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English 150: Women's Literature: Individual and the Community

This course introduces students to female authors of fiction, poetry, and critical theory from around the world. The course is aimed at providing students with a historical approach to understanding literature by female authors. As a Great Books course, we will focus on canonical works by Mary Shelley, Willa Cather, and Virginia Woolf within a historical and critical framework. Students will learn to understand, analyze, and evaluate college-level reading materials; write timed, impromptu essay responses; edit and revise compositions; and provide an effective, well-organized, fully developed presentation.

Table of Contents

The contents of the module are as follows:

- Texts
- Theme
- The importance of studying women's literature
- Problems and pitfalls
- Syllabus
- Sample essay exam questions
- Other books, essays, and e-texts used in this course
- Secondary materials and supplementary information
- In-class handouts: *Frankenstein*
- Group 1 presentation: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Texts

Judith Wilt, ed. *Making Humans* (contains *Frankenstein*, by Mary Shelley). Houghton Mifflin.

Willa Cather. *O Pioneers!* Random House.

Virginia Woolf. *A Room of One's Own*. Harcourt.

(For information on the many supplementary texts used in this course and listed in the “Syllabus,” see the section “Other Books, Essays, and E-Texts Used in This Course” later in this module.)

Theme

The theme of this course is “the individual and the community.” This theme is especially appropriate for studying women’s literature. Historically, women have been marginalized in terms of human and political rights. In this course, students will consider the historical events that allowed for this and the literature and art by women in response to the age in which they lived and worked. This theme allows students to consider the following topics: women’s roles; a timeline of women’s rights (sixteenth century to present); issues of gender and sexuality; political events and the exclusion of women; notable women throughout history; women in power and their actions; the equality of the sexes; the woman as artist; the language of repression and oppression; and violence against women (both government-sponsored violence and domestic violence). Finally, *Frankenstein*, *O Pioneers!* and *A Room of One’s Own* all consider the historical experiences of women and the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the community.

To demonstrate how central this theme is, I have provided a list of sample essay exam questions for *Frankenstein*, *O Pioneers!* and *A Room of One’s Own* that require students to think critically about the role of the individual and the role of the community. These sample essay exam questions follow the syllabus in this module.

The Importance of Studying Women’s Literature

The study of women’s literature is important and useful because it

- provides students with the opportunity to think critically about gender, sexuality, literary history, criticism, and cultural studies as they become familiar with canonical literature
- encourages students to consider the aesthetic, emotional, symbolic, and intellectual language we use to communicate, and what these codes mean
- explores the human experience historically, which leads to reflection and insight
- places current events into a larger historical context and allows students to trace the argument that is being presented to them
- challenges students to uncover irony, epiphany, and the complexity of human emotion, and often presents a world that is far different from the one they are living in
- teaches students to talk about their experiences by placing them within the framework of language; in other words, students consider their world by examining how writers understand the world to which they belong, and they begin to discuss these evaluations with one another and the instructor
- allows students to understand the culture of a particular time; students recognize continuity and possibility along with the contradictions of a particular culture, including their own

- highlights the relationship between literature and social experience, allowing students to critique current events; in other words, students consider actual historical events against the story that is told in canonical literature
- asks students to consider social constructions (men's roles, women's roles, political responses, social and economic opportunities) for individuals; students identify what typifies a culture, a time period, and the individual roles that comprise society
- challenges a sentimental or romanticized view of history by asking readers to explore the cultural distortions that serve power; students explore conflict between groups and classes, the sexes, and religions, as well as personal conflict
- encourages students to identify privilege, language as an agent of oppression, agenda, and the sources of injustice for a given time period; students recognize inequity in treatment, and in the division of goods and services
- expects students to begin questioning the mythology of a culture, i.e., the stories we tell ourselves about ourselves; specifically, students delve into the stories that address origin, history, deities, ancestors, and heroes, and trace common themes that occur in different cultures

Problems and Pitfalls

Problem:

A historical approach to women's literature discusses the work and the era in which a writer wrote. Political, economic, and social constructions are discussed, as well as the author's biographical information. This information challenges students to think about current constructions and their beliefs and responses to those constructions. This can lead to polarization of the students in the classroom. How can an instructor facilitate a healthy discourse between students?

Suggested Solutions:

When teaching a topic that has the potential to polarize students, an instructor must set some ground rules for facilitating discussion. One way to encourage discussion is to explain to students that a discussion should apply key concepts from the text; develop critical thinking skills; require students to listen carefully to the ideas of others; allow students to effectively communicate with others; address problems; use problem-solving skills; challenge dominant attitudes and consider many points of view; develop interpersonal skills; respect the contributions of other students; and encourage student participation. For additional information on encouraging discussion, see "Facilitating Classroom Discussion" in the "Secondary Materials and Supplementary Information" section of this module.

Problem:

Some students are intimidated by the class size. How can the instructor encourage participation from all the students in the class?

Suggested Solutions:

In-class group work and exercises can encourage discourse and draw out shyer students.

