

GSWS 4459G/GSWS 9469: The Feminist Romance Novel

Tentative Course Outline

Instructor: Dr. Miranda Green-Barteet

Course Description and Objectives: A romance novel is a work of genre fiction that primarily focuses on the relationship and romantic love between two people, generally with a happy ending. One of the most commercially successful genres, especially among female and female identifying readers, the genre has often been dismissed by critics for being “fluff” or escapist. As critic Pamela Regis argues, “critical characterization of the romance novel is overwhelmingly negative” (3). In this course, we consider why is the romance novel, a genre that is primarily written by women and read by women, is treated so dismissively. We will examine the genre from the nineteenth century to the modern day, exploring how the genre has evolved and asking ourselves: are romance novels feminist? In addition to this question, we will consider issues of consent, work-life balance, gender roles, social and societal expectations for women, and sex and sexuality. Novels that may be considered include Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple*, Daphne Du Maurier’s *Rebecca*, Gordon Merrick’s *The Lord Won’t Mind*, Kathleen E. Woodiwiss’s *The Flame and the Flower*, Julia Quinn’s *The Duke and I*, and Sarah J. Maas’s *Court of Thorn and Roses*, among others. In addition to novels, we will consider theoretical perspectives on the romance novel, including works by Pamela Regis, Kristin Ramsdell, and Janice Radway.

Course Objectives

Throughout the semester, in addition to gaining and sharing knowledge through the assigned readings, you will engage with the following concepts:

- apply rigorous critical thinking and analysis by engaging productively with new ideas through reading and discussing literature and critical sources;
- develop a critical and historical understanding of the romance genre;
- gain an understanding of how the romance novel has been viewed by feminist theorists;
- have a sense of how the romance novel has changed over time;
- consider how issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality affect how we view the romance novel;
- contribute to a learning community focused on issues of gender theory, feminism, and literary scholarship;
- learn how to write for an academic audience;
- enhance and refine presentation skills for an academic audience;
- learn how to lead and/or contribute to committee work;
- learn the steps of planning an academic conference, including, but not limited to, developing a CFP, advertising the conference, and applying for funding;
- complete research on a topic of your choosing connected to the course theme;
- and develop professional skills in research and service.

Possible Course Texts

*Please note: these are subject to change prior to the start of the winter term.

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

Harper, *Iola Leroy*

Du Maurier, *Rebecca*

Woodiwiss, *The Flame and the Flower*

Jenkins, *Night Song*
Garden, *Annie on My Mind*
Quinn, *The Duke and I*
Malinda Lo, *Last Night at the Telegraph Club*
Krystal Marquis, *The Davenports*
Dunmore, *Bringing Down the Duke*

Seminar Requirements

Engagement	10%
Group Presentation	10%
A-Level Assignment	20%
B-Level Assignment	25%
C-Level Assignment	35%

*Please note: Assignment requirements and instructions may vary for students enrolled in GSWS 4459G and those enrolled in GSWS 9469.

Each assignment is discussed below. For written assignments, I will distribute longer prompts the first week of class.

Engagement (10%)

This is a seminar and is, thus, focused on discussion. While I may briefly lecture and turn the class over to individuals/groups for presentations throughout the term, the bulk of each class will be spent discussing the readings, both primary and secondary.

You are expected to actively participate in each class. “Actively participate” means to be engaged with the discussion and the materials and to participate, thoughtfully, in the discussion. Please get in touch with me at any point if you feel the virtual nature of this course is making your participation difficult.

Group Presentation (10%, various due dates)

In groups of 2 or 3, students will present on a critical article related to the day’s reading. The groups may present on the article assigned for the day’s reading or they may present on a reading of their choosing, so long as the reading directly connects to the assigned reading. On the first day of class, students will be given partners and presentation days. Presentations must summarize and evaluate the critical article. In preparation for conference presentations, students should be prepared to present for 12-15 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of questions. Strict time limits will be kept. Presenters will be notified at the 10 minute and 13-minute mark, and presenters will be cut off at 15 minutes.

Remainder of Seminar Work (80%, various due dates)

The rest of the work is, in part, up to you. Use your work in this seminar to support your own goals and intellectual development. Do you want to produce an essay you can revise toward publication in a scholarly journal? Do you want to prepare to teach a course related to our seminar topic? Would you like more practice in digital forms of scholarship, public speaking, or pedagogy? On our course site, I have posted a “menu” of assignments, organized by the labor they require: “A-Level assignments,” in my

estimation, require the least labor, while “C-Level Assignments” require the most. Each student is required to complete one assignment from each column. I have mapped out a few potential tracks through these assignments, but you need not follow them. If you have a particular sort of work in mind that does not appear on the menu (a website, a podcast, an Instagram page, for example), please let me know. My only requirement is that you disperse your work among all three columns and that you focus on normative and non-normative girlhood in YA literature, either as represented in the texts we read together or in material not included on our syllabus.

By January 15th, submit to me, by email, a one-page proposal (composed in Word or Google Docs) outlining the work you will complete and a schedule for its completion. You do not yet need to know the content of your work, only the form it will take. For example, you can propose writing a conference paper, but you do not need to know the topic of the paper. Include a rationale for why you have selected the assignments you have. I will review your proposals and return them in one week, meeting with students individually as I deem necessary, ensuring you have the resources and examples you need to complete your chosen assignments.

