**English 845: “Familiar Marriage”**

Talia Schaffer Mon 2-4pm, 4422

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ENGL 84500. “Familiar Marriage”. Talia Schaffer. 2/4 credits. (Cross-listed with WSCP 81000). [CRN 20137].

In the nineteenth century, the traditional practice of companionate marriage with a candidate approved by one’s community, began to compete with a newer notion, the idea that one should marry solely on the basis of one’s own romantic/erotic passion. This cultural change provoked immense anxiety. A single feeling, ‘love,’ displaced the many pragmatic reasons for which marriages could have previously been contracted: shared work, child care, nursing, political alliances, property consolidation. Moreover, fidelity to the private feelings of the participants now took primacy over parental vetting of the suitor’s credentials. Thus women who married for love could be particularly vulnerable, as they consigned their legal and economic futures to a possible stranger, based solely on a mutual attraction. In this course, we will see that the Victorian marriage plot frequently interrogates changing marital ideas by posing rival suitors against one another, each embodying a different rationale for marriage. The romantic suitor is often charismatic but risky, a stranger who may be up to no good. His rival, the ‘familiar suitor,’ is safe but not erotically exciting. He may be an endogamous, a disabled, or a vocational suitor; he may offer kin consolidation or bodily familiarity or meaningful work; but what he offers is something powerfully attractive that is an alternative to romance. This course will trace the ‘familiar suitor’ through these different configurations and uses in the Victorian marriage plot. Novels may include *Mansfield Park, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, Lady Audley’s Secret, Can You Forgive Her?, David Copperfield, Phoebe Junior, The Portrait of a Lady*, and *The History of Sir Richard Calmady*. We will look at Victorian anthropological theories of primitive marriage by Henry Sumner Maine and John McLennan, journalism about women's employment and marriage reform by Frances Power Cobbe and Margaret Oliphant, and  disability and ethics of care theory by Rosemarie Garland Thomson and Joan Tronto, along with histories of marriage and the family including Stone, Perry, Macfarlane, Coontz, Davidoff, and Dabhoiwala. Our aim is to embed the Victorian marriage plot in a rich nexus of theoretical, historical, and critical readings that help us understand what was at stake as the central transaction of women's lives slowly changed its fundamental meaning between 1800 and 1900, how painful and difficult that shift really was, and how that process shaped the novel form. Research paper, presentation, and blog.

Required books:

Buy your books through the Mina Rees Library’s amazon.com link and support our library: http://library.gc.cuny.edu/info/amazon.html

\*Readings with an asterisk are available via Blackboard

Required texts

Brontë, Anne, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall,* 1848. Broadview Press

ISBN 978-1551115085

Brontë, Emily, *Wuthering Heights,* 1847. Oxford World’s Classics

ISBN 978-0199541898

James, Henry, *Portrait of a Lady*, 1881. Oxford UP.

ISBN 978-0199217946

Oliphant, Margaret. *Phoebe Junior,* 1876. Broadview Press

ISBN 978-1551112961

Course Schedule

*Family History: Risking Romantic Marriage*

Jan 28 introduction and handouts:

\*Armstrong

\*Cobbe, \*marriage handout

Feb 4 \*Stone: Ch 1, 2, 6, 7

\*Berkowitz, \*Macfarlane

Feb 11 \*Perry: Intro, Ch 5, Ch 6

\*Dabhoiwala

Feb 18 PRESIDENTS’ DAY – NO CLASS

Feb 20 (MON DAY) *Tenant* first half

\*Hammerton, \*Cobbe

Feb 25 *Tenant* to end

\*O’Toole, \*Davidoff

*Cousin Marriage*

Mar 4 Victorian anthropology:

\*Maine, \*McLennan, \*Psomiades

Feb 25 *Wuthering Hts*, first half

\*von Sneidern

Mar 4 *Wuthering Hts* to end

\*Corbett, \*Stoneman

*Vocational Marriage*

Mar 11 Women and work:

\* Cohen, \*Peterson,

\*Bodichon

Mar 18 Marriage in theory and practice:

\*Marcus, Ch. 2

\*Hager, Intro and Ch. 1

\*Feurer

**Initial research draft due (5-7 pp)**

Mar 25-Ap 2 SPRING BREAK

Apr 8 *Phoebe Jr*, first half

\*Wagner

Apr 15 *Phoebe Jr* to end

\*Langland, \*Michie

*Disabled Marriage*

Apr 22 Disability theory:

\*Noddings ch 1-3

\*Garland Thomson (2 articles)

Apr 29 *Portrait of a Lady*, first half

\*Luciano

May 6 *Portrait of a Lady* to end

\*Blackwood

May 13 final discussion

**final paper due**

Learning goals:

In this course students should

1. Become familiar with recent theory about the history of the family and marital structures

2. Analyze significant works of nineteenth century fiction

3. Locate and critically engage with relevant research

4. Practice professional skills of conference-paper-length delivery and article-length writing

Requirements and grading:

One presentation (about 20 min.) 30%

One long paper (about 20 pp.) 50%

Effort grade 20%

Presentations:

Everyone has to give one brief presentation. Aim to keep it no longer than 20 min., which means about 8 double-spaced typed pages. Please give me a copy of the presentation afterwards, and bring extra copies for anyone else in the class who might want it. If two people are scheduled for presentations on the same day, you need to meet with each other to coordinate your talks.

In the presentation, you should analyze the critical article or theoretical reading for that day. *Do not summarize it.* Instead, briefly explain what the critic is arguing, isolate areas where you think the critic is wrong (or especially insightful), and suggest alternative ways of explicating the text. You must find one thing you admire about the article before you launch into your devastating critique.

Practice it as if it is a real conference paper. That means: 8 or 9 pages, no more; practice reading it aloud before you deliver it; structure it for listeners (make it a little more schematic than you would be in a written paper). Give clear and frequent signposting. Make space for occasional side comments and spontaneous asides. Handouts help.

Writing:

In this class I am setting up an experiment to try to alleviate the problem of having several research papers all due at the end of the semester. You will turn in a 5-7 pp paper draft halfway through the semester. In this first short draft you will set up the theory, history, or genre work that you think will be most useful for your final paper, and begin to outline the argument. I’ll give you feedback, tell you what’s working, and suggest ways to develop it further (but I won’t grade it). The final paper will incorporate a revised version of the first draft. Keep in mind that you may well discover your subject in the second half of the class, so keep your first draft research broad enough to be flexible if so required. My hope is that the first draft will get you going early, provide you with research you can use later, and allow me to help you with any writing or analytical issues before the big paper is due.

Blogging:

I’ve set up a blog on Blackboard. Since we meet on Mondays, I’d like to have everyone post either a question or an answer to someone else’s question on that week’s reading during the week. (No need to make them long – a couple of lines is fine).

Deadline is Friday at 5pm, but you can of course post any time before then; if Friday is hard for you, make Wed or Thurs your blog day. You don’t have to have finished the reading in order to blog, and in fact your postings may be better if you are still in the middle of the text. The blog is your chance to talk to each other, try out presentation ideas, ask about confusing matters, and float crazy theories.

Those of you who are not Grad Center students need to see Vin DeLuca at the registrar’s office, room 7201 (registrar@gc.cuny.edu, (212) 817-7500). He’ll register you and then you can contact Achia Samuels to enroll in Blackboard: asamuels@gc.cuny.edu, or (212) 817-7314.

Reserve Readings

Recommended texts, which will be on reserve:

Bailin, Miriam, *The Sickroom in Victorian Fiction*

Coontz, Stephanie, *Marriage, A History*

Cohen, Monica, *Professional Domesticity*

Corbett, Mary Jean. *Family Likeness* (available as e-book)

Davidoff, Lenore, *Thicker Than Water*

Hager, Kelly, *Dickens and the Rise of Divorce* (available as e-book)

Kuper, Adam, *Incest and Influence* (available as e-book)

Marcus, Sharon. *Between Women*

Michie, Elsie. *The Vulgar Question of Money*

Michie, Helena. *Victorian Honeymoons*

Nelson, Claudia. *Family Ties*

Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations*

Phegley, Jennifer. *Courtship and Marriage in Victorian England*

Rivers, Bronwyn, *Women and Work*

Shanley, Mary Lydon. *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850-1895*

Stocking, George. *Victorian Anthropology*

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*