Some useful exercises include:

- Have students keep journals and share their observations in a smaller group setting. The groups will narrow down their observations and present the most useful questions and observations to the group as a whole. Each student will take a turn as reporter. In their journals, students should identify areas of the text that they would like to discuss in class; the main characters in the text; passages in the text where women are portrayed negatively or positively; and areas that are surprising, confusing, or that need clarification.
- Have students fill out an index card with a question or observation from the text. Ask students to write their names on these index cards. The instructor can choose the most interesting topics for conversation and ask the student to begin the discussion by explaining what led to the question/observation.
- Divide the students into groups. Weekly, one group will sit in a circle in the center of the classroom and discuss the material for approximately ten minutes. The other students will observe the discussion from the larger group and take notes on the most interesting topics that were raised. Then, as a larger group, focus on those issues. This encourages student-led discussion.
- Students can be divided into two groups, and each team is assigned a "position" to defend. This encourages students to consider different points of view and anticipate counter-arguments. On two boards, the groups defend their positions and match up arguments with counter-arguments. Students can then see where one argument falls short or what was overlooked, and the class discusses those items.
- Each student signs up for one presentation group, with approximately ten students in each group. Students choose Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* or Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. These presentations must include biographical information on the author; the historical context of the work; critical essays on the text; scenes from a movie or documentary that was influenced by the work; the reception of the work over time; and its influences on contemporary and future works. Students are responsible for lecturing for the entire class period (eighty minutes), which means that each student provides roughly eight minutes of material. Prior to the presentation, each group meets with me to ensure that they have sufficient information and the resources they will need (projector, TV/DVD, computer lab). This helps students understand the amount of preparation needed for a comprehensive lecture. In addition, prior to these presentations, I schedule a class meeting at the library so that students learn research techniques and the resources that are available to them on campus. (For an example of the components of a group presentation, see the section "Group 1 Presentation: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" at the end of this module.)
- At Wright College, we have access to Blackboard for each class. This allows the instructor to set up an electronic discussion list, and students can respond to topics at any time. Students are required to discuss something from the text and respond to another student's discussion. The instructor monitors the discussions and addresses these questions and concerns in lectures.

Problem:

There is a resistance in students to critical thinking. In other words, students often feel (and have been trained) that regurgitating or parroting information is enough. How can the instructor encourage students to think critically?

Suggested Solutions:

An instructor must explain what critical thinking means. Often, students have only been expected to repeat what they have been told. A historical approach to canonical literature requires students to analyze and evaluate information and to communicate their interpretations in ways that show the depth of their knowledge. The instructor can assist students by examining the structures of critical thinking and by asking students to consider purpose; the problem or central question; empirical data; reasoning; fallacy; the implication and consequences of the information; alternative viewpoints; and a context for further study or reference.

Critical thinking requires students to be thoughtful and responsive to information. A historical approach considers the literature from different angles: political, social, economic, anthropological, and philosophical reasoning is included. This provides students with information from different sources and highlights your commitment to research. Students understand that seeking information on a topic is necessary in order to have a better understanding of that topic.

Critical thinking requires the instructor and student to consider the writer's motivation. Students recognize the manipulation of ideas that serve one group versus ideas that serve the greater good. By studying fallacy, students can discover when an argument is intellectually flawed.

An instructor should explain that each of us has undisciplined and irrational thoughts. Being a critical thinker means being aware of our tendency to engage in an *I-just-feel-this-way* form of discussion that does not seek out additional information. Critical thinking is developed over a lifetime, and students should be encouraged to appreciate different perspectives and sources as a way to begin this process.

An instructor should remind students that 'education' comes from the Latin word *educare*, which means to draw out. Education is a process in which the instructor draws out ideas from students. When students realize that the teacher is committed to a student-centered learning experience, students feel a greater responsibility for the information.

For additional information on thinking critically about Women's Literature, see "Critical Thinking" in the "Secondary Materials and Supplementary Information" section of this module.

Problem:

How can the instructor keep the texts central in discussions?

Suggested Solutions:

Instructors must determine the extent to which the course should encourage self-emotive and autobiographical forms of discourse. Student responses to literature can be narcissistic, meaning that the text becomes secondary to a topic of interest in the student's life. A historical approach to canonical texts encourages students to make connections between past events and current events, and oftentimes students will focus on current events while neglecting the text. Although this form of discussion can be interesting and useful, students also need a solid basis in literary analysis. One way to help students analyze texts is to have them identify the core components of literary analysis. For additional information on literary analysis, see "Literary Analysis" in the "Secondary Materials and Supplementary Information" section of this module.

Problem:

The list of female canonical authors spans a considerable amount of time and includes authors from different historical periods and geographical backgrounds. Why were these texts chosen?

Suggested Solutions:

The difficulty in creating this course is to find a unifying theme and to avoid an under-connected and overwhelming sampling of women's literature throughout history. Therefore, I have chosen the following texts: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. These rich texts represent important shifts in both literature and history. In addition, these texts fit nicely into the Great Books theme of "the individual and the community."

Specifically, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is significant for the following reasons:

- *Frankenstein* questions the nature of being human, the importance of society, and societal and individual responsibilities.
- Shelley explores human reason at a time when scientific, economic, and technological advancements were dangerously challenging traditional beliefs.
- Shelley explores the causes and effects of the abuse of power.
- Shelley explores the fear of the unknown. Specifically, Shelley considers what happens when human beings manipulate biological processes and threaten the "natural order" of things.
- Shelley explores the themes of the individual, the community, injustice, alienation, acceptance, love, companionship, revenge, and the act of creation.
- Shelley portrays women as weak, subservient creatures as a cultural construction.
- Finally, biographical studies on Mary Shelley provide students with insight into the Romantic and Victorian eras.

