

Religion and American Women Writers
ENGL 4640, RELI/WMST 4500, AAST 4990
Engineering 3106

Professor Quincy Newell

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Ross Hall 121

Office hours:

Tuesday, 1:00-3:00; Wednesday, 2:00-3:00

or by appointment

Professor Erin Forbes

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Office hours:

Tuesday, 9:20-10:50; Thursday, 9:50-10:50

or by appointment

Course Description

“God wrote it.” That’s what Harriet Beecher Stowe said about her runaway best-seller, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Why did Stowe make that claim, and what did it mean to her and the people around her? What did it then mean for Helen Hunt Jackson to try to write another *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*—this one to generate sympathy for American Indians? Was Jackson’s book, *Ramona*, less successful because she didn’t make Stowe’s claim that “God is my Co-Author”?

Over the course of the semester, we will explore these questions, and broader ones, such as: How does religion shape writing by women in the 19th-century U.S.? How does writing by women in the 19th-century U.S. affect religion? How might studying these two topics together change what we mean by “literature,” or even what we mean by “religion”?

The learning outcomes for this course include increased knowledge of religious traditions and women’s writing in the 19th-c. U.S., and improved skills in scholarly analysis of religious ideas and texts, literary analysis, oral presentation, and interdisciplinary research and writing.

For English majors, this course can meet two different requirements: 4000-level course in literature before 1900; and emerging fields and approaches.

Required books, available through the University Bookstore:

Course Pack (CP)*

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Signet, 9780451531469

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Library of America Paperback, 978-1598530865

Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*, Signet, 978-0451528421

*all readings from the Course Pack (CP) are also on electronic and traditional reserve at Coe

Course website: This course has a wyocourses website that will be used to distribute some materials. *Make sure you have access to this website and that you check it regularly.*

Schedule of Reading

Introductions

1/27 Introductions

1/29 CP 1: Judith Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions” (*Gender Trouble*, 128-41)

2/3 CP 2: Anne Braude, "Women's History Is American Religious History" (Tweed, 87-107)

Memoir and Autobiography

2/5 CP 3: Andrews, Introduction (*Sisters of the Spirit*, 1-22)

CP 4: Jarena Lee, *The Life and Experience of Jarena Lee* (Andrews, 25-48)

2/10 reading day

2/12 CP 5: Hazel Carby, "Hear My Voice" (*Reconstructing Womanhood*, 40-61)

Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, "Preface by the Author," "Introduction by the Editor," and Chapter I, "Childhood" through Chapter XV, "Continued Persecutions"

2/17 finish *Incidents*

Poetry

2/19 CP 6: Roger Lundin, "Introduction" (*Emily Dickinson and the Art of Belief*, 1-6)

CP 7: Emily Dickinson, 258 and 1551

2/24 CP 7: Emily Dickinson, 147, 185, 211, 241, 249, 324, 435, 465, 510, 712, 1228, 1545, 1601

2/26 CP 8: Claudia Stokes, "Derelict Daughters and Polygamous Wives: Mormonism and the Uses of Sentiment" (*The Altar at Home: Sentimental Literature and Nineteenth-Century American Religion*, 142-80)

CP 9: Eliza R. Snow, "The Kidnapping," "The Assassination," "My Father in Heaven," "Woman," and "Instructions of the Priesthood" (244-46, 295-99, 312-14, 474-79, 491-96)

Novels

3/3 CP 10: Tracy Fessenden, "From Romanism to Race: *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (*Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature*, 111-36)

James M. McPherson, "Introduction" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (xi-xx)

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, "Preface" and Chapter 1 (9-21)

3/5 reading day

3/10 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, finish Volume 1

3/12 Library workshop—MEET IN COE 218

SPRING BREAK

3/24 *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Volume 2 (be sure to review Volume 1 so that we can discuss the entire novel in class)

