

Syllabus:

**ENG 229 / WST 201: Topics in Literature:  
Home (Not So) Sweet Home in Literature.  
Spring 2017  
Instructor: Audrey Le**

Prerequisites: 3 hours of English.

Topics in Literature: Home (Not So) Sweet Home in Literature

Home Sweet Home. Such is the ideal, but domestic bliss is not always as it appears. In this course, we will study the subjectivity of “home” and the portrayal of women in the domestic sphere in selected British and American literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The chosen texts depict intense clashes between the public and private spheres, and the domestic strife caused by the intersections of, and interactions between, age, sex, class, race, mental (in)stability, marital status, sexual preference, and traditional “moral” judgment. The literature in this course depicts women and transgendered individuals as they negotiate their place in the home to engage as active participants in their lives without the moral restrictions of patriarchal cultural norms. Students will learn of cultural and historic expectations of changing women’s identities and the ‘truth’ of what happens behind closed doors.

Required Texts (available at the UMaine bookstore)

<i>Alias Grace</i>	Margaret Atwood
<i>Sacred Country</i>	Rose Tremain
<i>A Room of One’s Own</i>	Virginia Woolf
<i>House on Mango Street</i>	Sandra Cisneros
<i>House of Sand and Fog</i>	Andre Dubus III

- Excerpted critical essays will be posted as pdfs in the weekly conference

Excerpts of the following texts will be provided:

<i>Behind Closed Doors</i>	Amanda Vickery
<i>The Architecture of Happiness</i>	Alain de Botton
“The Angel in the House”	Coventry Patmore
“The Yellow Wallpaper”	Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Films:

*The Hours* Michael Cunningham (based on the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf)

**Learning Outcomes:**

With a backdrop of historical and cultural events, students will learn about various literary trends, including Sentimentalism and Realism, as well as cultural influences of dominant middle class domestic heterocentric norms. Theoretical issues will also be addressed, including the meaning of patriarchy, hegemony, transgender identities, and micro-level identities within larger meso scopes of family, home, and community. Students will also learn close reading; evaluating and synthesizing of texts, and will have exposure to literary criticism about the

chosen texts.

**Technology Requirements:**

The course will be conducted on First Class. You will also need Real Player and Quick Time Player to access archived movies and audio clips.

**Please contact CED Tech Help with any questions:** 1-877-947-HELP (4357) or 581-4591.

**Time Management:**

**The class will be fast-paced. Students should plan on being in the class (on-line) every day.**

The coursework reflects the standard university ratio of course work: 2 hours outside the class for every hour of "class time." On average, there will be approximately 75-100 pages of reading each week. In addition to the readings and critical written responses, students can expect to spend approximately 5-6 hours each week on-line, including initial critical essays and subsequent discussions and contributions.

**Structure of Class:**

Although this is an asynchronous course, there is a very specific weekly schedule. Students may contribute to the conference at any time during the day or night, but it is important to stay in step with the conferences we're working with each day.

Students will be responsible for and prepared to discuss (write) about the assigned reading for each text. The course is demanding in both the reading and the writing, and on-line discussions will be devoted to a detailed discussion of the literary works. Students are expected to expand upon the topic of conversation; the goal is for students to engage in "close reading" and apply those techniques to other literary texts. **The ability to write coherently about literature is a crucial gauge of your mastery of the course objectives.**

1. Students are expected to read the assigned texts. **Active reading** is crucial to this course; annotate your texts by marking significant quotations and specific scenes. Keep notes: they will help you significantly during your writing assignments.
2. For each reading, students will post a **Written Critical Response** to a prompt—or series of prompts—that will generate ideas about the literature. Assignments will be clearly posted. Students' in-depth written critical responses to the prompts generally will generate equivalent to 3-4 pages of (double spaced) typewritten pages *per* assignment, unless otherwise indicated.
3. Students will be expected to quote specific passages from the texts and to expand upon the discussion prompts and topic of conversation; the goal is for students to engage in close reading and literary analysis.
4. Students are expected to read ALL of the instructor's lectures and posts.
5. Students are expected to read at least five other students' posts, though it's best if students read all posts to prevent repetition in discussions.
6. Students are expected to **respond to at least two other students' posts** on the conference as part of class discussion and engagement each week. Students have freedom of choice of

the number and selection of emails to respond, but remember: keep up with the work, read the conference daily, and respond with insightful comments and additional ideas. If you pace yourself, follow the syllabus as scheduled, and write well, your grade will reflect the outstanding work.