Willa Cather's *O Pioneers!* is significant for the following reasons:

- *O Pioneers!* questions love, loss, youth, and the influence of land on people's lives.
- Cather accurately represents life on the Midwestern prairies and examines the relationship between individual will and outside forces.
- Cather explores the pioneer spirit at a time when western expansion juxtaposed a vast, unrelenting country with human endeavor.
- Cather considers human beings in an unforgiving landscape and the consequences this has on human relationships.
- Cather portrays women as capable, triumphant, and heroic, but also as tragic figures; this complexity points to the error in social conventions that wish to simplify women's roles.

- Finally, biographical studies on Willa Cather provide students with insight into life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is significant for the following reasons:

- *A Room of One's Own* ponders whether or not a woman can produce art of high quality; Woolf examines the historical experiences of women, the struggle of the female artist, and the differences in education for men and women. This is an important question for a Great Books course.
- Woolf explores scholarship on women (written by men) and the lack of data on the everyday life of women.
- Woolf considers the fate of the intelligent woman in history, society, and the literary tradition.
- Finally, biographical studies on Virginia Woolf provide students with insight into the modernist movement and the twentieth century.

Problem:

How can this course prepare students to interpret current events?

Suggested Solution:

This course will introduce students to a common historical struggle: namely, how society has viewed and treated women. We will study power, politics, the roles of women, and responses by female artists. In addition, we will consider the identity that forms out of marginalization, and what history can tell us about current events. This course will begin by examining women, women's literature, and women's rights in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe and, as the semester progresses, will move up to present-day human rights concerns affecting women globally. We will look at the timeline of women's rights and compare this to current United Nations and World Health Organization statistics on crimes against women. In a world where women represent the largest number of refugees and where violence against women and children is often part of war and ethnic cleansing, it is important for students to become critical thinkers about the world we live in.

Course Guidelines

Grading Policy

The components of grades in this course are as follows:

Essays (3):	50 percent
Presentation and class participation in discussions:	30 percent
Revision of writing:	20 percent

Attendance and Assignments

Attendance is mandatory. Final grades will be impacted by excessive absences. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to check with another student or contact me during my office hours so that you

can arrive at class prepared. If you miss in-class work, you will receive a zero on that assignment. All assignments are due at the beginning of class. Homework will be penalized by one letter grade if it is submitted late. Late assignments will only be accepted prior to the next class period. All essays should be completed on a computer. Handwritten work will not be accepted.

Plagiarism

Representing someone else's words or ideas as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in failing the assignment. A student who has plagiarized will be notified and required to meet with the instructor and the chair of the English Department. A second incidence of plagiarism will result in failing this course.

Syllabus

Week 1

August 29

Introduction

August 31

Setting the Stage: Women and Women's Roles

A brief overview of women's roles historically: anthropological evidence (cave paintings, pottery, burial mounds)

Week 2

September 7

Timeline of Women's Rights: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Europe)

Building toward *Frankenstein*: Mary, Queen of Scots, and Mary Tudor; John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*; women and power – leadership and the response

Week 3

September 12

Timeline of Women's Rights: Eighteenth Century (Europe)

Building toward *Frankenstein*: "A Queen Who Shaped Era and Image," *Los Angeles Times*; Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Rights of Women* (1791), *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792); Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile, ou L'Éducation* (excerpts)

September 14

Library: Research techniques (*Frankenstein*, *O Pioneers!* and *A Room of One's Own*)

Week 4

September 19

Timeline of Women's Rights: Nineteenth Century (Europe)

Building toward *Frankenstein*: Charles Darwin and George J. Romanes, *The Mental Differences between Men and Women*; Victorian theories of sex and sexuality; gender matters; issues of Victorian masculinity; Victorian sexual mores (*My Fair Lady* and the Pygmalion myth)

September 21

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Tracing influences in *Frankenstein*: introduction by Judith Wilt in *Making Humans*; Ovid, *Prometheus*; John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Week 5

September 26

DUE: *Frankenstein*

GROUP 1: PRESENTATIONS: biographical information (Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley), historical context, critical essays, movie/documentary, reception of work, influence on contemporary and future works

September 28

Computer Lab; DUE: In-class essay response: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Week 6

October 3

Timeline of Women's Rights: Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (United States)

Building toward *O Pioneers!*: Mary Rowlandson, *Narrative of Captivity and Restoration* (c. 1677); Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence (1776); United States Constitution and Bill of Rights (1788)

October 5

Timeline of Women's Rights: Eighteenth Century (United States)

Building towards *O Pioneers!*: Mary Sumner Benson, *Women in Eighteenth-Century America: A Study of Opinion and Social Usage*; Judith Sargent Murray, *On the Equality of the Sexes*

Week 7

October 10

Timeline of Women's Rights: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (United States)

Building toward *O Pioneers!*: *The Women's Rights Movement* (1848); Sojourner Truth, *Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association*; Susan Brownell Anthony; Emily Dickinson, *Selected Poems*

