Honors 206

Webs and Imagined Spaces: Victorian Lit and Hyperlit
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Cedar Crest College
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Course Policies

Please see attached document for specific information regarding attendance and my policies regarding absences, classroom protocol and the Cedar Crest Honor Code, late work, make-up work, plagiarism, disability accommodations, and class cancellations.

ourse Description and Objectives

Have you ever wondered whether you think or read differently, depending upon whether you grew up reading books or surfing the Internet? In this course, we'll consider what's different about a story told on a page versus on a computer screen, with possibilities for multimedia interactions. To help us answer this question, we begin with a consideration of fairy tales and their many variations, then move to an examination of nineteenth-century fiction and contemporary hypertext "revisions." Along the way, you'll have the chance to craft your own hypertext fairy tale and collaborate on a group hypertext project.

Why Victorian literature? Because the nineteenth century witnessed the flowering of narrative fiction and an emphasis on plot. Reading Victorian literature alongside contemporary hypertext will allow you to consider what it means to read for the plot and to perform acts of interpretation.

Course Objectives

As an offering for the Honors program in support of the liberal arts mission of the College and as a literature course, HON 206 seeks to foster students' ability to engage in critical analysis, demonstrate technical competency, write and speak with competence, evince familiarity with historical and contemporary trends in literature, and express their creativity and appreciate the creative activities of others.

More specifically, HON 206 seeks:

- To give students instruction and experience in reading and explicating a range of nineteenth-century narratives, representing different narrative conventions and reflecting different understandings of author, text, reader, and purpose.
- To introduce students to a range of questions about narrative form and function, in order to help them understand how literary narratives attempt to make sense of the world.
- To encourage students to explore some of the similarities and points of departure between our reading experiences of traditional forms of storytelling and newer ways of reading and experiencing via electronic media.
- To encourage students to explore the possibilities offered by the Web for enriching our experience of literature.
- To give students practice in creating oral discourse about literature.
- To give students the experience of shaping written discourse about literature, both analytical and creative, including discourse produced in hypertext formats.
- To inspire students with a love of learning--and to find pleasure in story-telling.

Course Outcomes

Upon completion of HON 206, students will demonstrate their knowledge of narrative conventions and reader relationships to the literary text from traditions spanning the folktale, to the flowering of the realist tradition and its critique in the nineteenth century, to contemporary hypertext with its "explosion" of traditional plot, to avant garde forms of electronic literature. They will demonstrate their competence in reading, analyzing critically, and discussing works of literature, as well as the technical skills needed to navigate the Internet, to read hypertext fiction, and to create hypertext of their own. Students will demonstrate their ability to write effectively and creatively in a variety of genres and contexts, including writing in hypertext formats.

Assessment of Course Outcomes

The successfulness of HON 206 in achieving its outcomes will be assessed, in part, by the ability of students to complete course assignments successfully. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of narrative conventions through class discussion of assigned reading, discussion board contributions, and their creation of an original hypertext fairy tale. They will demonstrate their reading competence and speaking abilities via class discussions, discussion board commentary, and group hypertext project. They will demonstrate their competence as writers, their technological skills, and their creativity in their hypertext fairy tale and their group hypertext project.

ourse materials

Texts

- Byatt, A.S.. *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye: Five Fairy Stories*
- Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking Glass*
- Cramer, Kathryn. *In Small and Large Pieces*
- Dickens, Charles. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*
- Hallett, Martin and Barbara Karasek, ed. *Folk and Fairy Tales* (4th edition)

- Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl*
- Critical readings, available on the Web and linked to the Course Schedule
- Other materials available at the eCompanion site during the semester

Assignments

Here are the assignments for the course. Descriptions of and/or directions for the assignments appear below.

