

NOTE: This is a revised syllabus that tries to account for some of the challenges we faced in defining Sensation as a transatlantic movement and illustrating the similarities between the national literatures. While the differences remain, we've tried to highlight the diversity of sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. This course is aimed at advanced undergraduate English majors (the course serves as a Capstone experience for them) and graduate students.

Transatlantic Sensations

English 433/5533

Histories of Reading, Writing, and Publishing

Dr. John Barton and Dr. Jennifer Phegley

Wednesdays 5:30-8:15



Course Description:

In recent years, nineteenth-century sensationalism has attracted much attention among scholars of both American and British literature and culture. Sensation literature, however, has yet to be examined in a transatlantic context, despite the fact that the genre emerged within a transnational publication system that shaped its development from the early 1800s to the end of the century. This course seeks not only to map the development of the “sensation novel”—the nineteenth century’s best-selling genre on both sides of the Atlantic—but also to account for the emergence of a new kind of writing that informed a range of genres and was determined by reciprocal influences that defy traditional conceptions of a one-way cultural flow from the “Old World” to the “New.”

In the course, we will focus on two burgeoning literary fields: transatlantic and sensation studies. While focusing on the novel and emphasizing issues related to race, class, and gender, the course will offer an exciting exploration of criminal behavior and punishment, eroticism and sexual exploitation, medical and technological innovations—topics that captivated large audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. Throughout the course we will give special attention to publication contexts and readers' responses that influenced shifts in generic conventions and the adaptability of sensation literature throughout the nineteenth century.

Course Texts:

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Broadview Press)
Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Broadview Press)
George Lippard, *The Quaker City* (University of Massachusetts Press)
William Gilmore Simms, *Martin Faber: The Story of a Criminal* (Kessinger Publishing)
George Thompson, *"Venus in Boston" and Other Tales of Nineteenth-Century City Life* (University of Massachusetts Press)

Course Requirements:

Class Participation (10%): Because this is a course that emphasizes class discussion and collective investigation, your success depends greatly on your willingness to participate actively. This means attending class, doing the reading, coming to class prepared, contributing to class discussion, evaluating your peers' written work, participating in small group work, and doing presentations.

If you have more than three unexcused absences, your final grade will be lowered by half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence. Absences that are the result of a documented illness, the illness of an immediate family member for whom you are required to care, the death of an immediate family member, the observance of a religious holiday, or the representation of UMKC in an official capacity will be excused. You should notify me of excused absences and make arrangements to make up work in advance when possible.

Daily Reading Quizzes (10%): We will not have either a mid-term or a final exam in this class (yeah!). However, we will have a heavy reading load each week (boo!). In order to ensure that you keep up with the reading, we will give a quiz at the beginning of class that is geared toward making sure you have read and comprehended the assigned text for that day. There will be 10 quizzes worth ten points each adding up to a total possible score of 100 points, which will be converted to the corresponding letter grade before being factored into your final grade.

Discussion Board Posts (10%): During the semester you will write a minimum of **ten discussion board posts** on our Blackboard Discussion Forum. **Five of these posts should be discussion starters** that raise questions for the class to ponder. These can include passages from the texts we are reading that are particularly interesting to you, questions about the development of the characters or themes, or inquiries about the author's intentions or readers' potential responses. **The remaining five posts should be responses to your classmates' discussion starters.** This balance is intended to maintain a true discussion with some people initiating threads when they are excited about a particular text or question, while others can respond to threads when they aren't as inspired to initiate one themselves.

Discussion starter posts should be made by 7:00 p.m. the night before class and discussion response posts should be made by noon the day of class. You are expected to keep up with the posts as a part of your reading for the class and to make sure that you post throughout the semester rather than all in one week or at the end of the semester! **See the handout on "Tips for Posting" on Bb for more information about how to craft effective posts.**

Presentation and Précis [GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY] (10%): Each graduate student will sign up to read and present on one scholarly article or book chapter related to the assigned reading. These articles are posted on Blackboard as PDF documents, and all students are encouraged to read them. However, the presenter is responsible for summarizing the main points of the article, evaluating its effectiveness, and connecting it to the day's reading. To aid your presentation, you should create a **1-2 page précis**.