October 12

Building toward *O Pioneers!*: Jeffrey L. Geller, *Women of the Asylum: Voices from Behind the Walls, 1840–1945*; Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*

Week 8

October 17

Kate Chopin: A Re-Awakening (PBS film): <http://www.pbs.org/katechopin/chronology.html>

October 19

Willa Cather, *O Pioneers!*

Tracing influences: Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Henry James, Sarah Orne Jewett

Week 9

October 24

DUE: *O Pioneers!*

GROUP 2: PRESENTATIONS: biographical information (Willa Cather), historical context, critical essays, movie/documentary, reception of work, influence on contemporary and future works

October 26

MIDTERM EXAM

Computer Lab; In-class essay response: Willa Cather: *O Pioneers!*

Week 10

October 31

Timeline of Women's Rights: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Critical Theory and Women's Rights

Building toward *A Room of One's Own*: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*; Gertrude Stein; marriage history – twentieth century

November 2

Building toward *A Room of One's Own*: Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World*; Jane Goodall, *Reason for Hope* (PBS film)

Week 11

November 7

The Female Artist

Building toward *A Room of One's Own*: Marianne Moore, *Selected Poems*; Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar*; Elizabeth Bishop, *Selected Poems* (excerpts)

November 9

Building toward *A Room of One's Own*: women artists – self-portraits and representations of womanhood from the medieval period to the present

Week 12

November 14

Understanding Love: The Naming of the Domestic Goddess

Building toward *A Room of One's Own*: women and social stability; Anne Fernald, *A Room, A Child, A Mind of One's Own*; Virginia Woolf, *Alice Walker and Feminist Personal Criticism*; Jane Marcus, *Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny*; Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet, *The Representation of Women in Fiction* (excerpts)

November 16

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Tracing influences: Greek mythology; Caroline Emelia Stephen; Vita Sackville-West; T. S. Eliot; the Bloomsbury group; *The War Within: A Portrait of Virginia Woolf*

Week 13

November 21

DUE: *A Room of One's Own*

GROUP 3: PRESENTATIONS: biographical information (Virginia Woolf), historical context, critical essays, movie/film/documentary, reception of work, influence on contemporary and future works

November 23

Computer Lab; In-class essay response: Virginia Woolf: *A Room of One's Own*

Week 14

November 28

Timeline of Women's Rights: Twenty-First Century

The Individual and the Community

Haig Bosmajian, *The Language of Oppression*; William Brennan, *Female Objects of Semantic Dehumanization and Violence*; *The Economist*, "The Conundrum of the Glass Ceiling"

November 30

The Individual and the Community

National Organization of Women, *Timeline of Women's Rights*; Domestic Violence Pilot Project, *Native American Battering*; U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women, *Rape and Sexual Assault Statistics*

Week 15

December 5

The Individual and the Community:

United Nations, *Human Rights Statistics*; World Health Organization, *Gender-Based Violence*

December 7

The Individual and the Community

Maori, *Whale Rider*; Maori: the first settlers of Aotearoa; political and family structure; spirituality and the environment; recognition and mysticism; defining indigene in a global community

Week 16

December 12

The Individual and the Community

Maori, *Whale Rider*: conclusion and discussion

December 14

Student-teacher conferences and grades

Sample Essay Exam Questions

Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

1. What allowances are made for individuality? What are the community's concerns regarding the individual? What are the individual's concerns regarding the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.

2. How does an individual gain power over the community? How does the community gain power over the individual? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
3. What are the rights and responsibilities of the individual? What are the rights and responsibilities of the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
4. What is the effect of presenting different narrative perspectives and characters' viewpoints throughout the novel? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
5. What role do letters and written correspondence play in the novel? Why does Shelley rely on this device? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
6. How are women presented in the novel? How do Victor and the monster differ in their view of women? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
7. Do you sympathize with the monster? Is the monster a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
8. Victor believes that his tragic fate is due to knowledge. Do you agree or disagree? Is knowledge dangerous and destructive? Why or why not?

Willa Cather, O Pioneers!

1. Explain how Manifest Destiny functions in *O Pioneers!* What are the moral responsibilities of the pioneers towards the land?
2. Think about the roles played by Emil Bergson, Frank Shabata, Crazy Ivar, and John Bergson. What can you say about their relationships with women? How do these men's relationships differ from those of Alexandra and Marie Shabata?
3. Why does Alexandra forgive Frank Shabata? What does this decision say about human responsibility? Do you agree or disagree with Alexandra's decision? Why?
4. The Nebraska prairie plays an important role in this novel. What is the relationship between the land and its settlers? How and why do different characters read the same landscape in very different ways? Use specific events to support your argument.
5. How is Alexandra a pioneering heroine? What is Cather saying about the opportunities made available to women in American culture? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
6. What is the prevalent attitude toward religion and God? What is this novel saying about organized religion? Use specific characters and events to support your argument.
7. Carl Linstrum states, "There are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves." At the end of the novel Alexandra responds to this idea by saying, "You remember what you once said about the graveyard, and the old story writing itself over?"

Only it is we who write it, with the best we have." What is Cather saying about human action and ability?

