

## Senior Seminar: Recovering American Women Writers

LITT 4610

The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey

T/TH 2:30-4:20, B103

Spring 2013

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Blackboard: LITT-4610-003 - SENIOR SEMINAR

### Required Texts

Collins, Julia A. *The Curse of Caste; or The Slave Bride* [1865]. Ed. William L. Andrews. Oxford UP, 2006. ISBN 9780195301601

Crafts, Hannah. *The Bondwoman's Narrative*. [c.1853-1860] Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Grand Central Publishing, 2003. ISBN 9780446690294

Howe, Julia Ward. *The Hermaphrodite*. [c.1846-1847] Ed. Gary Williams. U of Nebraska P, 2009. ISBN 9780803218871

Lane, Mary E. Bradley. *Mizora: A Prophecy*. [1890] Ed. Jean Pfaelzer. Syracuse UP, 2000. ISBN 9780815628392

Sedgwick, Catharine Maria. *Married or Single?* Volumes 1 and 2. Harper & Brothers, 1857. [Cornell reprint ISBN 9781429739764 AND ISBN 9781429739771.]

Note: The Sedgwick books cannot be purchased at the bookstore, as they are out of print. If you prefer to read these 2 volumes in book form, you'll need to order them from Amazon.com (they sell a bound edition of a microform copy from Cornell University Library). If you'd rather not spend the money, you can read this book on-line at the Wright American Fiction collection:

<http://www.lettrs.indiana.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=wright2;idno=wright2-2177v>

For the other books, **please order the editions specified here**. We will be spending a good bit of time on the scholarly introductions to these books, along with the novels themselves.

You will also need an updated style guide. Good choices are *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (March 2009) ISBN: 9781603290241 or *A Writer's Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition (with 2009 MLA update) by Diana Hacker, ISBN: 0-312-59335-X.

### **Other materials:**

*Wright American Fiction* 1851-1857 (on-line collection of 19th century American fiction)

*North American Women's Letters and Diaries* (Library Database)

*Dictionary of Literary Biography* (in Stockton Library reference section)  
*Godey's Lady's Book* Online (<http://www.history.rochester.edu/godeys/>)  
*Making of America Collection* at Cornell (<http://digital.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/>)  
*Making of American Collection* at U of Michigan (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>)  
Research Society for American Periodicals  
(<http://home.earthlink.net/~ellengarvey/rsapresource1.html>)  
Emory University Women Writers Resource Project (<http://womenwriters.library.emory.edu/>)  
MLA's Guidelines for Editors of Scholarly editions ([http://www.mla.org/cse\\_guidelines](http://www.mla.org/cse_guidelines))  
Selected critical essays posted on Blackboard (BB)

## **Course Description**

The last 25 years has produced an explosion of literary and historical research on literature written by American women before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As a result of the re-publication of literary works by women writers who were well-known in their times and the discovery of both unheralded and unpublished works by women writers, the contours of American literature and the narratives of American literary history have been dramatically revised. These recovered texts raise important and fascinating questions: what was it possible to show or say about such issues as gender, race, and sexual identity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? what were the cultural and material conditions of publication and dissemination of literary texts? how has literature been defined and redefined to include or exclude certain kinds of writing? This seminar will explore the politics and process of textual and historical recovery of writings by American women. We will work with a range of literary and critical texts and materials in order to examine issues of representation, identity, and canonization in the context of 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature in the US.

All students will write frequently and be expected to share their individual research with the class. The capstone project provides advanced literature students the opportunity to plan, prepare, write, and present a substantive individual research project.

## **Course Requirements**

1. *Attendance*: You are expected to attend class regularly having completed the assigned reading and/or writing and to be prepared to discuss the texts and your own work. Four absences will result in a lower grade; six absences mean failure in the course. Lateness disrupts the learning experience of other students and distracts me, so make every effort to arrive on time.

2. *Research Project*: Students in this seminar will choose **one** of two final research projects.

- A. Your research paper for this course will investigate a newly discovered or lesser-known work by an American woman writer of the nineteenth century, situating and explaining its form and content in terms of our discussions of the writers and works covered this term or in other American literature courses. Your final product will constitute an "edition" of the literary work you decide to write about, and your paper will be comparable in treatment to the introductions to texts we will read, and include an annotated bibliography.

