

## FREN 151 – FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

### SHIPWRECKS, OUTLAWS, AND WONDERLANDS : READING AND WRITING THE ADVENTURE STORY

Clapp Library 346 - TF 02:50 pm - 04:00 pm

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H. Meyer & F. Méaulle. Detail of an illustration for *The Count of Monte-Cristo* published in the Italian newspaper *Il Teatro Illustrato* in 1861.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine major XIXth and XXth-century French adventure novels and some of their Anglophone counterparts. We will seek to define and analyze a genre whose popularity in the nineteenth-century helped shape major national myths. The class will be divided into four parts, the first of which will be dedicated to Robinson Crusoe and his avatars in French literature (Tournier, *Friday*). Another section will be devoted to solitary heroes breaking free from prison and escaping the law (*The Count of Monte-Christo* and Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables*). We will then work on sea adventure fictions – excerpts from Melville's *Moby Dick* and Victor Hugo's *The Toilers of the Sea*. Finally, we will discuss fantastic fictions (Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, and prints by French illustrator J.J. Grandville).

## COURSE MATERIALS

The following books are required. You can find them at the Wellesley bookstore:

- Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Penguin 2003, ISBN 9780140449266
- Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, Penguin 2003, ISBN 9780141439822

- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Penguin 2009, ISBN 9780143105954
- Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1984, ISBN 9780553213454
- Michel Tournier, *Friday*, Hopkins, 1997, ISBN 9780801855924

You can feel free to buy the books elsewhere than in the bookstore, but it is important that you get the same edition as the ones that have been ordered for this class. If you order the books online, make sure that they have the same publication date and ISBN number.

Our class has a Google website, where I will post assignments, pdfs, and resources. In order to access our site, you should open your Wellesley email, click on the squares on the right hand corner of the page, and then click on “sites.” You should see a list of websites, and ours (FREN-151) should be among them.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

Here is the breakdown of the courses’ objectives:

- **To give you tools to think critically about literature.** When we read a novel (and maybe this is even truer for adventure novels) we may not necessarily question it so much: we are caught in the story. Another problem can be that we don’t know where to start in order to think critically about a story. This class will precisely train you to do that. Thinking critically about a text means being able to figure out how it “thinks.” For instance, if we were to discuss the love triangle of *Hunger Games*, we would certainly have an interesting discussion about gender roles. We would have to look closely at the novel and make hypotheses about how the characters fit into (or debunk) some gender stereotypes. In order to do that, one would need both an overview of the novel, and a close textual analysis of some specific excerpts. This class will train you to do both: on Tuesdays, you will have larger reading assignments, and on Fridays you will have shorter excerpts and close reading assignments.
- **To familiarize you with the history and conventions of a genre** that remains immensely popular up to today. Who wrote and read adventure novels in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? How were they published? How were heroes and villains described? How were those characters impregnated by the history of their respective nations? We will discuss the history of the genre and its link with the societies that produced and read it.
- **To improve your writing skills.** You will have different kinds of writing assignments during this semester: short response papers, journal entries, collaborative papers, reviews of your peer’s work, and individual papers. We will also write an adventure story of our own. You will get a varied writing experience, as you will have the opportunity to practice different styles of writing: academic writing, personal essay, and fiction.
- **To give you a reading experience.** We all spend a lot of our time reading on computers or tablets; when we read on those devices, we tend to “jump” from one source to another. It is probably rarer for us to spend a large amount of time reading just one thing: in this class it is precisely what is expected of you. I encourage you to create reading groups outside of class, and to carve out a space and a time just for reading – perhaps among friends, phones and computers off.

## GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

This year, Wellesley College implements a shadow grading policy for all first years. This course is shadow-graded, which means that you will receive grades for all assignments as well as a final grade. Your transcript, however, will show a P/NP at the end of the semester.

In order to pass the class, you will need to comply with the absence policy and the honor code (see below), do the readings and complete all assignments in due time, and produce satisfactory work. Satisfactory work means that I grade your work (such as a paper, or class participation for instance) higher than an F (60%). If an assignment is unsatisfactorily completed, I will let you know immediately and we will discuss the matter together.

Here is the breakdown of how I will calculate your final grade.