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

1. What does Woolf say about individual genius limited by poverty or lack of education? Is it possible for an individual to overcome these obstacles? Why or why not?
2. Woolf claims that the social reality in which women live creates distinct values. What are these values? What is Woolf's response to these values? Do you agree or disagree with the idea of uniquely female and male values?
3. How does tradition influence women's lives? What does Woolf believe must happen in order for all careers to be open to women? Do you agree or disagree? Provide specific examples to support your argument.
4. How have women expressed their creativity historically? What advice does Woolf give to women writers and artists? Is this useful or not?

Other Books, Essays, and E-Texts Used in This Course

John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558)

<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/firblast.htm>

http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/t/th/the_first_blast_of_the_trumpet_against_the_monstrous_regiment_of_women.htm

Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Women* (1791)

<http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/gouges.html>

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

<http://www.bartleby.com/144/>

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, ou L'Education*

<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/Contents2.html>

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/833/10762/>

William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation* (1620–1647)

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorse1/41docs/14-bra.html>

Mary Rowlandson, *The Narrative of the Captivity and the Restoration* (1682)

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/rownarr.html>

The Declaration of Independence

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/constRedir.html>

The U.S. Bill of Rights and Constitution
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/constRedir.html>

Judith Sargent Murray, *On the Equality of the Sexes*
<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womenshistory&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hurdsmith.com%2Fjudith%2Fequality.htm>

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Reply to the Affectionate and Christian Address of Many Thousands of Women of Great Britain and Ireland to Their Sisters the Women of the United States of America*
<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womenshistory&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.unl.edu%2Flegacy%2F19cwww%2Fbooks%2Felibe%2Fstowe%2Freply.htm>

Sojourner Truth, *Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association* (New York City, May 9, 1867)
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/dubois/classes/995/98F/doc26.html>

Julia Ward Howe, *What Is Religion?*
http://womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_1893_pwr_howe.htm

William Brennan, *Female Objects of Semantic Dehumanization and Violence*
<http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/brennan1.html>

The Economist, “The Conundrum of the Glass Ceiling”
http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=4197626

Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, *Critical Theory Since 1965* (Florida State University Press, 1986).

Mary Sumner Benson, *Women in Eighteenth-Century America: A Study of Opinion and Social Usage* (New York: Columbia University Press, P. S. King, 1935).

Jeffrey L. Geller, *Women of the Asylum: Voices From Behind the Walls, 1840–1945* (Random House, 1995).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 1979).

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

“Exercise, Physical Capability and the Eternally Wounded Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century North America,” *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1 (May 1987): 7–28.

Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Morrow, 1949).

Anne Fernald, “A Room of One's Own, Personal Criticism, and the Essay,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 40 (1994): 165–89.

Jane Marcus, “Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny,” in *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, ed. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 60–97.

Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet, eds., *The Representation of Women in Fiction* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

Haig Bosmajian, *The Language of Oppression* (University Press, 1983).

Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art and American Culture* (London: Viking, 1993).

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, 1951).

Secondary Materials and Supplementary Information

Websites

Women's Rights and History

Women's Rights Website – University of California at Berkeley
Conversations with history
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/women/>

Women in American History – Encyclopedia Britannica
<http://search.eb.com/women/index.html>

The Official Website of the British Monarchy
<http://www.royal.gov.uk/output/Page1.asp>

Women's History – BBC United Kingdom
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/society_culture/women/launch_gms_victorian_women.shtml

The History of Women's Suffrage – World Book
<http://www2.worldbook.com/features/whm/html/whm010.html>

The National Women's History Project
http://www.nwhp.org/about_nwhp/mission/mission.html
<http://www.legacy98.org>

Women's Human Rights Resources – Bora Laskin Law Library
<http://www.law-lib.utoronto.ca/Diana/>

Women and History
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Search?search=women+%2B+history>

The History of Women's History – Infoplease
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/womensintro1.html>

Women's Rights – ACLU
<http://www.aclu.org/WomensRights/WomensRightslist.cfm?c=174>

NOW – National Organization for Women
<http://www.now.org/>

Women’s Rights – U.S. Department of State
<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/women/rights/>

Women’s History – National Park Service
<http://www.nps.gov/wori/>

Madre – Demanding Human Rights for Women and Children around the World
<http://www.madre.org>

Women’s History Month – The History Channel
<http://www.historychannel.com/exhibits/womenhist/?page=home>

WHO – World Health Organization, Gender and Women’s Health Department
<http://www.who.int/gender/genderandwomen/en/>

Human Rights – United Nations
<http://www.un.org/rights/>

Women’s History – Human Rights Watch
<http://www.hrw.org/women/>

WHRNET – Women’s Human Rights Net
<http://www.whrnet.org/>

Department of Health and Human Services – Indian Health Services
<http://www.ihs.gov/PublicInfo/Publications/HealthProvider/issues/PROV1004.pdf>

Maori Culture
http://www.piccom.org/whalerider/culture_politics.html

Into the Heart of Maori Culture
<http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/culture/whale-rider-feature/whale-rider-feature.cfm>

Women’s Studies Resources and Databases

Women’s Studies Database – University of Maryland
<http://www.mith2.umd.edu/WomensStudies/>

Women’s Studies Resources – University of Iowa
<http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/literature.html>

