

ENGLISH 4604  
**The Victorian ‘Woman Question’**  
Dr. R. Maitzen  
Fall 2016  
MWF 1:30-2:30 McCain 2130

One of the liveliest of the many intellectual and social debates that raged in the 19th century was that over what the Victorians called the “Woman Question.” This rather sweeping phrase actually referred to a complex array of questions: What kinds of characters, behaviours, values, or roles were “natural” for women? What (if any) reforms of women’s social, legal, political, or marital status were desirable, and why (or why not)? What moral standards could or should be applied to women? How ought their sexuality to be understood and depicted? What were the implications for masculinity and for male rights and prerogatives if women’s roles changed? In this course we will focus on a range of readings across genres that set and answer these questions in interesting, diverse, and often provocative ways, focusing especially on education, work, marriage, art, and “fallen” women. Although we will discuss historical, political, and social contexts for our readings, our approach will be primarily literary, and discussions and assignments will focus on all the particularities of our texts—their forms, plots, style, and language—as much as on the various ways they interrogate or reproduce conventional Victorian ideas about gender identities and roles and about marriage.

**Books:**

- John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Broadview)
- Susan Hamilton, ed., *Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors: Nineteenth-Century Writing by Women on Women* (Broadview)
- Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Oxford World’s Classics)
- George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Oxford World’s Classics)
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (Oxford World’s Classics)
- Christina Rossetti, *“Goblin Market” and Other Poems* (Dover Thrift Editions)
- George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford World’s Classics)
- Selected stories and poems (links on Brightspace)

**Requirements:**

- 2 ‘Start-Ups’ (5% each)
- 2 ‘Follow-Ups’ (10% each)
- 1 Group Presentation (20%)
- 1 Critical Essay (40%)
- Attendance & Participation (10%)

**Contact Information:**

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30-11:30, F 2:30-3:30, by appointment, or whenever my office door is open.

E-Mail: [Dr.Maitzen@Dal.Ca](mailto:Dr.Maitzen@Dal.Ca) (Please check the syllabus first if your question is about the course schedule, requirements, or policies.)

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Start-Ups:** Twice this term, on assigned dates, you will be responsible for bringing to class a handout for everyone (*bring 24 copies*) identifying TWO short passages (maximum ½ a page) from that day's assigned reading that you consider particularly interesting (be prepared to explain why) and TWO pointed questions on broader aspects of that day's reading to help us get discussion going. Most classes there will be two students bringing these in. You must also post the passages and questions to the "Start-Ups" forum on our Brightspace site so that we have an archive of them for future reference. Include the topic and reading and the date in your subject line. (5% each)

**Follow-Ups:** Three times this term, you must follow up on one of your classmates' Start-Ups by writing a thoughtful response to one of their questions or a focused analysis of one of their passages. Follow-Ups must be between 300 and 500 words (approximately 1½ -2 double-spaced pages); they should be carefully composed and proofread, and must make specific reference to examples from our readings. To get credit, you must submit your Follow-Up no more than one week after the Start-Up you're responding to was distributed. (So, for example, to get credit for a response to a Start-Up for our first class on *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* on September 19, you would need to submit it by September 26.) Follow-Ups should be submitted to me in person, in class, in hard copy: do not email them to me or leave them in my mailbox. You may choose the dates on which you submit Follow-Ups, but you cannot submit more than one in the same week and the last date on which they will be accepted is **December 5**, so plan ahead so that you don't run out of opportunities. You are free to follow up on your own start-up materials. *Please help me keep track of your submissions by numbering them #1 of 3, #2 of 3 and so on.* **The best two of your three marks will count towards your final grade. If you are happy with your first two marks, you can stop there.** (10% each)

**Seminar Presentations:** Once this term, you will work with a small group to prepare a 45-minute seminar presentation on one of our major readings. Each presentation must include some specific elements: detailed guidelines are posted to Brightspace and should be reviewed carefully as you prepare. Tasks may be divided up as you see fit within the group, but except in extraordinary circumstances, all members of a group will receive the same grade. At least one person from each group should meet with me in person before you finalize your plans. At least 24 hours advance notice is required to book A/V equipment. (20%)

**Paper Proposals and Papers:** I will distribute specific guidelines and suggested topics for the papers later this term. See Course Policies for information about late assignments. (40%)

**Attendance and Participation:** Regular attendance and informed participation are expected. See Course Policies for details. (10%)

## COURSE POLICIES

**This syllabus explains in detail all policies specific to English 4604.** By registering in the course, you are agreeing to proceed on these terms. To guarantee consistency and transparency for all students in the course, no individual exceptions or exemptions will be negotiated. **This syllabus also highlights some key university-wide policies.** Please note that you are governed by all Dalhousie University policies as stated in the University *Calendar*, regardless of whether they are reiterated in this syllabus. It is your responsibility to be aware of both the rules and your rights as a student at this University.

