English 7320: Dead Girls

Bulletin Description: Intensive study in selected texts. Selection of authors varies from year to year at the discretion of the instructor. Seminars are offered as follows: 7120X [791X], area 1; 7220X [792X], area 2; 7320X [793X], area 3; 7420X [794X], area 4; 7520X [795X], area 5; 7620X [795.6X], area 6; 7720X [795.7X], area 7. With the permission of the graduate deputy, students may take a seminar in the same area twice if the topics are different.

Discussion: Young flirts. Debutantes. Street Walkers. In the nineteenth century, or at least in its novels, consumption, Roman fever, and madness claim these girls quite young. This class focuses on the surprisingly common figure of the dead girl in nineteenth-century American literature. We investigate the death of the young girl through a range of issues, including the construction of femininity and maternity, the intersection of class and ethnicity, the contrast between urban and rural space, and the formation of national identity. We speculate about the nature of realism and naturalism and explore the visual culture of dead girls of the time. We focus on the work of Louisa May Alcott, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Henry James, Edith Wharton, and others. Class requirements include on-line activities, a final project, and a presentation.

Objectives:
During the class, you will
- develop ability to understand and analyze literary texts
- develop understanding of literature in its interdisciplinary contexts (e.g., cultural, social, historical, scientific, psychological, and political)
- learn to appreciate literary complexity, ambiguity, and paradox
- develop understanding of interrelation of language, culture, and society
- be able to reason, think critically, evaluate, use evidence, and make judgments
- be able to write clearly and imaginatively, in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and audiences
- engage in civil debate

Course Schedule:
7/15, 7/18: Little Women
Angela Estes & Kathleen Lant, “Dismembering the Text: The Horror of Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women”

7/22: Daisy Miller
Lisa Johnson, “Daisy Miller: Cowboy Feminist”

7/25: Maggie
Robert M. Meyers, “Crane’s City: An Ecocritical Reading of Maggie”

7/29: The Yellow Wallpaper
Barbara Hochman, “The Reading Habit and “The Yellow Wallpaper”

8/1, 8/5:  
Iola Leroy
Michael Borgstrom,” Face Value: Ambivalent Citizenship in Iola Leroy”

8/8, 8/12  
The House of Mirth
Wai-Chee Dimock, “Debasing Exchange: Edith Wharton’s The House of Mirth”
Donald Pizer, The Naturalism of Edith Wharton’s The House of Mirth”

8/15:  
The Awakening
Molly Hildebrand, “Gender, Art, and Suicide in Kate Chopin’s The Awakening”
Winfreid Fluck, “The American Romance and The Changing Functions of the Imaginary”

Requirements
Reading
Each class will have required reading. Please read the assignments critically and well, as your readings of the material will form the basis of classroom discussion. Please bring your texts to class. (you may print them out or bring a laptop or e-reader. You may not use your phone).

Course Materials (at http://libguides.brooklyn.cuny.edu/deadgirls)
Louisa May Alcott, Little Women
Henry James, Daisy Miller
Stephen Crane, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Yellow Wallpaper
Frances Harper, Iola Leroy
Edith Wharton, The House of Mirth
Kate Chopin, The Awakening

Attendance and Class Participation:
Missing class will negatively affect your grade. Please be on time, as late arrivals disrupt the class. Preparation and participation are essential for this class. Please be prepared to discuss reading. If you miss more than four classes, you will receive an “F” for participation. Two latenesses count as one absence. Class participation is worth 15 % of your grade.

Visual Material:
Please submit at least three images to the student gallery on our class site. These should be 19th – early 20th century images, related to the material we are reading. Visual material is worth 5% of your grade.

Response Papers (on the discussion board):
You will post one response paper per novel (250-500 words) on the class discussion board. You must post this by at least three hours before the final class meeting during which we discuss each novel. Response papers are meant to be speculative. Ask questions; investigate textual elements that puzzle you; use the response papers to gather feedback for your own ideas. Response papers are worth 15 % of your grade.