- 3/26 reading day
- 3/31 Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona*, Chapters 1-15
- 4/2 reading day
- 4/7 finish *Ramona*
- 4/9 Individual paper meetings – bring research question + annotated bibliography of at least 3 sources

Sermons, Speeches, and other Public Texts

- 4/14 CP 11: Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (103-12, 151-84)
 CP 12: Sojourner Truth, “Ar’n’t I a Woman” and selection from *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (245-249)
- 4/16 CP 13: Maria Stewart, “Why Sit Ye Here and Die?” and “What if I am a Woman?”
 CP 14: Maria Stewart, “Religion and the Pure Principles of Morality”
- 4/21 CP 15: Ann Braude, “The Meaning of Mediumship” (*Radical Spirits* 82-116)
Banner of Light 1, no. 1 (April 11, 1857)—full issue. Posted on the course website.
- 4/23 Individual paper meetings with Prof. Forbes or Prof. Newell. Bring at least: introduction, thesis, & detailed outline OR introduction, thesis & 5 draft pages.
- 4/28 *Woman’s Exponent* 7, no. 13 (Dec. 1, 1878)—full issue. Posted on the course website.
Assignment: Thought piece packet due in class

Week 14: Research and Writing

- 4/30 Peer review of research papers – worksheets due in Prof. Forbes’s mailbox in Hoyt 201 by 5pm
- 5/5 Research presentations, day 1
- 5/7 Research presentations, day 2

Final papers due May 11 at 12:00 p.m. (hardcopy turned in to Dr. Newell’s mailbox in Ross Hall 123)

Course requirements

- 10% presentation and write-up of supplementary or “missing” footnote for secondary source
- 10% presentation of one of the articles/books/book chapters cited in a footnote
- 10% research presentation
- 15% participation
- 15% 8 “thought pieces” (2 pp. each)
- 40% research paper (10-12 pp.)

Grading scale

The English Dept., Religious Studies, and the Program in African American and Diaspora Studies have a department policy to use the new +/- grading scale. Therefore final grades for this course will be assessed as follows:

Grade	Percentages
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	60-67
F	59 and below

Note: Grades will be determined on the basis of performance not effort or time spent. However, to succeed in this class you will need to put in an average of at LEAST 9 hours of work outside of class per week. Some weeks, such as when you are giving a presentation or working on your paper, or when we are reading a novel, may require more than 9 hours.

Late work

“Thought pieces” must be turned in on time—they will not be accepted late. Likewise, presentations must be delivered on the day they are due, unless a dire emergency renders you totally incapable of making that happen. (Making decisions without forethought, such as scheduling a medical appointment during class or deciding to leave town in advance of a snowstorm that may well close the roads and prevent your return, does not constitute an emergency.) All other work will lose 10% for every 24 hours, or fraction thereof, that it is late. (Please note that this policy includes weekends, vacations, and holidays.) No late work will be accepted after Wednesday, 5/13, unless arrangements have been made with us before noon on Monday, 5/11.

Participation

Active participation in class and occasional group work is mandatory. We expect that everyone will make multiple, substantive contributions every time we meet. Listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to what others have to say. Note-taking and engaged facial expressions, important as they are, do not count as participation.

Attendance

University sponsored absences are cleared through the Office of Student Life (OSL). Students with official authorized absences shall be permitted to make up work without penalty in classes missed. Students who are suffering from an illness or who are experiencing an emergency must inform us of their absence in advance of class, and must provide official documentation in order to make up work without penalty.

Any other absences will result in a reduction of your final average. If you miss more than 1/3 the semester, regardless of the reason, you will receive a failing grade for the course.

Note: If you are absent for any reason, you are responsible for what you missed. Be sure to contact a classmate to discuss or read notes from that day's class.