### **On-Line Writing for the course:**

The on-line writing —written critical responses as well as general discussion — is an opportunity for students to explore the implications and interpretations of the literature, and prove their understanding of the texts. Students will write longer mid-term and final essays. If students have read the texts and have been engaged in on-line discussions throughout the semester, their writing will reveal the level of understanding of the texts.

### **Due Dates:**

It is expected that all Critical Written Responses as well as responses to other students will be completed by Fridays. (The early bird gets the worm on creative assignments.)

If you fall behind, you have until Sunday to complete that week's work, but after Sunday, your work will be marked as late. Do your very best not to get behind in the readings or responses.

### **Quality of responses:**

Each initial written critical response should be well-analyzed and insightful. Approach the material as an academic argument. Written critical responses should be in essay form with an introduction, analytical body paragraphs, supporting examples and quotations from the text, and a conclusion, unless the assignment specifies otherwise. Body paragraphs of each essay should present ideas with unity and coherence, and conclusions should be just that: your conclusion (rather than a mere restatement) of your ideas about the literature. **Always, always support your opinion with quotations from the texts.**

### **Class Discussion and Engagement:**

After students have posted your initial written critical response (with quotations from the text and a list of works cited in MLA format), students should submit discussion responses to *at least two other students*. Discussion is a place to generate more discussion, argumentation, close reading, and general literary analysis. Quotations from the text are necessary in discussion posts as a way to further analyze the literature. Responses to other students' work should be written with a critical eye; but even if you find another interpretation, please be respectful to other students' ideas. Some of the themes we will be studying are universal; you will find that there are current issues that relate to the readings. Get a discussion going! If students' responses to others' written work is basic ("I agree" or "I liked that one, too"), students will receive a zero for the discussion assignment. The discussion/engagement is a *significant* part of your of your overall grade. Engage in the discussions and let it flow~

### **MLA Documentation:**

Students are expected to follow the MLA style of documentation on all contributions and essays, using in-text citations and a list of works cited. For MLA format information, refer to our Rules for Writers conference, in which you will find Diana Hacker's *Rules for Writers*. You may also go to the On-Line Writing Lab at Purdue University:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Refer to the MLA formatting information whenever necessary.

**Respect:** I do my best to treat every class member with respect. I ask that you do the same to me and to each another. This means allowing others to express their ideas and responding with respectful comments or questions. Respect also means engaging with the ideas put forth in the course. Ask questions but also be prepared to research answers as others ask engaging questions. I will guide you in this learning process.

**Plagiarism & Academic Integrity:**

Academic honesty is vital to an intellectual experience, especially when the instruction is on-line. Remember that there are plenty of ways for instructors to find the same information that students can find and, although the Internet can illuminate, it can also be a place to get caught in the Web of deceit. Plagiarism will result in failure for the assignment and can result in failure for the course. The simplest way to avoid problems is to **credit the author for his or her research, ideas and/or quotations**; if it's not your idea, cite the information by using MLA format. If you have questions about MLA format or about how to cite specific examples, or about whether or not something needs to be cited at all, write to me. I have posted information on our Rules for Writers conference; you may also refer to the on-line OWL at Purdue citation guide.

**Responses from your instructor:**

On most days, I will respond to your questions are within just a few hours; I will respond within 24 hours at most. If several students ask the same question, I will post an answer with "FAQ" in the subject line.

I often “reply with quote” for further illumination of a topic. If I am particularly concerned about the quality or quantity of your work, I will contact you directly on First Class.

**Mid-term Exam:**

Mid-term exam: to be announced

**Final Exam:**

The final exam prompt will be posted on the last day of classes

**Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities who may need services or accommodations to participate fully in this class should contact Ann Smith, Director of Disability Services in 121 East Annex,(voice) 581-2319, (TTY) 581-2325, as early as possible in the semester.

**Assessment:**

40% Initial Critical Written Responses  
20% Daily on-line discussion, regular class participation, and engagement in the topic  
20% Mid-term exam  
20% Final exam

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE:**

Weekly assignments will be posted on the main board & in the weekly conference. Lectures and critical essays will also be posted in the weekly conferences.