Women's Studies (R)E-sources on the Web – Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture – Duke University
<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/women/cyber.html>

Women's Studies Programs, Departments, and Research Centers
<http://research.umbc.edu/~korenman/wmst/programs.html>

Literary and Feminist Theory Resources

Feminist Theory Resources – University of Iowa
<http://bailiwick.lib.uiowa.edu/wstudies/theory.html>

Philosophy and Feminist Theory Sites – University of Wisconsin
<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/philos.htm>

Literary Theory Websites – Wooster College
http://www.wooster.edu/english/literary_theory.html

The Literary Encyclopedia
<http://www.litencyc.com/>

Women Writers

Society for the Study of American Women Writers – Lehigh University
<http://www.lehigh.edu/~dek7/SSAWW/>

A Celebration of Women Writers – University of Pennsylvania
http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/writers.html#A_Section

Women Writers – University of Wisconsin
<http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/WomensStudies/writers.htm>

19th Century Women Writers
<http://www.womenwriters.net/19thc.htm>

20th Century Women Writers
<http://www.womenwriters.net/20thc.htm>

Women's Studies Section Literature and Culture – Massachusetts Institute of Technology
<http://libraries.mit.edu/humanities/WomensStudies/Culture2.html>

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Brandeis University
<http://people.brandeis.edu/~teuber/shelleybio.html>

Resources for the Study of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* – Georgetown University
<http://www.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/english016/franken/franken.htm>

Dark Romanticism: Byron, Coleridge, Mary Shelley, and the Pursuit of the Supernatural – University of Delaware
<http://www2.lib.udel.edu/subj/engl/resguide/darkrweb.htm>

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Barnes & Nobles Sparknotes

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/frankenstein/context.html>

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/mary%20wollstonecraft%20shelley>

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Shelley

Willa Cather – Longman Publishers

http://occawlonline.pearsoned.com/bookbind/pubbooks/kennedycompact_awl/chapter11/custom2/deluxe-content.html

Willa Cather – Harvard University

<http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/academics/english/cather/>

Willa Cather – Barnes & Noble Sparknotes

<http://search.sparknotes.com/?query=willa+cather>

Willa Cather – Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/willa%20cather>

Willa Cather – Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Willa_Cather

The International Virginia Woolf Society – University of Toronto

<http://www.utoronto.ca/IVWS/links.html>

Virginia Woolf: Turning the Centuries – University of Delaware

<http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/woolf.htm>

Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (1929) – City University of New York

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/ownroom.html>

Virginia Woolf – Barnes & Noble Sparknotes

<http://search.sparknotes.com/?query=virginia+woolf>

Virginia Woolf – Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/virginia%20woolf>

Virginia Woolf – Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_woolf

Modern American Poetry

<http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/index.htm>

The Academy of American Poets

<http://www.poets.org>

Women Artists

Women Artists – Self Portraits and Representations of Womanhood from the Medieval Period to the Present

<http://www.csupomona.edu/~plin/women/womenart.html>

Frida Kahlo – Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frida_Kahlo

Frida Kahlo – Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/topic/frida-kahlo>

Frida Kahlo – About.com

<http://womenshistory.about.com/od/fridakahlo/index.htm>

Frida Kahlo Images – The Artchive

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/K/kahlo.html>

Georgia O’Keeffe – National Women’s Hall of Fame

<http://www.greatwomen.org/women.php?action=viewone&id=116>

Georgia O’Keeffe – Answers.com

<http://www.answers.com/georgia%20o'keeffe>

Georgia O’Keefe – Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_o%27keeffe

Georgia O’Keefe Images – The Artchive

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/O/okeefe.html#images>

Elizabeth Murray Interview and Images – The Artchive

<http://www.artchive.com/artchive/M/murray.html>

Louise Bourgeois – PBS

<http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/bourgeois/>

Louise Bourgeois – University of California Berkeley

<http://www.bampfa.berkeley.edu/exhibits/bourgeois/>

Critical Thinking

The Critical Thinking Foundation

<http://www.criticalthinking.org>

The Critical Thinking Project – Washington State University

<http://wsuctproject.wsu.edu/ph.htm>

Master Teacher Program: On Critical Thinking – Georgia State University

<http://www2.gsu.edu/~dschjb/wwwcrit.html>

Facilitating Classroom Discussions

Suggestions for Classroom Discussion – Sandra Metts, Department of Communication, Illinois State University

http://www.cat.ilstu.edu/teaching_tips/handouts/classdis.shtml

Creating Inclusive College Classrooms – Shari Saunders and Diana Kardia, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan

http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/P3_1.html

Active Learning for the College Classroom – Donald R. Paulson and Jennifer L. Faust, Cal State University

<http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/chem/chem2/Active/main.htm>

Fostering Effective Classroom Discussions – Virginia Tech

<http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/english/tc/discussion.htm>

Fostering Effective Classroom Discussion: A Selective List of Online Resources – Virginia Tech

<http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/english/tc/pt/discussion/resources.htm>