Disability Statement

If you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let us know as soon as possible. You must register with, and provide documentation of your disability to University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in SEO, room 330 Knight Hall. 766-6189, TTY: 766-3073)

Academic Honesty

The University of Wyoming is built upon a strong foundation of integrity, respect and trust. All members of the university community have a responsibility to be honest and the right to expect honesty from others. Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable to our community and will not be tolerated, as outlined in UW Regulation 6-802.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty. Presenting someone else's writing, ideas or concepts—anything that does not fall under the umbrella of “common knowledge”—as your own is plagiarism. This includes information taken from the internet as well as conventionally published sources. To avoid plagiarism, clearly cite the source when you are relying on a specific source. Please refer to the *MLA Handbook* for additional guidance and appropriate citation format. We have included on e-companion another helpful and detailed explanation of plagiarism. You may also wish to consult the UW Unireg on academic dishonesty: <http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/files/docs/uw-reg-6-802.pdf>

You should expect that confirmed cases of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty—no matter how small—will result in a failing grade for the course, and will be referred to the Dean for further action. We will not tolerate any academic dishonesty. In our class, you would be better off simply *not* turning in an assignment (and getting an honest F for that assignment) than engaging in academic dishonesty.

Cell phones and other electronic devices

Turn off and store cell phones and other electronic devices out of sight while you are in class. If you get approval from us, kindles, laptops, etc. may be allowed for note taking or reading only (wireless should be set to off). Any violation of this policy will be counted as an unexcused absence.

Email policy

We will do our best to respond to emails within 48 hours (on weekdays), often much sooner, unless unusual circumstances arise. Do not expect a response after 5 pm or on the weekend.

Assignments

Source Presentation:

5 minutes max. Follow up on one of the **secondary source** footnote references that interests you in one of our critical readings. You will read the article/book/book chapter cited, and present a précis as well as your own response to the source. No handout required.

Footnote Presentation and Write-Up:

3 minutes max. Provide a supplementary footnote for the day's **secondary reading**. You must present on a different reading than you used in your source presentation. This may be a reference that you feel the author of the article/chapter, for whatever reason, overlooked, but really should be included. Or it may be a reference that you feel could usefully add to the author's argument. **Handout required.**

For this presentation you may choose to read all or part of your handout. You should also explain how you decided upon this footnote.

Research Presentation:

8 minutes max. Read a 3-4 pp condensed version of your research paper. You should be prepared to answer questions from your peers and professors.

Thought Piece Packet:

You will write eight "thought pieces" over the course of the semester. All of them are self-scheduled, but you may write no more than one per week. (This means you have thirteen opportunities to hand in thought pieces over the course of the semester. Start early!) You must be *present* in class to turn in a thought piece, and you must turn in a *hard copy* rather than submitting your thought piece electronically. Each thought piece should be about two typed pages long and should discuss the reading assigned for the day you hand in the entry. Your writing should *not* summarize the reading, but instead should engage its content. When you write, ask yourself questions such as the following: How does this text help us think about how religion shaped writing by women in the 19th-century U.S.? What does it contribute to our understanding of how women's writing in the 19th-century U.S. affected religion? How might studying this text affect what we mean by "literature," or even what we mean by "religion"? It is also useful to think about your reading in the broader context of the class: How does this reading relate to other readings from this class? How does it address issues we have discussed in class? How does it reinforce, extend, confirm or contradict ideas we've seen before in this class? What questions does it raise, and how might those questions be answered? (NOTE that these are starter questions. You may decide to write about one or more entirely different questions, and that is fine, as long as your thought piece engages the content of the assigned reading.) Each thought piece will be graded satisfactory (+) or unsatisfactory (0). You will hand in all eight of your collected thought pieces—the *ORIGINAL*, *GRADED* thought pieces—on 4/28.

Research Paper:

This 10-12 pp. paper will present your own original argument about one of the works we've read this semester, in relation to the arguments of two peer-reviewed critical sources that are also about that work. We will discuss this assignment in much greater detail in class.

Note: We may make changes to any of the above as the course proceeds. These changes will be announced in class or via email.