

Prof. S. Weisser
Gallatin K20.1238
Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45 am
715 Broadway, Rm 601

Interdisciplinary Seminar
The Anatomy of Love: Romantic Love in Western Literature and Culture

Romantic love is a ubiquitous phenomenon in Western culture and has had a special place in its literature, yet the feminist author Vivian Gornick has announced the “end of the novel of love” and contemporary treatments in scholarship and literature tend to run from skeptical to scathing. Meanwhile we are saturated with images and information from popular culture, including television, films, music and mass-produced print media, about its value and inevitability in life. In this course students will attempt to delineate the ideology of romantic love in Western thought, literature and scholarship, tracing major shifts in definitions and literary/philosophical concepts. In particular, close attention will be paid to issues of gender. Representative texts from disciplines such as history, sociology and psychology will provide an interesting and unusual context for discussing literary prose and poetry. This course will challenge students to define, evaluate and perhaps revise their received notions about romance and its meaning.

Texts to Buy:

Chretien de Troyes, *Lancelot: The Knight of the Cart*, trans. Burton Raffel
Dante, *La Vita Nuova*, trans. Mark Musa
Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, trans. Catherine Hutter
Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*
Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*
Dubravka Ugresic, *Lend Me Your Character*

A Coursepak, available at the NYU Bookstore, contains all the poetry for the course, as well as the multidisciplinary readings.

Course Requirements:

A paper of 5-7 pages will be due at mid-semester and a take-home essay of the same length due during finals week. There will also be informal writing, called Thought Questions, in response to opinion questions, to be discussed in class. These are not essays or tests, and there is no required length. These Thought Questions will not be given individual letter grades, but you will collect and submit them as part of a portfolio of writing at the end of the semester. In addition, at the end of the course you will be asked to write a Reflection Letter about the concepts of the course and your own views (details will be provided).

In this class we will read and respond to many kinds of texts from various scholarly disciplines: literature, history, philosophy, sociology, psychology, etc. You will be evaluated in part on your ability to use and integrate different approaches in understanding the concept of romance. The Thought Questions and Reflection Letter will be graded on the originality and thoughtfulness of your responses, whatever opinions you hold.

Your participation and contribution to class discussion will be factored into your grade.

Midterm paper: 25%

Final paper: 25%

Final Portfolio: Thought Questions and Reflection Letter: 15%

Participation: 10%

Contact Information

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 9-9:30 am, Room 416 (715 Broadway)

Email: sw34@nyu.edu; I encourage you to use email to convey information or ask questions. Please stay in touch if you are having a problem of any sort that affects your attendance or performance in class!

Note: Please do not send papers by email without discussing with me first.

Mailbox is on the fourth floor of 715 Broadway, near secretary's desk. Be sure to put materials in the right mailbox!

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SYLLABUS

WEEK ONE:

Jan 20 & 22: Introduction to course; Thought Question #1 due; Poetry: Sappho; Plato (Coursepak)

WEEK TWO:

Jan 27 & 29: Thought Question #2 due; Poetry: Provençal poets; begin *Lancelot*

WEEK THREE

Feb 3 & 5: Thought Question #3 due; continue *Lancelot*; begin *La Vita Nuova*

WEEK FOUR

Feb 10 & 12: Thought Question #4 due; continue *La Vita Nuova*; Person (Coursepak); Poetry: Barbara Allen

WEEK FIVE

Feb 17 & 19: Thought Question #5 due; Poetry: Donne, Shakespeare; *Sorrows of Young Werther*

WEEK SIX

Feb 24 & 26: Thought Question #6 due; Stendhal (Coursepak); Midterm essay assigned

WEEK SEVEN

Mar 3 & 5: Thought Question #7 due; Poetry: Blake, Keats, Shelley; *Pride and Prejudice*

WEEK EIGHT

Mar 10 & 12: **Midterm essay due**; Continue *Pride and Prejudice*

WEEK NINE

Mar 17 & 19: SPRING RECESS

WEEK TEN

Mar 24 & 26: Thought Question #8 due; Seidman, Freud (Coursepak); begin *Jane Eyre*

WEEK ELEVEN

Mar 31 & Apr 2: Thought Question #9 due; continue *Jane Eyre*; Poetry: Dickinson, Rilke, Lawrence

WEEK TWELVE

Apr 7 & 9: Thought Question #10 due; Fisher, Murray et al, Jankowiak, Jackson (Coursepak); Poetry: Lowell, Corso

WEEK THIRTEEN

Apr 14 & 16: Firestone, Norwood (Coursepak); Poetry: Plath, Swenson

WEEK FOURTEEN

Apr 21 & 23: Coward (Coursepak); *Lend Me Your Character*; Poetry: Walcott, Woody Allen

WEEK FIFTEEN

Apr 28 & 30: Final paper assigned; catch-up

FINALS WEEK: Final Writing Projects, including Final Paper, Portfolio of Thought Questions, and Reflection letter, due (exact date TBA)