- Discussion board participation (10%)
- Attendance and class participation (10%)
- Review of a work of electronic literature (5%)
- Creation of an original fairy tale, emphasizing your own variations on the tale type (25%)
- Group hypertext project (25%)

You will note that, with the grade percentages listed, there is 25% of the final grade unassigned. At the beginning of the semester, you will be asked to distribute the remaining 25% of the grade as you feel is appropriate among the different categories of assignments. You may wish to consider your strengths and to reflect these strengths in your weighting of each assignment. Once you have chosen your distribution of the 25%, you may not change this distribution.

Discussion Board Participation

You are required to contribute TWO responses to the discussion board, accessible via the e-Companion course site, each week when indicated on the course schedule.

Your responses should be a generous paragraph in length (4-5 sentences) *at the minimum*. Occasionally I will suggest a topic to which you should respond, but in general your responses may take any of the following subjects, according to your interests or to what we are doing in class: 1) You may react to the reading assignments. Your reaction shouldn't be merely a "thumbs up/thumbs down," but rather a consideration of the issues raised by the texts, or how the texts "work," or why you have the response to them that you do. You may also want, on occasion, to discuss things about the texts that puzzle you. 2) You may respond to the contribution(s) of your classmates: offer a different point of view; offer additional evidence for an argument that a classmate is attempting to make; offer feedback on a classmate's project. 3) You may respond to something that came up in class discussion. Take a look at the "Suggestions for Discussion Board Comments" available at the eCompanion site for advice about how to make this assignment a rich experience for all of us.

I will be grading your discussion board participation on the basis of three things: 1) consistent contributions, as assigned; 2) appropriate length of contributions--a brief comment is not what I'm looking for, though you may certainly offer these in addition to your longer responses; 3) quality of contributions, by which I mean that you are taking the assignment seriously and your contributions indicate thoughtfulness rather than superficiality or just "going through the motions."

Attendance and Class Participation

Because so much of the experience of this class involves collaborative learning, as we move back and forth between the solitary acts of reading and electronic literature browsing and the group acts of meaning-making, I feel that your presence in class is important. More than three absences will lower your participation grade by a letter grade for each additional class missed.

I believe that you and I both appreciate classes in which we have lively discussions. In order to make this happen, we must all come to class having done the reading assignment, thought about it, and jotted down some questions or issues that we can talk about. As instructor, I will take the lead in eliciting comments and posing questions, but you also need to do your part. To nudge you (or inspire you, or twist your arm) to participate, here are my expectations for participation:

- o If you *always* come to class having done the reading (or other assignments) and are ready and willing to contribute to our discussions and to share the responsibility for making sure that we continue our conversations if we get stuck, you have earned an A for participation.
- o If you *usually* come to class having done the reading (or other assignments), and you *usually* contribute to discussions--and often take the initiative to keep conversations going--you have earned a B for participation.
- o If you *generally* come to class having done the reading (or other assignments), and you *sometimes* contribute to discussions, you have earned a C for participation.
- o If you frequently come to class *not* having completed reading or other assignments, and you either do not contribute to class or--because you haven't done the reading--your contributions are not really on task, you have earned a D for participation.
- o If you come to class irregularly, don't do the assignments, and don't contribute to class discussions, it's pretty clear that you've earned an F for participation.

Review of a Work of Electronic Literature

On April 16th, our class meeting will be devoted to a discussion of the class's choices of electronic literature for exploration. In order to prepare for that class, I have asked you to explore some of the texts available in the [Electronic Literature Collection](), volume 1, prepared by the Electronic Literature Organization.

To prepare your review, you should first choose one of the works of electronic literature hosted at this website to read/experience as thoroughly as possible. (We will have read a couple of other works at the site--for this assignment, do not choose a work that we have already experienced.) Once you have finished your encounter with the work, write a 1-2 page typed review of the work which should contain 1) a description of the work's plot and/or main features and 2) a comment on your experience of reading/experiencing this work. What did you like? Not like? Find intriguing or challenging? Finally, 3) comment on how this work compares to other works of electronic literature you've read, and end with a question or comment that we can use for class discussion.