Written Assignments

All texts on the syllabus are available for use in any assignment, but no text may be substantively employed in more than one assignment. Please use MLA formatting to document your research. I highly recommend you meet with me to discuss your plan for each assignment before you begin working on them

Participation

This is a seminar and is, thus, focused on discussion. While I may briefly lecture and turn the class over to individuals/groups for presentations throughout the term, the bulk of each class will be spent discussing the readings, both primary and secondary.

You are expected to actively participate in each class. “Actively participate” means to be engaged with the discussion and the materials and to participate, thoughtfully, in the discussion. Please get in touch with me at any point if you feel the virtual nature of this course is making your participation difficult.

Course Policies

Professionalism & Privacy: Western Students are expected to follow the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Additionally, the following expectations apply to this course:

- Students are expected to be courteous and kind and to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL.
- All course materials created by the instructor are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared.
- All course materials created by graduate students (i.e., presentations, handouts, discussion questions, etc.) are the intellectual property of the student creating the materials and cannot be sold/shared.
- Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without the instructor’s or the students’ explicit permission.
- Permitted recordings are only to be used for class and are not to be distributed.
- All recorded sessions, if any, will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed.

OWL/Brightspace: The use of OWL/Brightspace is necessary for successful completion of this course. This includes accessing readings as stipulated in the course outline, downloading instructions and guidelines for assignments, and submitting assignments through OWL/Brightspace. All course information, including assignments, will be posted on the course website.

Communicating with Instructor: Email is the best way to communicate with me. It may take up to 24 hours for me to respond to you during the week and 48 hours on the weekend. Note: all email communication to me should be respectful in tone. Be sure to include an appropriate subject line—e.g., Missing Class, Oct. 13 or Extension Request for Novel Chunk.

Assignment Format, Submitting Assignments, Late Submission: All assignments are due on the date stated on the class schedule. All written assignments must be submitted to Brightspace under the Assignments module as .doc or .docx files. Do not submit PDFs.

It is your responsibility to submit assignments on time. *Late papers will not be accepted.*

Note: If you need an extension, email me 48-hours before the assignment is due to request an extension. You do not need to share with me the intimate details of your life. That information is none of my business, and you should never have to disclose private information to get support. If you feel compelled to offer a reason for requesting an extension, I encourage you to be creative (e.g., your cat vomited on your rough draft or you're a Marvel super-villain who is planning an inter-galactic heist and need more time to plan.)

Attendance policies: This is a graduate course, and attendance is required. If you are sick or need to miss class for any reason, email me as soon as you know you will be unable to attend class. Failure to notify me and repeated absences without contacting me will negatively affect your grade.

Working from Home: The pandemic has changed the way we conceive of workspaces and home spaces. As we are all working from home, I understand that you (and that I) may be interrupted by pets, parents, partners, and/or children, etc. As a group, we will be tolerant and understanding of such interruptions. Should you need to step away from the virtual class to deal with something going on at home, please feel free to do so, leaving a comment in the chat if you are able. While I anticipate that we will be able to meet in person for the semester, I have included this if we must meet virtually.

Cameras and Microphones: Please feel free to have your camera on or off as you choose or as is necessary to accommodate your internet speed/bandwidth. If you are able, please do have your camera on for your presentation. If you chose to use a static picture of yourself or an image, you are expected to choose one that appropriate for an academic/professional setting. To minimize background noise, please keep your microphone off unless you are speaking. Use the hand raised feature when you want to speak. You should feel free to use an appropriate virtual background and to use a nickname on Zoom. If you choose to use a nickname, please email me so that I learn your nickname and mark your attendance based on your nickname.

Statement on Electronic Devices

Students may use computers and e-readers in class, but students should only be doing class work during class. I prefer students not to use phones at all. I do recognize that students may be using an e-reader app

on their phone; if this is the case, please inform the instructor. Phones will not be permitted during the mini conference or during student presentations.

Statement on Academic Offences: Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web

site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf.

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and [Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com).

Note: you may not submit any work for this class that you have submitted for another class.

Statement on Artificial Intelligence: The use of AI (including programs like Chat GPT) to aid in any assignments is strictly **prohibited**. **All work must be your own**. Any use of AI without first consulting with the instructor will be viewed as an academic offense and will be treated as such.

Enrollment Restrictions: Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in the English Studies Department as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Graduate Course Health and Wellness: As part of a successful graduate student experience at Western, we encourage students to make their health and wellness a priority. Western provides several on campus health-related services to help you achieve optimum health and engage in healthy living while pursuing your graduate degree. For example, to support physical activity, all students, as part of their registration, receive membership in Western's Campus Recreation Centre. Numerous cultural events are offered throughout the year. For example, please check out the Faculty of Music web page <http://www.music.uwo.ca/>, and our own McIntosh Gallery <http://www.mcintoshgallery.ca/>. Information regarding health- and wellness-related services available to students may be found at <http://www.health.uwo.ca/>.

Students seeking help regarding mental health concerns are advised to speak to someone they feel comfortable confiding in, such as their faculty supervisor, their program director (graduate chair), or other relevant administrators in their unit.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: (<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Accessible Education Western (AEW): Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program. Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Intellectual Property and Copyright: All instructor-written materials (e.g., PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright.

You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation: Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays and should give reasonable notice in writing (email), prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

Statement on Gender-based Sexual Violence: Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/studentssupport/survivorsupport/get-help.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Other Student Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdwweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>
Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>