Leading Discussions – Cornell University

<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/taresources/leadisc.html>

Leading and Facilitating Discussion – Princeton University

<http://www.princeton.edu/~aiteachs/handbook/facilitating.html>

Literary Analysis

Literary Analysis – Chesapeake College Writing Center

<http://www.chesapeake.edu/writing/analysis.pdf>

Writing the Literary Analysis – Purdue University Online Writing Lab

owl.english.purdue.edu/workshops/pp/litanalysis.ppt

Books, Essays, and E-Texts

John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1558)

<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualNLs/firblast.htm>

http://www.absoluteastronomy.com/encyclopedia/t/th/the_first_blast_of_the_trumpet_against_the_monstrous_regiment_of_women.htm

Olympe de Gouges, *The Rights of Women* (1791)

<http://www.pinn.net/~sunshine/book-sum/gouges.html>

Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

<http://www.bartleby.com/144/>

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, ou L'Education*

<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/Contents2.html>

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House*

<http://www.readbookonline.net/read/833/10762/>

William Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation (1620–1647)*

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/SocSci/bdorsey1/41docs/14-bra.html>

Mary Rowlandson, *The Narrative of the Captivity and the Restoration (1682)*

<http://www.library.csi.cuny.edu/dept/history/lavender/rownarr.html>

The Declaration of Independence

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/constRedir.html>

The U.S. Bill of Rights and Constitution

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/help/constRedir.html>

Judith Sargent Murray, *On the Equality of the Sexes*

<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womenshistory&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hurdsmith.com%2Fjudith%2Fequality.htm>

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Reply to the Affectionate and Christian Address of Many Thousands of Women of Great Britain and Ireland to Their Sisters the Women of the United States of America*

<http://womenshistory.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=womenshistory&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.unl.edu%2Flegacy%2F19cwww%2Fbooks%2Felib%2Fstowe%2Freply.htm>

Sojourner Truth, *Address to the First Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association* (New York City, May 9, 1867)

<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/dubois/classes/995/98F/doc26.html>

Julia Ward Howe, *What Is Religion?*

http://womenshistory.about.com/library/etext/bl_1893_pwr_howe.htm

William Brennan, *Female Objects of Semantic Dehumanization and Violence*

<http://www.fnsa.org/v1n3/brennan1.html>

The Economist, “The Conundrum of the Glass Ceiling”

http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=4197626

Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle, *Critical Theory Since 1965* (Florida State University Press, 1986).

Mary Sumner Benson, *Women in Eighteenth-Century America: A Study of Opinion and Social Usage* (New York: Columbia University Press, P. S. King, 1935).

Jeffrey L. Geller, *Women of the Asylum: Voices From Behind the Walls, 1840–1945* (Random House, 1995).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Yale University Press, 1979).

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1952).

“Exercise, Physical Capability and the Eternally Wounded Woman in Late Nineteenth-Century North America,” *Journal of Sport History* 14, no. 1 (May 1987): 7–28.

Margaret Mead, *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: Morrow, 1949).

Anne Fernald, “A Room of One's Own, Personal Criticism, and the Essay,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 40 (1994): 165–89.

Jane Marcus, “Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny,” in *The Representation of Women in Fiction*, ed. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 60–97.

Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet, eds., *The Representation of Women in Fiction* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

Haig Bosmajian, *The Language of Oppression* (University Press, 1983).

Camille Paglia, *Sex, Art and American Culture* (London: Viking, 1993).

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt, 1951).

In-Class Handout: *Frankenstein*

Character Analysis

Robert Walton –

Margaret Saville –

Victor Frankenstein –

Alphonse Frankenstein –

Caroline Beaufort –

Elizabeth –

Ernest, William, Justine Moritz –

Henry Clerval –

M. Krempe and M. Waldman –

The Monster –

Felix –

Agatha –

De Lacey –

Safie –

The Turk –

Important Quotes

Consider the following quotes. Identify where they occur in the novel and if they are disputed or verified by the work as a whole. Decide whether you agree or disagree with each quote, and consider examples to support your argument. I have also included questions as a frame for each quote. Addressing these questions and formulating a response will prepare you for the in-class essay exam.

1. Victor tells Walton not to follow his example, warning, “Learn from me . . . how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.” What is Shelley saying about knowledge?
2. As soon as the monster comes to life, Victor is sickened by what he sees. He explains, “The beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.” What is Shelley saying about the quest for knowledge?
3. The monster explains his need for a home, saying, “Here then I retreated, and lay down happy to have found a shelter, however miserable, from the inclemency of the season, and still more from the barbarity of man.” How does this quote humanize the monster? What does it say about human need?
4. The monster has the intelligence of a human even if he is not one. He explains, “I heard about the slothful Asiatics; of the stupendous genius and mental activity of the Grecians; of the wars and wonderful virtue of the early Romans—of their subsequent degenerating—of the decline of that mighty empire; of chivalry, Christianity, and kings.” What does this knowledge (or knowing) do to the monster? Consider the lectures this semester on ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and how these civilizations defined the rights and responsibilities of the individual versus the community.
5. The monster learns that the most respected men in society have wealth and influence and he says, “I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property.” How does this make you feel about the monster? What is Shelley saying about humanity and our sense of justice? How humane are humans?
6. Frankenstein’s monster explains his anger, saying, “There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.” Is the monster justified in his declaration of war against human beings?
7. Victor laments, “William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands.” Frankenstein believes that he is the cause of their deaths, and he believes he will be responsible for many more deaths. Do you agree with Frankenstein’s response? Are we responsible for the actions and consequences of our creations?