We will have the chance to visit and discuss everyone's choices during class on April 16th.

Creation of an Original Fairy Tale Variant

You will create, using the software program *Storyspace*, an original hypertext variation on a traditional fairy tale. You may choose any fairy tale you like and vary it by changing it to a contemporary setting, giving it a feminist interpretation, adding ethnic dimensions, changing the plot, fleshing out characters, adding unexpected twists, etc. Or you may combine features of several tale types in order to evolve your own fairy tale plot. As you will see when you read *In Small and Large*

Pieces and *Patchwork Girl*, *Storyspace* allows you to create a story that can take many different directions, depending upon the reader's choices. You should exploit this feature of *Storyspace* in creating your plot whenever possible. The purpose of this assignment is to help you to experience firsthand the tensions between our narrative expectations (doesn't the prince always rescue the princess?) and how these expectations may be revised, rerouted, postponed, perhaps derailed by the writer--or left entirely within the control of the reader.

When grading your fairy tale, I will look for the following:

> o   creative work with the traditional fairy tale, not just a duplication of it
> o   evidence of comprehension of specific fairy tale elements, functions, and tale types as discussed in class
> o   attempt to explore/exploit the possibilities of hypertext in creating a story plot
> o   evidence of experimentation with the features of *Storyspace*, though not necessarily mastery of them
> o   pleasure for the reader!

Your fairy tale variant is due for initial review on March 19th. You may revise your tale and resubmit it for a new grade; if you choose to do this, your revision is due to me on April 14th.

Group Hypertext Project

You and your group members will design a group project that creates an "ending" for *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. Charles Dickens died before he could complete the novel's final three chapters, leaving a presumable murder unsolved--or at least a criminal not brought to justice. It will be your mission, as a group, to finish Dickens's novel in any way you'd like, using the advantages of Storyspace, an HTML composing program (such as Dreamweaver or, more simply, the HTML composing program found within SeaMonkey), a Flash program, or any other form of software you and your group members feel comfortable using.

Here are some possibilities for your project. These are not the only options and are only meant to prompt your thinking about how to approach the assignment.

- Your narrative can confirm the suspect that many readers of the novel assume "did it"--or your narrative can take details from the novel to move the plot in a different direction, unmasking a different suspect--or solving the "mystery of Edwin Drood" in a way not anticipated by the plot as we have it.
- Your narrative can be told from one or more character's perspectives and might reveal different "truths," depending upon whose perspective we follow to see the ending of the story. You may introduce a new character into your chapters not contained in Dickens's original.
- You may provide a definitive "ending" to the novel or choose to leave it more openended. You may choose to provide multiple endings for the novel.
- You might take the novel out of its original setting and "re-see" it in a contemporary context--a bit like Shelley Jackson does in her re-visioning of *Patchwork Girl*. If you do this, make sure that enough of the novel "translates" to your new vision for it to make sense to the reader of your project.

Whatever your group chooses to do to solve the mystery of Edwin Drood, think carefully about how you might use the advantages of hypertext and electronic literature formatting to engage the reader in the vision of the novel you wish to create.

Your group will turn in a one-page proposal on April 14th. This proposal should indicate preliminary plot ideas and thoughts about how these ideas will be realized in the hypertext, as well as questions or problems the group feels it needs to address to complete the project successfully. (These questions might take the form of a request for particular training or mentoring by me. I will do my best to respond to expressed needs.) The project itself is due on April 28th.

Your grade on this project will reflect your contribution to group dynamics as well as your individual effort on the project. As we get closer to your work on this assignment, I will distribute information describing my criteria for a successful project, my expectations for your group work, and my standards for evaluation.

ourse Schedule

Introduction

Jan 20 T

- o   Introduction to the course.
- o   Also, introduce yourself on the class discussion board, found at our eCompanion site.