- B. Your research paper will focus on a recovered text that has become more well-known and about which a critical discussion has emerged. Your paper will engage with issues of genre, style, historical context related to your text, and your final project will include an extensive literature review of your text and annotated bibliography, as well as a 20 page paper on a topic and hypothesis you will develop during the term.

3. *Shorter Papers*: Each of you will complete **four** short writing assignments in preparation for your final paper. These papers are designed to assist you in developing your final project and focus on identifying a text and topic, researching the historical context for your text, considering your text in terms of genre, and analysis of style. Specific instructions for each assignment can be found below.

#### 4. *Presentations*

##### **Team presentation:**

Along with another student, you will lead a 30-45-minute discussion, focusing on question and connections between assigned critical readings and the primary text. You will need to summarize the main points of the critical readings and apply them to the section of the novel we are reading for that class. Feel free to be creative in presenting your material and in engaging the class in discussion. Your group should meet with me during office hours in advance to discuss your plans for the class.

**Research Presentation:** The final two weeks of class are set aside for individual student presentations of final research projects.

#### 5. *Blackboard*

You will use Blackboard to access course readings, receive assignments, and communicate electronically with your classmates and me. If you have trouble accessing or using Blackboard at any time during the semester, please contact the computer helpdesk by calling x4340 or emailing Student-Help-Desk@stockton.edu.

##### *Other policies:*

- All writing should be error-free. You are expected to proofread for typographical, spelling, mechanical, and grammatical errors. I will mark down for mechanical and grammatical errors.
- I will not give incompletes at the end of the semester unless you have warned me well in advance and have appropriate reasons.
- I will not accept papers as email attachments unless previous arrangements are made. It is not my responsibility to make sure that you have handed in all assignments; it is yours.
- All assignments for the class must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.
- For obvious reasons, please silence cell phones and do not text message, check email, listen to music, or surf the web during class.

*Grades will be calculated as follows:*

Paper 1 - 10%

Paper 2 - 15%

Paper 3 -15%  
Paper 4 -15%  
Team Presentation -10%  
Individual Research Presentation - 10%  
Final project (paper, annotated bibliography, appendices if required) -25%

*Special Needs:*

Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in West Quad 110 (609/652-4998). More information can be found at [www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html](http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html)

*Academic Honesty:* The Literature program expects students to maintain the highest standard of academic honesty. You should make yourself aware of Richard Stockton College's Academic Honesty Policy, which can be found in the Student Handbook ([intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=67&pageID=2#10](http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=67&pageID=2#10)). You should also make yourself familiar with the penalties for violations of the policy and your rights as a student. Please be aware that plagiarism (one form of academic dishonesty) includes, but may not be limited to: using all or part of a source, either directly or in paraphrase, either intentionally or unintentionally, whether that source is published, or online, or taken from a fellow or former student, without properly acknowledging that source. If you are found to have represented the work or ideas of others as your own, intentionally, or unintentionally, you will face serious consequences, as follows:

1. If this is the first time the student has been found to have plagiarized, he/she will receive an "F" for that paper or assignment and/or the course.
2. For second offenses of plagiarism, the student will receive an F for the course.
3. Whenever possible, a student who is found to have plagiarized a paper or assignment, in full or in part, should meet with the professor of the class for which the paper is written in order to review and discuss the suspect work.

Additionally, in accordance with Stockton College policy, Literature faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Provost of Academic Affairs. Students may be subject to discipline by the college, such as being placed on academic probation or expelled. If you have a question specific to a paper you are working on, please bring it to my attention.

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

Note: This syllabus is a work-in-progress and subject to change. If you are late or miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and/or what changes were made to the syllabus or schedule. All changes will be posted to Blackboard.

### Week 1

1/22 Course introduction: syllabus, assignments, expectations, presentations.