**GENERAL COURTESY:** Please be punctual and stay for the whole time, so as not to interrupt or distract from our work together as a class. Cell phones, iPods, and any other electronic devices should be turned off before class begins. Everyone will appreciate being able to concentrate! Out of respect for your classmates' privacy as well as mine, you may not record our classroom sessions unless you need to do so because of a properly documented accessibility issue.

**LAPTOPS AND TABLETS:** I discourage the use of laptops in English 4604, as seminar classes rely on active participation, not passive observation. I have seen too many students in seminars take refuge behind their screens and, in their determination to record the class discussion, become parasitic on those students who generate and sustain it. If you do bring your laptop, be aware that I will be monitoring its use. If you seem to be typing a lot and not speaking, I'll have a word with you at some point about how we can change that balance. Be sure you aren't doing anything on your computer *besides* taking notes: especially in a seminar class, when we're seated around a common table, there's no excuse for distracting your classmates with other activities — and it's also extremely disrespectful to them and to me. Our time together is brief and precious. Treat it that way! I promise to do the same.

**LATE PAPERS:** Your term papers are due as indicated on the schedule. Anticipate and work around technical problems: keep cloud back-ups and print-outs of rough copies in case your computer breaks down or is stolen or some other catastrophe occurs. Late papers will be penalized  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade per day (e.g. B to B-); the clock starts immediately after the deadline and stops when Dr. Maitzen receives the paper. Late papers may receive only minimal commentary. Papers that are more than one week late will not be accepted at all unless you have received special permission in advance due to a family or other emergency.

**ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION:** Students should register as soon as possible at [Academic Support Services](#) if they want to receive academic accommodations under the terms established by the University. Follow the link on our Brightspace site for more information.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Being part of the academic community at Dalhousie means committing yourself to the principles of academic integrity that underlie all of our work. The fundamental principle of academic integrity is that people receive credit for work that they have done themselves. You must not pass off the work of others as your own or allow others to submit your work under their names. As stated in the [University Calendar](#), "Violations of intellectual honesty are offensive to the entire academic community, not just to the individual faculty member and students in whose class an offence occurs." Such violations betray the trust

necessary to the academic enterprise, show disrespect to your colleagues in that enterprise (including both your instructors and your fellow students) and undermine your claim to your degree.

Our Brightspace site includes a more detailed explanation of the rules and procedures that protect academic integrity, as well as link to Dalhousie's complete policies. I will review them in class and in the instructions for your essays, but ultimately it is your responsibility to be informed about and comply with these policies.

**EMAIL:** Dalhousie assigns all students an official email address; this the only email address that I am supposed to use to communicate with you about academic and administrative matters. Be sure to check your Dalhousie email address frequently in order to stay current with Dalhousie communications. At your own risk, you may choose to have your Dalhousie email forwarded to a different account. Do not email me questions about course requirements or policies without carefully checking the syllabus and Brightspace course materials first. I try to respond to emails promptly, but don't assume I will get (or can answer) your message immediately, or at night or on weekends. Treat emails as business communications: see 'How to Email Your Professor' (linked to our Brightspace site) for further guidance.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:** Regular attendance and ready, informed participation from all students are crucial to the success of any seminar class. Students who don't show up, or who show up unprepared, are not contributing their share to our collaborative effort or maximizing their own opportunities to learn. To reinforce the importance of your presence and your input, the following policies will apply.

**Attendance:** Every student gets two "free" absences to allow for the occasional minor illness or other scheduling complication. Beyond that, except in cases of serious, specifically documented illness or proven family (or other) emergency, every absence will cost you one percentage point of the 10% set aside for attendance and participation. If you develop an ongoing health or personal problem that affects your attendance, meet with me (or email me) as soon as possible so that we can discuss what support and accommodation you need. The university has many resources for students in difficulties and many people (including me) will want to help you; the worst thing you can do is cut yourself off. Students who miss a significant number of classes without sufficient reason will not be permitted to submit assignments for this course.

