Victorian Marital Models" asks how much space there was in Victorian marriage practices for alternative kinds of unions - queer unions, familial matches, weddings that functioned to generate networks of kinship and friendship, marriages motivated by nonerotic needs like vocational possibilities.

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Required books:

Buy your books through the Mina Rees Library’s amazon.com link and support our library: http://library.gc.cuny.edu/info/amazon.html

\*Readings with an asterisk are available via Blackboard

Required texts

Austen, Jane. *Mansfield Park* (Penguin)

ISBN 978-0141439808

Corbett, Mary Jean. *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (Cornell UP, 2010)

ISBN 978-0801476631

Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations* (Penguin)

ISBN 978-0141439563

Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss* (Penguin)

ISBN 978-0-14-143962-4

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England.* Princeton, 2007

ISBN 978-0691128351

Yonge, Charlotte. *The Clever Woman of the Family.* (Broadview)

ISBN

Recommended criticism:

(Please note: these are important books but they are expensive. Buy them if you can, but I will post the relevant sections on Blackboard and put them on reserve as well for those who can’t.)

Hager, Kelly. *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce* (Ashgate, 2010)

ISBN 978-0-7546-6947-0, or e-book ISBN 978-0-7546-9711-4

Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship in English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818* (Cambridge UP, 2004)

ISBN 978-0521687904

Course Schedule

*Historicizing Marriage*

Feb 2 introduction and handouts: the family history debate

\*Stone Ch 1, 2, 6, 7, 8

\*Berkowitz, Macfarlane

Feb 9 \*Perry, “Introduction,” Ch. 3, 5, 6

Feb 16 Austen, first half

\*Cleere, D.A. Miller (**Erin)**

Feb 23 Austen to end

\*Tuite (**Sean)**, Corbett ch. 2 **(Katie)**

Mar 1 Corbett, chapters 1, 3, 4

*Anthropologizing Marriage*

Mar 8 \*McLennan Ch. 1-7, Maine Ch. 5, 9

\*Psomiades

Mar 15 *Mill on Floss* first half

Corbett Ch. 5 **(Mikayla)**

Mar 22 *Mill on Floss* to end

\*Logan, \*Corbett article **(Alyssa)**

*‘Just Reading’ Marriage*

Mar 29 Marcus, ch. 1, 2, 5 **(Lisa)**

Apr 5 *Great Expectations* first third

Marcus, ch. 4 **(Julie)**

Apr 6-Apr 15 NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK

but keep reading Dickens

Apr 19 *Great Expectations* to end

\*Hager, intro, ch. 1, 2 **(Nathalie)**

*‘Familiar’ Marriage*

Apr 26 Symptomatic reading debate:

\*Latour, Felski, Marcus and Best, Kucich

May 3 Yonge, first half

\*Stoddard Holmes **(Melina)**, Wagner

May 10 Yonge to end

\*Schaffer

Learning goals:

In this course students should

1. Become familiar with recent theory about family and marital structures of the nineteenth century

2. Analyze significant works of nineteenth century fiction, canonical and noncanonical

3. Locate and critically engage with relevant research

4. Practice professional skills of conference-paper-length delivery and article-length writing

Requirements and grading:

One presentation (about 20 min.) 30%

One long paper (about 20 pp.) 50%

Effort grade 20%

Presentations:

Everyone has to give one brief presentation. Aim to keep it no longer than 20 min., which means about 8 double-spaced typed pages. Please give me a copy of the presentation afterwards, and bring extra copies for anyone else in the class who might want it. If two people are scheduled for presentations on the same day, you need to meet with each other to coordinate your talks.

In the presentation, you should analyze the critical article or theoretical reading for that day. *Do not summarize it.* Instead, briefly explain what the critic is arguing, isolate areas where you think the critic is wrong (or especially insightful), and suggest alternative ways of explicating the text. End by asking a question to get the discussion rolling. You must find one thing you admire about the article before you launch into your devastating critique.

Because this class occurs during lunchtime, I have a long-standing tradition of asking the presenter to provide a snack for the rest of the class. If you have special dietary needs please let us know, and if you are bringing in food, make sure you bring enough different kinds to accommodate vegans, people with nut allergies, etc. Don’t forget plates and/or napkins! You will not be graded on your baking skills. But people like chocolate.

Writing:

It is fine to have the topic for the long paper grow out of the presentation. This often happens naturally; the presentation engages with issues that intrigue you and you want to pursue them further. However, you should feel free to write on something completely different for your long paper, should you so desire.

Blogging:

I’ve set up a blog on Blackboard. Since we meet on Thursdays, I’d like to have everyone post a comment on that week’s reading by Tuesday at 5pm. You don’t have to have finished the reading in order to blog, and in fact your postings may be better if you are still in the middle of the text. It can be either an independent post or a response to someone else’s. I’ll also be posting prompts, questions, and links to interesting stuff. The blog is your chance to talk to each other, try out presentation ideas, ask about confusing matters, and float crazy theories.

Those of you who are not Grad Center students need to see Vin DeLuca at the registrar’s office, room 7201 (registrar@gc.cuny.edu, (212) 817-7500). He’ll register you and then you can contact Achia Samuels to enroll in Blackboard: asamuels@gc.cuny.edu, or (212) 817-7314.

Reserve Readings

Recommended texts, which will be on reserve:

Corbett, Mary Jean. *Family Likeness*

Deresiewicz, William. *Jane Austen and the Romantic Poets*

Hager, Kelly, *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce*

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women*

McFarlane, Alan, *Marriage and Love in England*

Michie, Elsie. *The Vulgar Question of Money*

Michie, Helena. *Victorian Honeymoons*

Miller, D.A. *Jane Austen: The Secret of Style*

Nelson, Claudia. *Family Ties*

Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations*

Phegley, Jennifer. *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England*

Shanley, Mary Lydon. *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*

Stocking, George. *Victorian Anthropology*

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*

Tuite, Clara. *Romantic Austen*