1/24 Jane Tompkins, "Masterpiece Theater: The Politics of Hawthorne's Literary Reputation" in Finklestein and McCleery eds. *The Book History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Routledge, 2006. 337-

344, and Judith Fetterley, "Commentary: Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers and the Politics of Recovery," *American Literary History* 6:3 (1994) 600-611. (BB)

#### Week 2

1/29 Frances Smith Foster, "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Development of African American Print Culture." *American Literary History* 17.4 (2005): 714-740. (BB)

1/31 Catharine Sedgwick, "Cacoethes Scribendi" in *Provisions: A Reader From 19<sup>th</sup>-Century American Women*, ed. Judith Fetterley, Indiana UP, 1985, 41-59. (BB)

Nelson, Dana. "Rediscovery" in Damon-Bach, Lucinda L. and Victoria Clements, eds. *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*. Boston, MA: Northeastern UP; 2003. 286-93. (BB)

#### Week 3

2/5 Sedgwick, *MOS* VI, Preface-Ch. X, v-127

2/7 Sedgwick, *MOS* VI, Ch. XI-XX, 128-261  
Presentation on Carolyn Karcher, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History" in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives* (BB)

#### Week 4

2/12 Sedgwick, *MOS* VII, Ch. I-XII, 5-162  
Presentation on Charlene Avallone, "Catharine Sedgwick and the Circles of New York" *Legacy* 23.2 (2006) (BB)

2/14 Sedgwick, *MOS* VII, Ch. XIII-XXIV, 163-283.  
Presentation on Deborah Gussman, "Equal to Either Fortune: Sedgwick's *Married or Single?*" in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives* (BB) and Maglina Lubovich, "*Married or Single?*": Catharine Maria Sedgwick on Old Maids, Wives, and Marriage." *Legacy* 25.1 (2008) 23-40. (BB)

#### Week 5

2/19 Howe, *The Hermaphrodite*, "Introduction" and Part I, ix-89.  
Presentation on Gary William's "Introduction"

2/21 Howe, Part II, 93-160.

**2/22 Assignment 1 due:** Identification. By now you need to have selected the text you intend to work on this semester. You are going to be spending a lot of time with this text so be sure that you choose well, that you have found something that you feel confident will hold your interest. Write a brief account of what draws you to this text, what about it attracts you. What do you already know about the text and the writer? What do you need to find out? Where will you look

for more information? What questions do you have about the text, the writer, the period in which it was written? Turn in through Blackboard. (3-4 pages)

#### Week 6

2/26 Howe, Part III, 163-198. Presentation on Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author" in *The Book History Reader*, 277-291. (BB)

2/28 Crafts, *The Bondwoman's Narrative*, Introduction and Ch. 1-5

#### Week 7

3/5 In class workshop on historical context assignment (#2).

3/7 Crafts, Ch. 6-15

Presentation on Nina Baym, "The Case for Hannah Vincent" 315-331 and Katherine E. Flynn, "Jane Johnson Found! But Is She 'Hannah Crafts'?" 371-405 in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Hollis Robbins eds. *In Search of Hannah Crafts: Critical Essays on The Bondwoman's Narrative*, Basic 2004.

**3/8 Assignment 2:** Historical Context. What have you been able to discover about the context that produced this text? Biographical information about the author, information about social or political context, literary history, all offer possible areas of research; in short you should investigate any adjacent facts that can help you to understand what is at stake in the production of this particular text. What occasioned this act of writing? What can you discover about the milieu that surrounded the creation of this text? What are its political or social ramifications? Your paper should include a discussion of your text. What does this context help you to understand? **See page 10 of syllabus for additional instructions!** Turn in through Blackboard. (5-10 pages depending on how much you have to tell)

Week 8 [March 11-17: Spring Break]

#### Week 9

3/19 Crafts, Ch. 16-21

Presentation on William Andrews, "Hannah Craft's Sense of an Ending," and Karen Sánchez Eppler, "Gothic Liberties and Fugitive Novels: *The Bondwoman's Narrative* and the Fiction of Race" in Gates, ed. (BB)

3/21 Collins, *The Curse of Caste*, Introduction - Ch.4

#### Week 10

3/26 Preceptorial Advising – no classes

**Assignment 3 due:** Genre. Compare your text with other texts of a similar genre (or sub-genre) from the same period. What do you know about this literary form? How much does your text

conform to literary conventions? How does it differ? What does this comparison tell you about this particular text? Your paper should contain specific references to traits of your text, that is your discussion of genre should help you to read this text. Turn in through Blackboard. (5 pages)

3/28 Collins, Ch. 5-20

Presentations on Rafia Zafar, "Of Print and Primogeniture, or, The Curse of Firsts" *African-American Review* 40:4 (2006) 619-624, and P. Gabrielle Foreman, "The 'Christian Recorder,' Broken Families, and Educated Nations in Julia C. Collins Civil War Novel *The Curse of Caste*" *African-American Review* 40:4 (2006) 705-716 (BB)

Week 11

4/2 Collins, Ch. 21-31, plus 2 conclusions.