Jan 22 Th

- o   Read Jay David Bolter, "Introduction: Writing in the Late Age of Print," from *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (2001; handout)
- o   Read the following two sections from N. Katherine Hayles's 2007 online essay "Electronic Literature: What Is It?": Section 1, "A Context for Electronic Literature" and Section 3, "Electronic Literature Is Not Print." The essay can be found at: http://eliterature.org/pad/elp.html#sec3
- o   Browse Nancy Kaplan's "E-literacies, Politexts, Hypertexts, and Other Cultural Formations in the Late Age of Print" (*Computer-Mediated Communication Magazine* 1995)

  Don't worry if you have trouble following all of Kaplan's argument or understanding all of Hayles's terminology—we will just be using Bolter, Hayles, and Kaplan to spur our discussion in class

What's in a Plot: Themes and Variations

Jan 27 T

- o   In Hallett & Karasek: "Sleeping Beauty " (63-93), "Little Red Riding Hood" (27-55; skip "Wolf" and "What Bugs Bunny Said to Red Riding Hood")

Jan 29 Th

- In Hallett & Karasek, from "The Enchanted Bride(groom)": "Beauty and the Beast" (169-181), "East of the Sun and West of the Moon" (181-188), "The White Cat" (192-203)
- Contribute your first discussion board comments by Friday

Feb 3 T

- Byatt, from *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*: "The Glass Coffin" (1-23) and "The Story of the Eldest Princess" (39-71)
- J.K. Rowling, from *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, "The Fountain of Fair Fortune" (available at our eCompanion site)

Feb 5 Th

- In-class screening of *Ever After*. (The film runs 100 minutes; if we can, we will stay in the room until the film has ended. If possible, please plan to stay in class. Otherwise, view the rest of the film on your own before our next class.)
- Read, in Hallett and Karasek: Lee, "When the Clock Strikes" (117-130) and Maitland, "The Wicked Stepmother's Lament" (130-135). We will discuss all three versions of Cinderella next class.
- Contribute your second discussion board comments by Friday

Feb 10 T

- Experience an online version of "Little Red Riding Hood" by Donna Leishman at the following address: http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/leishman__redridinghood.html
- We will discuss *Ever After*, Lee, and Maitland, as well as your experience of an e-lit fairy tale
- We will also discuss your fairy tale assignment

Expect the Unexpected: Playing With Plots

Feb 12 Th

- Introduction to *Storyspace*, Part One (class time will be spent as workshop)
- Look ahead on the reading list: begin reading Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*.
- Contribute your third discussion board comments by Friday

Feb 17 T

- o Introduction to *Storyspace*, Part Two (class time will be spent as workshop)
- o Read the following for today's discussion: Jacobs, "The Story of the Three Little Pigs" and Garner, "The Three Little Pigs" (289-292, in Hallett & Karasek).
- o Look at my sample hypertext version of "The Three Little Pigs," available at our Ecompanion site.

Feb 19 Th

- o Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass* (read in its entirety by today; we will continue discussion of Carroll over the next three classes)
- o Contribute your fourth discussion board comments by Friday

Feb 24 T

- o Cramer, "In Small and Large Pieces"

Feb 26 Th

- o Web sources on Carroll: browse Mitsuharu Matsuoka's weblinks to Carroll websites (Carroll is author #225 on Matsuoka's list)
- o Look at "From the Ashes" for another hypertext approach to fairy tale variant creation
- o Discussion of these materials and in-class work on your fairy tale
- o Contribute your fifth discussion board comments by Friday

Other Ways to Tell Stories: Image versus Text; Metaphors for Text and Hypertext

Mar 3 T

- o Go to the WWW version of "The Hunting of the Snark," at the British Poetry 1780-1890: A Hypertext Archive of Scholarly Editions, and enjoy its presentation of the illustrated text. (The text is long; you need only sample the site for today's class. Return to it on your own when you are able. Do click on the pictures in order to see them enlarged.)
- o Read, in Hallett & Karasek, "Illustration" (297-310)
- o Discussion of this site and in-class work on your fairy tale