**Paper 1 (in pairs) : 10%**

**Paper 2 (alone, but one of your peers will proofread it) : 15%**

**Paper 3 (alone) : 20%**

**Short response papers : 25 %**

**Participation : 10%**

**Reading journal: 10%**

**Collective book project : 10%** (you will receive 100/100 if completed)

**Papers 1, 2, and 3:** I will give you guidelines for all three writing assignments, but for the third paper you will also have the possibility to write on the topic of your choice. You will write the first paper in collaboration with another student from the class. You will write the second paper alone, but you will have to send it to a peer a few days before the deadline (see calendar below); your peer will then edit it and make suggestions with “track-changes” in Word; you will do the same for their paper. You will return the reviewed papers to each other two days before the deadline, which will give you time to work on your paper again before you submit it. I will grade both your paper and your review of your partner’s paper.

**Short response papers:** on the weeks that have no journal assignment due, you will have short response papers (200-250 words) to hand in on Fridays. I will give you the subjects in advance.

**Participation:** being active in class is essential to your progress. You are expected to have done the readings actively: when reading, you can underline, take notes, write questions, or take any other approach that helps you participate in class later on. The detailed description of how I will grade your participation is on our website (in the section entitled “syllabus”).

**Reading journal:** this writing assignment will be your reading diary for the semester. I will give you blue books to write in (but you can choose to buy or make a notebook if you prefer). You are required to write at least 3 sentences for every class, and at least 2 pages (handwritten, the format being approximately that of a Blue Book) before the diaries are due (see calendar). I read these journals and comment on them, but I do not “correct” them: we will use them as a means of communication. You will have a lot of freedom for this assignment. I will give you a grade at the end of the semester (see the details of the grading on our class’s website, section “Journals”).

**Collective book project:** this semester, we will collectively write an adventure story. Alexandre Dumas, whom we will read, used many ghostwriters in order to create his novels: we will emulate this collective form of writing, deciding together on a story, a set of characters, and a chapter progression. Each of you will then

write a chapter with a partner. The specifics will depend on the number of students enrolled, so I will give you more information as the semester unfolds. At the end of the semester (see calendar), we will spend one session in the Book Arts Lab, where we will learn to bind our pages together into a book.

## ABSENCE POLICY, CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Your presence in class is mandatory. You should also have completed all the readings for each session, and be prepared to discuss them in class.

**You can have two unexcused absences.** If you miss a third class, your dean will be informed of your absence and we will discuss your options for staying in the class. If you miss a fourth, you will fail the class.

**If you are absent, you are still responsible for the assignments due on that day.** If there are special circumstances that prevent an assignment to be handed in on time, please let me know and inform your dean. Stay in touch with both of us and we will help you resolve the issue.

**Honor code:** please make sure that you are familiar with Wellesley's Honor Code, and follow its rule. You should never receive any exterior help in the writing of your papers, except as specified in the collective writing assignments (paper 1, 2, and our creative project). If you use someone else's research in a paper, quote it appropriately: cite it between inverted comas and with a clear bibliographical reference. The complete Honor Code is available here:

<http://www.wellesley.edu/studentlife/aboutus/honor>

**Computers, ipads, smartphones:** I will ask that you do not use laptops in class, because it is distracting to others and it also obstructs communication among us (incidentally, all studies show that students taking notes with a laptop or a tablet assimilate a lot less than those that use pen and paper...). If you have special needs that require the use of a computer, please come and talk to me and we can look into the matter together. For the same reason, I prefer that you do not use tablets in class either.

Smartphones should be turned off and out of sight. It is distracting to hear a phone vibrate or to hear emails and text messages come in, so please be mindful of all of us and turn everything off.

**Disability accommodations:** Any student with disability accommodation needs should contact Jim Wice in Disability Services, [781-283-2434](tel:781-283-2434), [jwice@wellesley.edu](mailto:jwice@wellesley.edu), preferably during the first 2 weeks of class, so that he can review the request and notify me of the approved accommodations.

## CALENDAR

Tuesday, Sept 2<sup>nd</sup>: Introduction.