A précis is simply a concise summary. Your presentation should break the essay down into its most compelling elements while also providing an overview of its main points. **You will be required to bring copies of your précis to class on the day of your presentation. These should fill no more than the front and back of one sheet of paper.** The précis shall consist of the following parts:

- **THE CITATION:** Provide the full citation for your book in MLA format at the top of the page.
- **GENERAL SUMMARY:** Provide a one-paragraph summary of the topics covered in your book and explain the approach taken. What is the main purpose of the book?
- **THE QUOTABLES:** Select a few of the "most interesting" or "most useful" quotable passages (a few sentences) and/or some of the "most frustrating" or "most debatable" quotable passages from the book. In your presentation, you will explain how these quotes are emblematic of the article as a whole.
- **THE QUESTIONS:** Write three leading discussion questions linking your book to the class reading for the day. Try to get at issues that will be useful for all of us as we think about the parameters of courtship and marriage in the Victorian age.

You will discuss your article with the class on the day designated on the schedule. Your goals during the presentation are to concisely convey the major concepts presented in the article and to explain how the article is relevant to the course and/or to the novels we are reading. You will have 10-15 minutes to summarize the contents of the article and your assessment of it. You should end with a few discussion questions that will encourage us to think about the relationship of the book to the reading we have done for that day.

Victorian Wiki Assignment (25%): Andrea Kaston Tange, Associate Professor of English at Eastern Michigan University, has set up a student-generated, publicly available online "wiki" that will house original documents from the nineteenth century (e.g., periodical articles, cartoons, letters, etc.) with annotations and analysis. The goal is to begin to build an archive of primary materials that provide useful constellations of perspectives within which to understand nineteenth-century literature. Dr. Tange has invited us to help build this site.

Here are the nuts and bolts: In teams, you will do archival research to locate a short text relevant to our course theme of sensationalism that will be posted on the wiki for use by students around the country. For example, you might find a cartoon poking fun at women readers of sensational novels; a review of a sensational book, play, or author; or an article on some sensational subject or theme (murder, arson, insanity, etc). The document you choose must be an original text from the period that is not easily accessible or frequently reprinted. You may scan or—if it is something that is copyright protected—retype the text in preparation for annotating and posting it to the website, along with an accompanying essay that you write collaboratively.

After being assigned to teams, you will:

1. Identify 3-4 possible documents for instructor feedback and approval by Week Seven. Submit hard copies of the documents with a brief description of why you chose them and what you might do with them if you used them for the Wiki project.
2. Narrow your focus to one document, using feedback to guide you.

3. Generate a “clean” and copyright compliant copy of the text for posting to the Wiki.
4. Annotate the text with hyperlinks or footnotes that explain key terms, phrases, and references.
5. Write a brief analysis of the meaning of the text and its significance to our understanding of sensationalism or transatlantic studies.
6. Present your analysis in class during Week Eleven.
7. Use feedback from the class to produce a final draft that you will post to the Wiki site by Week Twelve.
8. Evaluate yourself and your team members in writing; we will consider both the final project and your team evaluations when assigning each group member’s individual grade.

To find original 19th-century articles, serialized novels, stories, poems, reviews, etc. go to the Miller Nichols Library website (<http://library.umkc.edu/>) and type in these titles under “Databases.” Once you sign in to a database, you will be able to conduct title, author, or keyword searches for documents:

- **British Periodicals I and II and American Periodicals Series.** These are by far the single most important databases for nineteenth-century studies that the library has. Both provide access to hundreds of British and American periodicals. These full text databases take you directly to articles that you can read online or download as PDFs.
- **Newspaper Databases:** MNL has several useful newspaper databases accessible from its webpage including the **19th-Century British Newspapers**, **19th-Century U.S. Newspapers Database**, the *Godey’s Lady’s Book Full Text Archive*, the *Times Digital Archive* (the *Times of London* full text archive starting in 1875), and the *New York Times full-text database* starting in 1851.
- Another great resource is the on-line database called **C19** that allows you to keyword search through more than 11 million documents, including all of the articles included in the three nineteenth-century microfilm periodical collections listed below. Choose a theme or title or author and begin searching the database for relevant articles/images and their citations. You will then need to track down copies of the items you identify. C19 includes an index to *Punch* magazine, the most famous humor magazine in Victorian England, which is an excellent source of cartoons. Listed below are several of the most promising places to locate the items you find in a C19 search (some will link directly to full text in BP I & II and American Periodicals Series).
- **Microfilm Periodicals Collections at MNL:** UMKC’s library houses several excellent microfilm collections that feature thousands of pages of periodicals. Located in the lower level of the library in large files that line the south wall are the **Early British Periodical Microfilm Collection**, the **English Literary Periodical Microfilm Collection**, and the **American Periodicals Microfilm Collections, Series I and II**. You can find the guides to these collections in the first floor microfilm reference section (EBP: PR408.P37 E32; ELP: PR1.B74 1968; AP: PN4832.A486 1971). These guides will list the titles of periodicals included in the collections. In order to find relevant articles, you will have to choose the periodical you want to search and then browse the reels that contain that periodical.
- **Illustrated Magazines in Hard Copy at MNL:** Issues of *Punch* from 1842-1864 are housed on the second floor of Miller Nichols Library with the periodicals. Issues of the *Illustrated London News* from 1844-1898 are stored on the third floor with the oversized books. **PLEASE, PLEASE treat these valuable historical documents with care.** They are extremely fragile and can disintegrate with rough handling or even rapid turning of the pages.

- For historical overviews of the periodicals you are interested in, consult the following reference works: **Alvin Sullivan’s *British Literary Magazines*** (Ref. PN5124.L6 B74 / Vol. 3); **Walter Houghton’s *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*** (Ref. Z2005. H6 / Vol. 3); and **Edward E. Chielens’s *American Literary Magazines: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*** (Ref. PS201 .A43 1986).

Paper Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (10%): You will write a 2-3 page paper proposal on some topic related to the course so that we can make suggestions that will help you refine and focus your ideas for the final paper. You can focus on any author or topic related to the course. We would like to see you incorporate primary sources from the nineteenth century (in addition to any fictional texts from the course reading) as well as secondary scholarly sources. Feel free to build on your discussion board posts, your précis presentation, or your Wiki research when developing the topic for your paper. You may also want to consider searching the library databases for additional articles that relate to your topic.

Your proposal should follow the form of a conference abstract/proposal (we will provide some examples). It should include a general description of your goals, a summary of the evidence you will use, and a preliminary thesis statement. You should also include a brief **annotated bibliography of sources related to your paper topic. The bibliography should include at least five secondary scholarly sources and two primary sources from the period (these can come from the Wiki project but if you use the document you posted to the wiki, that cannot count as one of your two sources).** Your annotations should be about 1-2 paragraphs long and should explain how the source listed will further contribute to your paper. Use proper MLA Style for citations. Due Week Thirteen.

Final Paper (30%): After receiving feedback from us on your proposal, you will write a 15-20 page paper investigating some element of the course by providing an original analysis of both primary and secondary sources. We encourage you to use a combination of resources from the nineteenth-century and today to support your claims. You will be required to share a draft of your paper with the class and participate in a peer response session. Due Exam Week.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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| Week One | <p><u>Introduction to Transatlantic Sensations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus and Assignments <p><u>Defining Transatlantic Studies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Approaches to Transatlantic Studies <p><u>Defining 19th-Century Sensation Fiction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pamela K. Gilbert, “Genre: The Social Construction of Sensation” • David S. Reynolds, “The Sensational Press and the Rise of Subversive Literature” • Sally Streeby, “Sensational Fiction” • Video Clip/Discussion of David Lynch’s <i>Twin Peaks</i> and Melinda Huskey, “<i>Twin Peaks</i>: Rewriting the Sensation Novel” |
| Week Two | <p><u>18th-Century Origins of Sensationalism</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Decemberists <i>The Hazards of Love</i> and Sensational Balladry • 18th-Century Execution Narratives <p><u>British Newgate Fiction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Harrison Ainsworth, from <i>Jack Sheppard</i> (250-258, 412-424, |