**Participation:** Students who are consistently quiet during class discussion will receive a warning part way through the term; after that, every completely silent week (or any three consecutive silent classes) will also cost one percentage point. Shy students are encouraged to meet with me to develop strategies for comfortable participation.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1      Defining the ‘Woman Question’**

W Sept. 7 Introduction; sign up for ‘Start-Ups’

F Sept.9 Lecture: The Victorian ‘Woman Question’  
Submit presentation preference sheet

### **Week 2      Voicing the ‘Woman Question’**

M Sept.12 Cobbe: “Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors”; Oliphant, “The Condition of Women” (in Hamilton, ed.); Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (Ch. 1)

Start-Ups: R. Maitzen

W Sept.14 Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (all)

F Sept.16 **Presentation I: Mill and/or Cobbe and the Victorian ‘Woman Question’**

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
          \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week 3      Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

M Sept.19 *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Letter; Chs. I-XV)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Sept.21 *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Chs. I-XXII)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Sept.23 *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Chs. I-XXX)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

### **Week 4      Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

M Sept.26 *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Chs. I-XLIV); Cobbe, “Wife-Torture in England”

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Sept.28 *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (all)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Sept.30 **Presentation II: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall***

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 5 Poetry And Poet(esse)s; Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh***

M Oct.3 Stodart, "Poetry and the Poetess" (in Norton *Aurora Leigh*); Hemans, "Corinne at the Capitol"; "Woman and Fame"; LEL, "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs Hemans"; EBB, "LEL's Last Question," "To George Sand: A Desire," "To George Sand: A Recognition"; Bessie Parkes, "To Elizabeth Barrett Browning" (Links to e-texts of these poems are set up on our Brightspace site. You can also look for them in any anthologies of Victorian women poets.)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Oct.5 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (Books 1-2)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Oct.7 *Aurora Leigh* (Books 3-5) [last day to drop without a W]

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 6 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh***

M Oct.10 Thanksgiving: No Classes

W Oct. 12 *Aurora Leigh* (Book 6; Greg, "Prostitution")

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Oct. 14 *Aurora Leigh* (Books 7-8)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 7 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*; Fallen Women**

M Oct.17 *Aurora Leigh* (Books 1-9; Letters on *Aurora Leigh*; Contemporary Critical Reception)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Oct.19 **Presentation III: *Aurora Leigh***

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Oct.21 Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “Jenny“; Augusta Webster, “A Castaway“ (links to e-texts of these poems are set up on our Brightspace site; they can also be found in various Victorian poetry anthologies)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 8 Fallen Women: Rossetti, *Goblin Market*; Gaskell, “Lizzie Leigh”**

M Oct.24 Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Oct.26 **Presentation IV: *Goblin Market*, “Jenny,” “A Castaway”**

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Oct.28 Elizabeth Gaskell, “Lizzie Leigh” (a link to an e-text of this story is set up on our Brightspace site; it can also be found in the Broadview collection *Nineteenth-Century Stories by Women*)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 9 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss***

M Oct.31 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Book I Chs. I-XI)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Nov.2 *The Mill on the Floss* (Books I & II)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Nov.4 *The Mill on the Floss* (Book III)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**November 7-11 Fall Study Break: No Classes**

**Week 10 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss***

M Nov.14 *The Mill on the Floss* (Books IV & V) [last day to drop with a W]

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Nov.16 *The Mill on the Floss* (Book VI Chs. I-X)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Nov.18 *The Mill on the Floss* (all)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 11 George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*; *Odd Women* and *Old Maids***

M Nov.21 **Presentation V: *The Mill on the Floss***

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Nov.23 Cobbe, "Celibacy vs. Marriage," "What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?";  
Oliphant, "The Grievances of Women" (in Hamilton, ed.)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Paper Proposals Due**

F Nov.25 *The Odd Women* (Chs. I-X)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 12 George Gissing, *The Odd Women***

M Nov.28 *The Odd Women* (Chs. I-XV)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

W Nov.30 *The Odd Women* (Chs. I-XXIV)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Dec. 2 *The Odd Women* (Chs. I-XXVII); Caird, "Marriage" (in Hamilton, ed.)

Start-Ups: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

**Week 13 Gissing, *The Odd Women*; The End**

M Dec.5 *The Odd Women* (all); Contemporary Reviews

T Dec.6 **Presentation VI: *The Odd Women***

Group: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

F Dec.9 Final essays due on Brightspace