Mar 5 Th

- o Begin discussion of Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl* (continue to explore this hypertext on your own over spring break; also, if you need extra time to complete reading assignments, get started on Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* over break)
- o We'll decide if you want more in-class time to work on your fairy tale
- o Contribute your sixth discussion board comments by Friday

Spring break week

Mar 17 T

- Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*
- Final questions on your hypertext project

Mar 19 Th

- Finish discussion of Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*
- If you are enjoying reading hypertextual stories, you might want to explore another classic work, *Twelve Blue*, by Michael Joyce, available at the following address: http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/joyce__twelve_blue.html We won't discuss this one in depth, but I may have us look at some of the links in class. Like *Patchwork Girl*, Joyce's work was also initially created in Storyspace.
- FAIRY TALE VARIANT DUE FOR INITIAL REVIEW. (You will be given directions for submission of these to me, for placement at our eCompanion site.)
- Contribute your seventh discussion board comments by Friday

Mar 24 T

- Discussion of classmates' tales. Please view these at our eCompanion site prior to class.
- Discussion of group hypertext project; form groups.

The Victorian Novel: Taking Time to Read—and Finish—the Plot

Mar 26 Th

- Dickens's *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Chs. 1-8 (pages 7-82)
- By this date, I will have given you a status report on your performance in class, taking into consideration your fairy tale variant, your in-class contributions, and your contributions to the discussion board.
- Contribute your eighth discussion board comments by Friday

Mar 31 T

- *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Chs. 9-16 (pages 82-186)

Apr 2 Th

- *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Chs. 17-21 (pages 187-236)
- No discussion board comments this week

Apr 7 T

- o Finish *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*
- o Group discussion of possibilities for ending the novel and first plans for group project

Apr 9 Th

- o See what [The Victorian Web](#) has to tell you about Dickens. Our discussion of this site will enhance our discussion of Dickens's novel as well as provide us with some models of website design, should your group decide to present its "solution" to the novel as a website.
- o Second half of class will be used for group exploration and discussion. I will meet with all groups before the end of class to discuss your evolving plans for your project, as well as to point out areas where you may need further exploration.

Break

Apr 14 T

- o No formal class meeting. Instead, I will meet with groups individually to discuss your progress on your project. Each group will turn in a one-page PROPOSAL for its project, indicating how the group members are envisioning the ending of Dickens's novel.
- o FAIRY TALE HYPERTEXT DUE FOR FINAL EVALUATION

Apr 16 Th

- o Choose one e-literature text to explore from the Electronic Literature Collection, volume 1, assembled by the Electronic Literature Organization. The main page for this collection can be found at: http://collection.eliterature.org/1/
- o Turn in your REVIEW of your chosen text (see directions for review under assignment link at the eCompanion site).

Your Plots

Apr 21 T

- o Out-of-class work on group hypertext project—no class meeting.

Apr 23 Th

- o Out-of-class work on group hypertext project—no class meeting.
- o Groups meet with me to discuss group projects. Each group should be able to demonstrate a "first draft" version of its hypertext for my review and comments. Also, bring questions!

Apr 28 T

- o GROUP HYPERTEXT PROJECTS DUE. (I will give you directions for submitting your projects.)
- o Group presentations of web projects: you should discuss with the class your rationale for your version of an "ending" to Dickens's novel and how your influenced your project design. You may also discuss your experience with hypertext materials and any other discoveries you made about text and hypertext, webs and imagined spaces, that you want to share with the class. Your assignment for the final class will be to explore your classmates' projects at the E-college course site.
- o No discussion board responses required.

Apr 30 Th

- o Final reflections on group projects. Final comments on course.
- o In-class exploration of future possibilities for e-literature.
- o You should contribute two final discussion board comments: 1) share your experience of your classmates' projects: how have these projects reflected the issues raised by this course (possibly in design or content); 2) share your experience of the course as a whole: what did you especially like? What worked less well for you, and why?