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| | <p>477-481 in Broadview Edition of the novel)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G.W.M. Reynolds, from <i>The Mysteries of London</i> “The Body-Snatchers” • Presentation: Lynn Pykett, “The Newgate Novel and Sensation Fiction, 1830-1868” • Presentation: Simon Joyce, “Reading Run Riot: Criminal Subcultures in the Newgate Novel” |
| Week Three | <p><u>American Gothic Fiction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Gilmore Simms, <i>Martin Faber: The Story of a Criminal</i> (2-55) • Edgar Allan Poe, “The Black Cat” (Bb) • Presentation: Kevin W. Jett, “A Seductive Plea from the Gallows: Reconsidering William Gilmore Simm's <i>Martin Faber</i>” |
| Week Four | <p><u>American Working Class Sensations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Lippard, <i>The Quaker City</i> (Introduction; 1-195) • Presentation: Michael Denning, “Mysteries and Mechanics of the City” (from <i>Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America</i>) • Presentation: David S. Reynolds, “Radical Sensationalism: George Lippard in his Transatlantic Contexts” (from <i>Transatlantic Sensations</i>) |
| Week Five | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Lippard, <i>The Quaker City</i> (195-393) • Meet at Library: Database Demonstrations, Microfilm Introduction |
| Week Six | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Lippard, <i>The Quaker City</i> (395-575) • Presentation: Dana Nelson, “Gynecological Manhood: The Worries of Whiteness and the Disorders of Women” (from <i>National Manhood</i>) |
| Week Seven | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George Thompson, <i>The Housebreaker</i> • Presentation: Christopher Looby, “George Thompson's 'Romance of the Real': Transgression and Taboo in American Sensation Fiction” |
| Week Eight | <p><u>Transatlantic Domestic Sensations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDEN Southworth, Selections from <i>The Hidden Hand</i> • Louisa May Alcott, “Behind a Mask” • Ellen Price Wood, “The Self-Convicted” (http://www3.shropshire-cc.gov.uk/etexts/E000338.htm; link also on Bb) • Presentation: John Cyril Barton and Jennifer Phegley, “An Age of Sensation Across the Atlantic” (from <i>Transatlantic Sensations</i>) • Presentation: Susan David Bernstein, “Transatlantic Magnetism: Eliot’s ‘The Lifted Veil’ and Alcott’s Short Fiction” (from <i>Transatlantic Sensations</i>) |

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| Week Nine | <p>British Middle-Class Sensation Fiction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Elizabeth Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> (7-237) • Presentation: Kathernine Montwieler, "Marketing Sensation: <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> and Consumer Culture" • Presentation: Lynette Felber, "The Literary Portrait as Centerfold: Fetishism in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>" |
| Week Ten | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mary Elizabeth Braddon, <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> (238-437) • Presentation: Andrew King, "Sympathy as Subversion? Reading <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> in the Kitchen" • Presentation: Richard Nemesvari, "Robert Audley's Secret: Male Homosocial Desire in <i>Lady Audley's Secret</i>" |
| Week Eleven | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wiki Project Presentations |
| Week Twelve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class: SPRING BREAK |
| Week Thirteen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilkie Collins, <i>The Woman in White</i> (49-353) • Presentation: Richard Collins, "'Marian's Moustache': Bearded Ladies, Hermaphrodites, and Intersexual Collage in <i>The Woman in White</i>" • Presentation: Dallas Liddle, "Anatomy of a 'Nine Days' Wonder': Sensational Journalism in the Decade of the Sensation Novel" |
| Week Fourteen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilkie Collins, <i>The Woman in White</i> (353-617) • Presentation: Deborah Wynne, "Wilkie Collins' <i>The Woman in White</i> in <i>All the Year Round</i>" • Presentation: Tamar Heller, "<i>The Woman in White</i>: Portrait of the Artist as a Professional Man" • Paper Proposals/Annotated Bibliographies Due on Bb Friday at 5p.m. |
| Week Fifteen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Class: WRITING DAY |
| Week Sixteen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper Drafts Due on Blackboard by 5 p.m. Monday • Peer Response Groups Meet in Class • Course Evaluations |
| Exam Week: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Paper Due Wednesday at 5:30 p.m. |