Presentations:
Students will be responsible for two presentations during the semester. The presentations are worth 20% of your grade.

**Final project:**
Please choose one of the following:

1. A research paper (12-15 pages), which makes an argument about one or two novels and supports that argument with evidence from at least four scholarly sources.
2. A multi-media presentation of one of the novels. This should include the following: historical material, visual material, scholarly material, other primary material. It should also include a 7-9 page introductory essay that introduces the material and details the argument you are making about the novel. The final project is worth 45% of your grade.

**Policies**
- Students are required to complete all of the assignments for class.
- Writing assignments are due three hours before the beginning of our class meetings. If papers are not submitted at that time, they are considered late.
- Students are required to maintain a portfolio of their work, including all in-class assignments and originals of all papers returned with my comments.
- Students should keep back-up copies of papers.
- Papers must be typed in a 12-point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins.

**Academic Honesty**
The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete texts of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at these sites: [http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Academic_Integrity_Policy.pdf](http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Academic_Integrity_Policy.pdf) and [http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/portal/docs/AI_Implementation_Procedures.pdf](http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/portal/docs/AI_Implementation_Procedures.pdf). If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

**Disability-Related Academic Accommodations**
Note regarding Student Disability Services: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the CSDS please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her as soon as possible and at an appropriate time.

**Evaluation criteria for class participation**
Your class participation will be judged on the basis of your respect for class members’ comments and your attentiveness to the discussion (people who don’t like to speak frequently will not be penalized, but you should make an effort to participate). I also expect that your participation will reflect your having done the reading for each class.

**Evaluation criteria for written work**
From a list by Lewis Hyde, edited by Sue Lonoff, with thanks to Richard Marius’s writing handbook.

The Unsatisfactory Paper.
The D or F paper either has no thesis or else it has one that is strikingly vague, broad, or uninteresting. There is little indication that the writer understands the material being presented. The paragraphs do not hold together; ideas do not develop from sentence to sentence. This paper usually repeats the same thoughts again and again, perhaps in slightly different language but often in the same words. The D or F paper is filled with mechanical faults, errors in grammar, and errors in spelling.

The C Paper.
The C paper has a thesis, but it is vague and broad, or else it is uninteresting or obvious. It does not advance an argument that anyone might care to debate. “Henry James wrote some interesting novels.” “Modern cities are interesting places.”
The thesis in the C paper often hangs on some personal opinion. If the writer is a recognized authority, such an expression of personal taste may be noteworthy, but writers gain authority not merely by expressing their tastes but by justifying them. Personal opinion is often the engine that drives an argument, but opinion by itself is never sufficient. It must be defended.
The C paper rarely uses evidence well; sometimes it does not use evidence at all. Even if it has a clear and interesting thesis, a paper with insufficient supporting evidence is a C paper.
The C paper often has mechanical faults, errors in grammar and spelling, but please note: a paper without such flaws may still be a C paper.

The B Paper.
The reader of a B paper knows exactly what the author wants to say. It is well organized, it presents a worthwhile and interesting idea, and the idea is supported by sound evidence presented in a neat and orderly way. Some of the sentences may not be elegant, but they are clear, and in them thought follows naturally on thought. The paragraphs may be unwieldy now and then, but they are organized around one main idea. The reader does not have to read a paragraph two or three times to get the thought that the writer is trying to convey.
The B paper is always mechanically correct. The spelling is good, and the punctuation is accurate. Above all, the paper makes sense throughout. It has a thesis that is limited and worth arguing. It does not contain unexpected digressions, and it ends by keeping the promise to argue and inform that the writer makes in the beginning.

The A Paper.
The A paper has all the good qualities of the B paper, but in addition it is lively, well paced, interesting, even exciting. The paper has style. Everything in it seems to fit the thesis exactly. It may have a proofreading error or two, or even a misspelled word, but the reader feels that these errors are the consequence of the normal accidents all good writers encounter. Reading the paper, we can feel a mind at work. We are convinced that the writer cares for his or her ideas, and about the language that carries them.