8. Prometheus, a figure in Greek mythology, took fire from the gods in order to give it to man and suffered eternal punishment. Explain how the theme of the modern Prometheus functions in this work.

Metaphors

A metaphor is when one thing represents another; one thing becomes symbolic of another and is regarded as representative or suggestive of something else. Consider how the following metaphors function in *Frankenstein*.

- sickness
- fate
- nature
- weather
- the monster

Themes

Consider the following themes and how they are raised in the work. Are these ideas resolved or unresolved? What is Shelley saying about each idea? What conclusions do the characters reach about each of these topics?

- ignorance
- technology
- faith
- reason
- human injustice
- human behavior
- the individual and the community
- unfulfilled desire
- revenge
- the role, rights, and responsibilities of the creator and the creation
- the portrayal of women by society

Additional Questions to Consider

1. Why did Shelley use the subtitle, "The Modern Prometheus"? Who did Shelley see as the Modern Prometheus? Why?
2. What are Shelley's views on science and knowledge? How do these views relate to the time period in which she wrote? What does *Frankenstein* say about the following topics: love, the role of women in society, domesticity, and companionship? How are women presented in the novel? How do Victor and the monster differ in their views on women? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
3. How does the monster change over the course of the novel? Why? What does this say about human nature?
4. What allowances are made for individuality? What are the community's concerns regarding the individual? What are the individual's concerns regarding the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
5. How does an individual gain power over the community? How does the community gain power over the individual? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
6. What are the rights and responsibilities of the individual? What are the rights and responsibilities of the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
7. What is the effect of presenting different narrative perspectives throughout the novel? What role do letters and written correspondence play in the novel? Why does Shelley rely on this device? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
8. Do you sympathize with the monster? Is the monster a sympathetic character? Why or why not? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.

Group 1 Presentation: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

1. Biographical Information

Information should include:

- Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851)
- Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797)
- William Godwin (1756–1836)
- Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)
- George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824)

- Shelley's life, upbringing, education, important interactions, a timeline of significant events, what led her to write *Frankenstein*

2. Historical Context

Information should include:

- Nineteenth-century London society and England: timeline of significant events
- Gothic and Romanticism (the novel is a mix of both)
- Europe's political events: the French Revolution and industrialization

3. Novel Summary

Information should include:

- Plot synopsis: what happened, when, why, what does it mean?
- Character analysis: main characters only
- Questions/concerns the novel raises/addresses

4. Themes and Metaphors

Information should include:

- The Modern Prometheus (<http://www.kimwoodbridge.com/maryshel/bushi.shtml>)
- Human nature
- Ignorance vs. knowledge (technology)
- Faith vs. reason
- Human injustice and human behavior
- Unfulfilled desire
- The role, rights, and responsibilities of the creator and the creation

Consider these themes in terms of the historical context and what Shelley was saying about the time period in which she lived.

5. The Portrayal of Women (Frankenstein and the Community)

Information should include:

- Women in society (nineteenth-century England, London society)

- Portrayal of women: *Frankenstein* (by society, by monster)

6. Critical Essays on Shelley or Frankenstein

Information should include:

- *Frankenstein*, Harold Bloom
- *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, critical essays on Shelley's work
- *Frankenstein's Fallen Angel*, Joyce Carol Oates
- *The Noble Savage in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, Milton Millhauser
- *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979)
- Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein" (1818) — A Summary of Modern Criticism (<http://www.victorianweb.org/previctorian/mshelley/pva229.html>)
- Consider the “academic conversation” on *Frankenstein*: what is being said? You do not need to use these essays, but search through Wright’s online databases and see what you come up with. These are just some examples of the work that is out there.

7. Reception of Work

Information should include:

- Publication information
- Preface
- *Quarterly Review* (January 1818)
- *Edinburgh Review* (1818)
- Reviews (Europe, United States)
- Reception of work (past to present)

8. Movie/Film/Documentary and Explanation

Information should include:

- Richard Brinsley Peake’s *Presumption, or The Fate of Frankenstein* (1823)
- James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (1933)
- Mel Brooks’ *Young Frankenstein* (1974)

- Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994)
- Bill Condon's *Gods and Monsters* (1998)
- Movie reviews and short clips: compare how the monster is portrayed compared to Shelley's version

9. Social and Individual Responsibility

- Victor laments: "William, Justine, and Henry—they all died by my hands." Frankenstein believes that he is the cause of their deaths and he believes he will be responsible for many more deaths. Do you agree with Frankenstein's response? Are we responsible for the actions and consequences of our creations?
- What allowances are made for individuality? What are the community's concerns regarding the individual? What are the individual's concerns regarding the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
- How does an individual gain power over the community? How does the community gain power over the individual? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.
- What are the rights and responsibilities of the individual? What are the rights and responsibilities of the community? Use specific examples from the text to support your argument.

10. Influence on Contemporary and Future Works

Information should include:

- *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979)
- The "Lucy" of science fiction
- *Frankenstein's* influence on *Dracula* and horror movies
- Contemporary issues: stem cell research, cloning, etc.