Presentations on Jennifer Rae Greeson, "'Ruse it Well': Reading, Power, and the Seduction Plot in *The Curse of Caste*." *African-American Review* 40:4 (2006) 769-778, and Tomeiko Ashford Carter, "The Sentiment of the Christian Serial Novel: *The Curse of Caste; or The Slave Bride*, and the AME Christian Recorder," *African-American Review* 40:4 (2006) 717-730.

4/4 Lane, *Mizora*, Introduction and Part I, Ch. 1-VII

Presentation on Christine Mahady, "No World of Difference: Examining the Significance of Women's Relationships to Nature in Mary Bradley Lane's *Mizora*," *Utopian Studies* 15:2 (2004) 92-115, and Lorna Fitzsimmons, "Lane's Jeremiadic *Mizora*." *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*. 24.3-4 (2003). (BB)

Week 12

4/9 Lane, Part 1, CH. VIII-XIII

4/11 Lane, Part II, CH. I-XI

Presentation on Duangrundi Susksang, "The Separatist Utopian Vision of Mary E. Bradley Lane's *Mizora* in *Redefining the Political Novel: American Women Writers, 1797-1901*, ed. Sharon Harris, U of Tennessee P, 1995, and Katherine Broad, "Race, Reproduction, and the Failures of Feminism in Mary E. Bradley Lane's *Mizora*" *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 28:2 (2009) 247-266. (BB)

Week 13

4/15 **Assignment 4:** Style/Close reading. Choose particular portions of your manuscript to analyze and write a paper that explores the style and literary feel of your text. Turn in through Blackboard by noon.  
(5 pages)

4/16 Writing and Research/Individual Conferences

4/18 Writing and Research/Individual Conferences

Week 14

4/23 Writing and Research/Individual Conferences

4/25 Presentations

Week 15

4/30 Presentations

**Final Research papers due in class.** (For both Project A and B, you should draw on all your previous assignments. However, your final paper should not simply be a consecutive assemblage of these assignments. Instead you need to write a piece that melds the textual and contextual information you have amassed about your text with literary analysis to provide an account of what matters about this material and why it is worth reading.)

5/2 Presentations and celebrations.

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Additional Guidelines for Research Projects and papers:

**For Project A: Investigating a newly discovered or lesser-known work by an American woman writer of the 19th century**

*Finding the Literature*

As in almost every research paper you will ever write, finding your topic is perhaps the most crucial and difficult part of the assignment. Since the purpose of this assignment is for you to play the part of scholars working at the margins of the field—in the archive, or close to it—your task will be to find a work to write about that not many scholars have treated before. It may be effective to find a lesser-known work by a writer who is known but not canonical. The question for many of you will be “how do I know whether a writer is too well-known?” While I would be happy to respond to your specific inquiries as you investigate possibilities, you should be able to discover the status of your writer and the work you find by carrying out some searches on our library databases—especially MLA Bibliography, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete and the Literature Resource Center. If you find one or two articles and a dissertation on your writer, and nothing on the specific text you’ve selected from that writer, you’ve likely found a lesser-known work.

One of the best resources for this assignment may be the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series in our library’s reference section. There are several volumes on nineteenth-century American literature, as well as specific volumes dedicated to women writers. Each entry should provide you with biographical information on an American woman writer along with some brief comment on her most well-known works, but most important, at the beginning of each entry is a *bibliography* of the writer’s work. If you find a writer you like in the *DLB*, the job then becomes one of making sure not too many scholars have written about the text you select from the bibliography of their works, then finding the novel, story or essay listed. While Stockton does not own most nineteenth century journals, you may find some of them on one of the *Making of America* websites, or you may order a volume or reel of microfilm containing stories of



interest through our circulation department's interlibrary loan service (ILLIAD). Stockton also subscribes to several databases that may be useful for this project, including *America's Historical Newspapers*, *Black Thought and Culture*, *North American Women's Letters and Diaries*, and *Oxford Reference Online*.

There are plenty of other sources on the web that may lead you to interesting stories not yet very well known. *The Research Society for American Periodicals* (RSAP) website is particularly good, with links to mainly periodicals available full-text on-line.