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### Castaways

Friday, Sept 5<sup>th</sup> : *Robinson Crusoe*, p 34-52 (« Our ship was about 120 tun burthen » - « as I observ'd just now »). **Reading journal 1 due in class.**

Tuesday, Sept 9th : *Robinson Crusoe*, p 52-104 (« had thought fit »).

Friday, Sept 12th : *Robinson Crusoe*, p120-124 (« You are to understand »-« in the island »), p 156-169 (« when this had agitated »-« in the afternoon »). **SRP 1 due in class (short response paper).**

Tuesday, Sept 16th : *Friday*, p 7-68 (Prologue and Chapters 1, 2, 3).

Friday, Sept 19th : *Friday*, p 131-147 (Chapter 7). **Reading Journal 2.**

Tuesday, Sept 23rd : *Friday*, p. 149-199 (Chapters 8 and 9)

Friday, Sept 26th : *Friday*, p. 215-235 (Chapters 11 and 12). **Paper 1 due.**

**Visit to Special Collections : our class meets in Special Collections, 3rd floor of the Clapp Library.**

**Tentative field trip (dependent on number of participants)**

**Saturday, Sept 27 9am-6.30pm: Field trip to Mystic Seaport. I recommend reading beforehand Chapters 16 of *Moby Dick* (« The Ship », 76-89) and Hugo, *The Toilers of the Sea*, Book 3 Chapters 4 and 5 (pdf on website).**

## Solitary Heroes : The Count of Monte-Cristo and Jean Valjean

Tuesday, Sept 30th : *The Count of Monte-Cristo* : read the Table of Contents and p 7-33 (Chapters 1, 2, and 3).

Friday, Oct 3rd : *The Count of Monte-Cristo* p 33-111. **Reading Journal 3.**

Tuesday, Oct 7th : *The Count of Monte-Cristo* p. 120-219.

Friday, Oct 10th : *The Count of Monte-Cristo* p. 220-241. **SRP 2 due.**

Fall Break

**Friday, Oct 17th : No Class. Draft of your chapter for the book project due**

Tuesday, Oct 21 : *Les Misérables* 1 (pdf on website)

Friday, Oct 24th : *Les Misérables* 2, **Paper 2 must be sent to your reviewer.**

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## Adventures at Sea : Melville and Hugo

Tuesday, Oct 28th : *Moby Dick*, pages xxiii-xxvi, 3-8, 13-32, 36-38 (Etymology/Extracts, Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6). **Paper 2 due in class.**

Friday, Oct 31st : *Moby Dick*, pages 76-89, 124-136 (Chapters 16, 26-28).

Tuesday, Nov 4th : *Moby Dick*, pages 174-181, 194-212, 307-312, 330-340, 500-507 (Chapters 36, 41-42, 61, 67-70, 105-6).

Friday, November 7th : *Moby Dick*, pages 576-579, 594-625 (Chapters 128, 133-135). **SRP 3 due.**

Tuesday, Nov 11th : *The Toilers of the Sea*, p 1-25 (pdf on website, Part 1 Book 1 Chapter 1, 2, 6, 7 ; Book 2 Chapters 1, 4 ; Book 3 Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 ; Book 4 Chapter 7 ; Book 5 Chapters 5, 8).

Friday, Nov 14th : **Outline of paper 3 due, Reading journal 4 due.** : *The Toilers of the Sea*, p. 25-35 (Book 6 Chapters 2, 4-7).

Tuesday, Nov 18th : *The Toilers of the Sea*, p 35-53. (Book 7 Chapter 1 ; Part 2 Book 1 Chapter 1, 7-13 ; Book 2 chapter 4, 9)

Friday, Nov 21st : **Paper 3 due**, 7 pages. No readings, **Visit to the Book Arts Lab**

Tuesday, Nov 25th : *The Toilers of the Sea*, p. 54-60 (Book 4 chapter 1-4).

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Thanksgiving break

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## Wonderlands : J.J. Grandville's *Another World* and *Alice in Wonderland*

Tuesday, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> : *Alice in Wonderland*, p 1-61.

Friday, Dec 5th : *Alice in Wonderland*, p 62-104. **Reading journal 5 due.**

Tuesday, Dec 9th : Selection of images by J.J. Grandville (on website). Conclusion of the class.

**SRP 4 due on Dec. 15th.**