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 using Google Calendar (see Moodle)

English 491H
 Spring 2020
 Winston Hall 003
 Mon & Weds, 3-4:15

Serials and Storylines

English Honors

Course Description

Ours is a culture of serial storytelling. Whether it's the television shows we're hooked on, the podcasts we listen to, the interactive video games we immerse ourselves in, or the book series we love, so many of the stories we enjoy today are told in parts. But how do we approach these serial texts as literary critics when we are so used to discussing texts as "whole" forms? In this class we will take up this and other questions related to seriality by investigating the history and conventions of serial and multiplot storytelling. We will spend most of our time in the heyday of serial fiction: the Victorian era. But we'll journey all the way back to early story cycles like *One Thousand and One Nights*, in which sequential storytelling is nothing short of life-saving, and we'll finish in the present moment with television shows and a contemporary novel-in-stories that examines the strange sequences and cycles that structure our world (Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*). Along the way, you will experience what it was like to be a Victorian reader consuming one of the most popular serial detective novels of the day, Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*, in parts over many weeks. We will spend some time with the most famous serial novelist, Charles Dickens, by reading his masterpiece *Bleak House* alongside the notes he kept for himself as he wrote the novel over 19 months. In addition to writing a final research paper, you will contribute to an ongoing research project on Dickens's working notes by making your own set of annotations on a single serial installment, and you will work with a small group to create a project on a popular serial narrative (television show, podcast, film series, book series, graphic novel, video game, etc.) of your choice.

Questions we will be asking this semester might include: How do the plots and parts of serial stories relate to one another and to the notion of a "whole text"? What role do theories of reading and technologies of production play in the history of serial storytelling? What is the relationship between serial storytelling and the history of mystery and detection as genres? Do our theories of serial narrative change when we move from one medium (e.g. serial novel) to another (e.g. television series)? What can attention to seriality teach us about narrative form in general?

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete requirements for this class will learn to:

1. Demonstrate through writing, a group project, and class discussion the ability to critically read and interpret serial texts and to analyze the relationships between literary and popular texts within and across various media;
2. Recognize and evaluate the relationship between literary works and their historical and cultural contexts;

3. Identify and describe the narratological conventions of serial literature across multiple genres, media, and historical periods;
4. Research, interpret, and construct an argument about a text/texts and convey this analysis using both traditional academic and non-traditional creative and online formats;
5. Write a persuasive, well-organized, and well-researched academic paper that contributes to a critical conversation by selecting and synthesizing textual evidence.

This course will satisfy requirements for British Literature in the English Core and Interdisciplinary Approaches for the Literature concentration (LLT).

Required Texts

Please be sure you have **the exact editions** of the texts below. We will spend a lot of time discussing texts in detail in class, which means we need to be on the same page. Please make sure you always bring the required text to class with you. All other required readings should be accessed via Moodle.

Reading:

- *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens (Penguin, 9780141439723)
- *The Woman in White*, Wilkie Collins (Oxford, 9780199535637)
- *The Time Machine*, H.G. Wells (Norton, 9780393927948)
- *Homegoing*, Yaa Gyasi (Vintage 9781101971062)

Watching:

- *Sherlock*, Steven Moffat & Mark Gatiss (BBC) – Season 2, Episodes 1 & 3 (Netflix or library reserves)
- *Scandal*, Shonda Rhimes – pilot episode (Netflix or library reserves)
- *Bleak House*, Andrew Davies, Justin Chadwick, Susanna White (2-3 episodes) (Hulu)
- Your choice of 1 episode from the *middle* of any television series you have not watched before!
- One episode from a television series we will select together as a class

Listening: Podcast TBA

Misc. One season, series, or sequence of a serial text selected with a group for your group project

Assignments

There are no exams in this class. Your grade will be comprised of the following assignments. Each assignment category is worth 20% of your final grade.