The work you choose may be a short story, a personal narrative, a short novel, or work of literary non-fiction on a topic relevant to our course. If you discover poetry, that's fine, but in that case you should concentrate on several shorter works or one extended poem. Don't try to write your paper on a single sonnet. A published book of poetry would be better!

Finally, even as you begin this project, do not expect to find the text and the writer you want to focus on for your research paper right away. Patience will pay huge dividends. You do not want to choose the first story you read, and then discover it's really not something you're very interested in. At the same time, *the WORST thing you can do is to wait too late to begin this project and then be forced to write on "any old story" because you haven't left yourself enough time to do the research.*

After you've decided on a work to write about, your job will be to do enough research on the writer that you can introduce her to your reader in some detail. Obviously, details relevant to her career as a writer are what you're looking for most—that is, her education, who encouraged her (or discouraged her) to write, her religious and social affiliations, her relations with publishers, etc.

### *Scope of the Project*

Your research paper should read like an introduction to the work you have chosen. It should include the following information (some of which will be addressed initially in your shorter papers):

- A brief biography of your writer, including the history of her writing career
- A discussion of where the work you have chosen fits into her life and career
- A detailed discussion of the work itself—how it might relate to the works we've read in the course thus far, a close reading of the plot, themes, setting, characters, imagery, allusions, etc., and what it reveals about American women's experience in the nineteenth century.

### *Matters of Form*

What you hand in should be your introductory essay, a copy or typescript of your chosen work, and a *properly formatted* annotated bibliography indicating all those works you have used in writing your paper. Please staple your paper together—no plastic covers please. Illustrations

(for example, a photocopy or scan of the first page of the work in its original setting/context) are encouraged.

**For Project B: focus on a recovered text that has become more well-known and about which a critical discussion has emerged**

You will have a great deal of freedom of choice in designing your topic, within certain parameters. The annotated bibliography must include 15-20 peer-reviewed scholarly books or articles. You are permitted to consult internet sources, but they must be reputable and scholarly; however, no internet sources, no matter the quality, will count toward the 15-source minimum. Papers that fall short of 20 pages will receive a lowered grade; papers under 18 pages will receive a failing grade. Research papers must follow MLA format.

This paper should incorporate the following elements:

- *Attention to the scholarly conversation about this author/text/theory*: incorporate at least five peer-reviewed journal articles or books related to your topic (e.g. not web pages).
- *A clearly defined argumentative thesis*: you need to identify your position in relation to the critical conversation – are you adding to it with new information or interpretations, disagreeing with a strand of argument, or addressing an area that has not yet been considered? Simply summarizing the criticism and texts will not suffice.
- *Close reading of the primary text or texts to support and flesh out your argument*.
- Expansion or rethinking of the research and writing of your shorter papers.
- Perfect MLA citation

The paper's introduction should address the following questions:

- What is the scholarly conversation that has already taken place about this author and/or text?
- How does your paper contribute to this conversation? For instance, will you disagree with an accepted reading? Will you provide a different/new lens with which to read this text?

**For Assignment #2: Historical Context**

This assignment requires you to explore nineteenth-century magazines, newspapers, and other writings through electronic databases in order to enrich your understanding of the text you'll be researching this term. There are many possibilities for this assignment, including:

- Search for usages of a key term, concept, or item that you come across repeatedly in a particular novel. How does what you learn about contemporary usage of this term or concept affect your interpretation of the novel? (The OED is a good source for this.)
- Find images in magazines, newspapers, or advertisements that relate to your text. How do these images illuminate your interpretation?
- Search a newspaper database to find articles on a historical events or individuals referred to in the text. How does reading those articles affect your interpretation?

Remember that your sources must all be from the nineteenth-century and that your goal (for the final paper) is to be able to make an argument about the text that is enriched by what you have discovered. I'm confident that you can come up with possibilities that I am not aware of, so be creative in your approach!

**Quotation and Citation**

I expect proper MLA citation for each and every paper. Do not quote too extensively or paraphrase and summarize ideas without properly citing your sources. In ALL CASES, any quotation you use from an outside source should be placed *within a sentence of your own*. All quotations should be “sandwiched”—that is, preceded by a sentence or phrase that makes it clear why you’re using the quotation, and followed by a sentence or more explaining its meaning or importance. In-text citations and a works cited list are required for every assignment.