FYS 039: WOMEN BEHAVING BADLY
FALL 2015
T/TH 9:30-10:45AM
PROFESSOR TAMIK A NUNLEY
COURSE DESCRIPTION

What does it mean for a woman to “behave badly”? This course will ask broader questions about how and why women violated the law or transgressed during the nineteenth century. More specifically, what does women’s law breaking tell us about the formation of laws and societies? We will study the lives of women across a spectrum of racial, class, and ethnic identities to understand the meanings of their legal violations and social transgressions in the United States. The women discussed in the course were identified as “behaving badly” for a variety of reasons that help us grasp how gender and racial dynamics evolved in nineteenth-century America. Some women committed murder, maintained romantic affairs or were arrested for infanticide, drunkenness, or cross-dressing. As a First-Year Seminar, this course is designed to introduce students to an interdisciplinary approach to critical thinking and writing. We will interrogate ideas about womanhood, genetics, criminology, and reform that evolved during the nineteenth century through an examination of laws, history, art, literature, and film. The course will feature key primary and secondary sources that foreground seminar discussions, and a series of focused writing exercises and assignments.

COURSE THEMES

- **Crime**
  - Criminology, Genetics and Darwinian Evolutionary Science
  - Murder and Sensation
  - Abortion and Infanticide

- **Transgression**
  - Aesthetics and Images
  - Insurrection and Resistance
  - Sex and Prostitution
  - Prisons and Reform
ASSIGNMENTS

All of the course assignments and responsibilities are aimed at crafting a writing portfolio for students to reflect on after the course has ended. The assignments require a variety of strategies for thinking, writing, and interrogating that help students understand their strengths and areas of improvement. When students re-visit the portfolio once the course is completed, my hope is that they will be able to see a body of work that is theirs to draw from and gain a better understanding of how they write, and how they can continue to build upon their approaches to writing throughout the course of their liberal arts education.

Course Participation/Discussion (25%): Course participation and attendance is critical to the success of the seminar. Students are expected to form thoughtful and informed points of discussion, questions of inquiry, and ideas to share with fellow classmates. Student participation will be evaluated based upon the quality rather than quantity of points, observations, and questions posed in class. Each student will be asked to bring to every meeting: one key point, one observation, and one critical question for the class to consider.

Writing Journal (20%): the writing journal is a personal and informal medium for reflection. Here, I will pay less attention to grammar and punctuation and more towards your personal reactions to the texts, discussions, images, and artifacts introduced each week in class. Prior to fall recess, I will meet individually with each student to discuss journal reflections and writing style. We will discuss strategies for maximizing the use of the journal as a form of reflection, a space to develop style, and explore untapped ideas. This portion of the writing portfolio will be graded based upon satisfactory completion and not for compositional merit or content. The Professor will read the journal but the journal will not be publicly discussed among peers in the course. Journal entries may be submitted on the course blackboard site under the “Journals” tab of the Course Tools feature. Students are not required to submit entries when final drafts of writing assignments are due.

Textual Analysis (15%): this assignment will be based upon a close reading of an article from an academic journal, newspaper, magazine or critical blog that addresses gender and criminality. This short paper (2—3 pages in length) requires each student to provide a concisely written analysis of the author’s views about gender and criminality. Be sure to anchor your analysis in the historical context in which it was written and include your own critique of the author’s argument.

Visual Analysis (15%): this assignment will require the student to employ visual analysis in a 2-3-page essay. Students will draw upon our class visits to the Allen Memorial Art Museum and the films viewed in the course to explore a different approach to critical thinking about the course themes.
Final Essay (25%): this 4-6-page essay requires students to ask a relevant question of interest that engages the course themes. The student will conduct the necessary research to interrogate and answer the question to demonstrate information literacy, sound research practices, and writing style.

COURSE POLICIES

Plagiarism and the Honor Code
All work submitted for this course must be done in compliance with the Oberlin Honor Code and include a signed honor pledge (“I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in the assignment”). Any written work submitted to the course must include citations of sources you consulted whether as a direct quote or paraphrase. Failure to adhere to the Honor Code will result in a grade penalty, withholding of a grade, and/or reporting to the Student Honor Committee. Please consult a reference librarian or myself if you have questions about how to properly cite sources or ideas in your work.

Students with Disabilities
Accommodations will be made for persons with disabilities documented at the Office of Disability Services. Students should notify the Office of Disability Services located in Peters G-27/G-28 (440-774-5588) and the Professor of any disability related needs.

Classroom Rules and Etiquette
The use of cell phones is prohibited, except in cases of emergency. Laptops are allowed only for the purposes of referencing readings. Research has shown that students absorb knowledge more effectively when writing notes by hand. Laptops often distract students using them as well as fellow classmates around them. I strongly encourage students to take notes by hand for a more productive learning process and classroom environment.

This is a seminar that requires active and engaged participation in class sessions. Every student will come with a particular experience and perspective that informs the content of course discussions. Therefore, I ask that every person commit to making space for new ideas and concepts even if they differ from your own. I ask that we be respectful of one another and exercise good judgment in how we speak to one another.

Given the content of the course, I understand that there may be reasons that lead you to leave the room. If this is the case, notify me of any concerns you may have. Otherwise, please avoid unnecessarily leaving the room.

Academic Incompletes
If you are unable to complete the requirements of this course for any reason, the College does allow two categories of incompletes, educational and emergency. To further understand your options, consult the Dean of Studies website at: http://new.oberlin.edu/office/dean-of-studies/policies/incompletes.dot
INTRODUCTION

The Rights of Women: How Laws Shape Gender
Sept. 3rd—Martha Jones, “Female Influence is Powerful: Respectability, Responsibility, and Setting the Terms of the Woman Question Debate” in All Bound Up Together: The Woman Question in African American Public Culture p. 59-86
*****Reading the Texts Workshop 9/3*****

CRIME

Criminology
Sept. 10th—Special Collections Visit

Comparative Ideas about Women and Crime
*****Writing Workshop 9/17*****

Cross-Dressing and Public Space
*****Draft I of Textual Analysis due in class 9/22*****

**Murder and Sensation**

**Infanticide**

****Textual Analysis Final Draft due 10/6 in class****
Annette Gordon-Reed, “Celia’s Case,” an excerpt from Race on Trial: Law and Justice in American History
Film, Beloved (1998)

**Contraception and Reproductive Control**

******Fall Break (Week of 10/19)******

**TRANSGRESSION**

**Aesthetics and Transgression (Week of 10/26)**
Aesthetics: Learning to Read Visually
Allen Memorial Art Museum visit

Same-Sex Love

Women and Insurrection

******Visual Analysis Draft I due in class 11/17******

Enslaved Women and Resistance

******Visual Analysis Final Draft due in class 11/24******

Sex and Leisure
**Prisons and Reform**


******Final Paper Draft I due in class 12/10******

******Final Paper due Sunday, December 20th******