Serial Journal

Since serial consumption is at the heart of this class, you will keep your own online serial reading, watching, and listening journal that records your experience of serial media across the course of the semester. You should plan to write at least ten entries altogether, at least four of which need to be posted before spring break. At least five of these entries should record your serial experience of reading *The Woman in White* in parts. The remaining entries can be about *any* serial media you experience this semester, and you are certainly not limited to posts about texts in this course. See assignment sheet for more guidance.

Dickens Working Notes Annotations & Essay (20%)

Each student will take on one installment of *Bleak House*, paired with Dickens's working notes for that installment. The student will read the installment interactively with the working notes, creating a set of minute annotations that explore the connection between notes and novel. These annotations will be displayed online using the annotation software *hypothes.is*, so you will need to create a free *hypothes.is* account (more about this in the assignment). Each student will write a short 4-5 page accompanying essay about the function of their serial installment within the novel as a whole.

Serial Media Group Project (20%)

For this assignment you will work in groups of three, selecting an example of a popular form of serial storytelling (examples: a season of television shows; a film series; a serial podcast; a comic strip or graphic novel; a video game; fan fiction; web serials). You will work together using your learning about seriality to produce a creative project that interprets and presents a claim or series of claims about your chosen serial text using a method of presentation that is itself serial. Ideas might include a podcast, filmed "episodes," a serial blog, a traditional essay accompanied by a graphic sequence, etc. You will receive guidance and feedback throughout stages of this project. At the end of this group project, you will also present your findings to the class in a 10-minute flash presentation.

Final Research Paper (20%)

At the end of the semester you will research and write an 8-10-page research paper focusing on one of the serial texts we read together in this class. You will have an opportunity to turn in a proposal for this essay and receive feedback on a draft of the first three pages.

Participation and Free Writes (20%)

Because this is a seminar, active participation in discussion is essential. This means you need to come to class prepared, having completed the reading. Occasionally, at the beginning of class, I will ask you to take out a piece of paper and complete a "free write" based on a fairly open-ended prompt I give you. These free writes are designed to do two things. First, they give you the opportunity to show me that you have carefully completed the reading for class by mentioning specific details that stood out to you as significant as you were reading. For this reason, you need to put your books away for these free writes and offer as many details in your response as possible. Second, and more importantly, free writes give you the opportunity to generate your own written thoughts about one or more of the texts we will be discussing that day. This can be very helpful for students who find it difficult to talk in class, because it gives you a chance to formulate your thoughts before we begin discussion.

Grading for in-class participation:

A: Consistently comes to class on time and shows clear evidence of having read and thought about the material beforehand. Contributes actively and significantly to discussion with thoughtful answers or questions.

B: Consistently comes to class on time and shows evidence of having read the material. Contributes to class discussion on a regular basis.

C: Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material in most instances. Contributes only occasionally to class discussion.

D: Comes to class but does not participate in most class discussions. Rarely shows evidence of having prepared.

F: Does not show evidence of engaging with the material or participate in class discussion; sleeps during class, uses electronic devices in class outside pre-approved usage, or causes substantial disruption to class.

Assessment

Some important points about grades:

- Grades are not negotiable.
- You must complete all work.
- I do not discuss grades via email. This is both for privacy reasons and because it is much more productive to discuss these matters in person. I am happy to talk to you about *any* aspect of your learning experience in the class, including concerns about assessment, in person. Just make an appointment with me during my office hours or contact me to arrange an alternative time if you cannot meet during those hours.
- If you are concerned about your performance in the class or with any of the assignments, please do come talk to me as early as possible. There is not much I can do to help you if you come to me the week before the final exam to ask me how to get an A if you have a B- average. Try to meet with me early in the semester so that I can help you develop strategies and direct you to useful resources.
- Grades will be calculated using the rubrics on the assignment sheets. Grades will be posted to Moodle and are calculated using the grading scale below.

