

**HL2036: Virgins and Vixens - Intersectional Romance
Spring 2019**

**THIS IS A PRELIMINARY DRAFT (SUBJECT TO CHANGE): PLEASE REFER TO
THE FINAL VERSION ON NTULEARN ONCE THE SEMESTER BEGINS**

Instructor: Professor Samara Cahill

Email: sacahill@ntu.edu.sg

Office Hours: TBA

Phone: 6592 1534

Office: HSS-03-73

Time: TBA

Location: TBA

Course Aims

1. You will analyze the diverse representational options for (and limitations of) women in the Anglophone world of the British Empire in the period 1660-1832
2. You will chart the historical and formal developments of Anglophone literature as they intersect with the representation of women in this period
3. You will build a toolkit of theoretical terms and concepts that will enable you to analyze the romance genre, its canonization (or exclusion from the canon), questions of intersectionality and social justice, and how contemporary romance novels build on and intervene in the conventions and tropes of “classic” novels.

Content

Focusing on the concepts of “intersectionality” and the “romance” will enable you to chart literary developments across the eighteenth century (and beyond) while also tackling questions of canon formation, the patriarchal literary tradition, theories of the novel, the representation of women, the virgin/whore binary, the public/private binary, women’s contribution to national identity (and the consequent regulation of femininity, motherhood, and who counts as an acceptable/desirable hero and heroine), and questions of value and authority in the assessment of “popular” and “classic” literature. Our module will focus on canonicity, fanfiction, reader response, adaptation (feminist or not), the politics of representation, gender stereotypes, and women’s agency. The romance genre is a billion-dollar industry founded on the popularity of books for, by, and about women that has struggled for “respectability” since the seventeenth century. We will explore what is at stake when romances and their readers are not identified with literary good judgment. From Fantomina’s “private Vexation” to Anastasia’s “Oh, my!” to critical condescension regarding the “Happily Ever After” (HEA) at the core of the romance genre, we will explore why romance can’t get any satisfaction from the literary establishment.

Books to Purchase

****Please purchase on your own through [Book Depository](#), [OpenTrolley](#), or [AbeBooks.com](#), etc.**

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour* (Broadview) (If you prefer, you can purchase a less expensive e-copy of this text at the Broadview website)

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

Final unit text (we will choose/allocate these within the first three weeks of the semester):
Ayesha At Last, Crazy Rich Asians, Fifty Shades of Grey, The Kiss Quotient, Let Us Dream, Midnight, Pride and Porters, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Twilight (alternates are acceptable if you can justify their selection on the basis of intersectional representation or intervention in the romance canon)

Week 1 - Introduction

Introductions and syllabus overview

Week 2 - Where's the Love for the Romance? Why Do Intersectionality?

Assignment

Excerpts from: Collins and Bilge, *Intersectionality*; Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *The Wrongs of Woman*

Week 3 – The Romance: Feminocentric Adventure

Assignment

Excerpts from Scudery, *Clelia* and Cavendish, *The Blazing World* (NTULearn OR https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/cavendish/margaret/blazing_world/contents.html); and a selection of fairytales (NTULearn)

Group Presentation: Excerpt from Weisser, *The Glass Slipper*

Week 4 – The Virgin/Whore Binary: Performing Women

Assignment

Haywood, *Fantomina* (NTULearn)

Group Presentation: Excerpt from Rodale, *Dangerous Books for Girls*

Week 5 – Seducing the Subaltern?

Assignment

Richardson, *Pamela* (first half)

Group Presentation: Excerpt from Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel*

Week 6 – The Subaltern Seduces

Assignment

Pamela (second half)

Group Presentation: Excerpt from Binhammer, *The Seduction Narrative in Britain, 1747-1800*

Week 7 – The Marriage Market

Assignment

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (first half)

MIDTERMS DUE: TBA

MIDTERM RECESS

Week 8 – Class and the Single Girl

Assignment

Pride and Prejudice (second half)

Week 9 – Race, Racism, Slavery, and the Sentimental Heroine

Assignment

Anonymous, *The Woman of Colour*

Week 10 – Class, Orientalism, and the Romance

Assignment

Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (first half)

Group Presentation: Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts”

Week 11 – Colonialism, Romance, and Feminist Orientalism

Assignment

Jane Eyre (second half)

Group Presentation: Zonana, “The Sultan and the Slave”

Week 12 – Contemporary Romance and Intersectionality

Assignment

Novels assigned by Week 3

Group Presentation: Excerpt from Teo, *Desert Passions: Orientalism and Romance Novels*

Week 13 – Contemporary Romance and Intersectionality

Assignment

Novels assigned by Week 3

Week 14 – Semester Review

FINAL ESSAYS DUE: TBA

Extensions will only be granted for documented cases of medical or family emergencies or for students with FYP projects confirmed by the Division of English (please contact me if you are an FYP student).

Learning Outcome

By the end of the semester you will have learned about the diverse representational options for (and limitations of) women in the period 1660-1832 alongside the economic, legal, political, and social issues that informed choosing among those options. You will have a firm grounding in the historical and formal developments of English literature as they intersect with the representation of women in the period 1660-1832 and you will have a toolkit of terms to use in evaluating intersectional concerns in Anglophone literature and the romance genre.

Student Assessment

- In-class writing exercises/group work: 10% (this includes group presentations on secondary sources)
- Midterm Project (750-1000 words): 10%. Choose one primary text (this can be an excerpt). Analyze your primary text in terms of (1) intersectionality and (2) two works of scholarship (at least one of which must have been published in the last ten years). The assignment must include a Works Cited page and be formatted according to MLA conventions.
- Final Essay (2000-2500 words): 30%. Must be in MLA format, must focus on at least one full text (not an excerpt) and must incorporate at least three scholarly sources (at least one of which must have been published in the last ten years). You may use the

same primary text and secondary texts you used for your midterm if the primary text is not an excerpt.

- Final Essay Exam: 50%