A+	97-100%	Consistently excellent; demonstrates superior mastery of material
A	93-96.9 %	Excellent; demonstrates mastery of material
A-	90-92.9 %	Very good to excellent
B+	87-89.9 %	Very good
B	83-86.9 %	Consistently good
B-	80-82.9 %	Fair to good
C+	77-79.9 %	Acceptable
C	73-76.9 %	Falls short of expectations, but acceptable
C-	70-72.9 %	Falls short of expectations
D+	67-69.9 %	Poor
D	63-66.9 %	Very poor
D-	60-62.9 %	Extremely poor
F	0-59.9 %	Failing

Course Policies

Expectations Overview: I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. There is a lot of reading and watching to cover in this class, and you cannot learn and do well unless you do all the reading. Please arrive on time, remain in the room during class (e.g. if possible, please try to use the bathroom before class), and remain attentive during the class. Since this is a seminar, I expect you to participate in class discussions so that we are all engaged in the learning process. However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors. To make this class a positive environment, I ask that you all adhere to a social contract of mutual respect. We need to respect one another's opinions, abilities, differences, and backgrounds to make this classroom a safe space. This applies to me too: as your professor, I expect your respect, and you can also expect me to treat you with respect. This policy extends beyond the classroom to email correspondence.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete all reading and written assignments and exams, and to participate in class discussions. Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class, so if you are very late you may be counted as absent. You have three “free” absences to use as you wish, whether excused or unexcused, before absences start to impact your final grade. If you anticipate that you will experience more than three absences due to sanctioned anticipated situations (e.g. participation in official University functions, court attendance, religious observances, military duty) or emergency situations (e.g. serious illness, injury or death of immediate family member) please contact me as soon as you can so that we can discuss your situation. You may not always know that I am taking attendance: Sometimes I will use a sign-in sheet or call names; sometimes I will take attendance silently. Excused absences will only be given according to the university guidelines outlined below.

If You Miss A Class: If you miss a class for any it is your responsibility to catch up on missed material by contacting a classmate. During the first week you should share contact information with two of your peers. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date. There will be no make-ups for free writes, but for this reason I will drop the lowest free-write grade.

Bring to class: Bring the book mentioned on the syllabus to class with you. You will be reading *The Woman in White* throughout the semester and therefore don’t have to bring it to class every session, but make sure you bring it on the days when we are scheduled to be discussing it. Always bring a pen/pencil and notepaper. You will need these for taking notes in class (see below!)

Electronics Policy: Since this is a seminar, we need to be able to talk to one another without hiding behind screens. Once class begins, please **put away ALL electronic devices** unless you have a registered accommodation that requires electronics use (please discuss with me if you do). While I understand that laptops can be useful for note taking, the downsides of having screens in the classroom usually outweigh the benefits, especially in a seminar environment. It’s just too tempting to text, browse social media, shop for shoes, check the scores, etc. And your screen doesn’t just distract you; it can be a distraction to those sitting behind or beside you. So, we will liberate ourselves from our screens in this class! Invest in a notebook; research shows that taking notes by hand can help you better retain information.¹ Taking notes by hand is a useful skill to practice. Silence and put away your cell phone before class starts. Texting, chatting, or using electronics in class will result in one of the following: a zero for attendance, a zero for the day’s participation grade, or an embarrassing (for both of us) request for you to leave the room.

Meetings/Contacting Me: I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours. I’m here to talk to you! My office is Tompkins 286. My office hours vary each week, but they are always listed online [on my Google Calendar](#) so that you can schedule an appointment with me (see Moodle on right hand side of page). If these times do not work for you, just send me an email with your availability and we can set up an appointment at a different time. It is my policy not to discuss grades via email. If you have any question about your progress or grade in the class you need to set up a meeting to discuss this with me in person.

Academic Integrity (University Policy): Regardless of discipline, honest and rigorous scholarship is at the foundation of a Research I institution. Students are bound by the academic integrity policy as stated in NCSU Code of Student Conduct: <http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01>. Students are required to uphold the university pledge of honor and exercise honesty in completing every assignment.

¹ Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer. “The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking.” *Psychological Science* 25.6 (2014): 1159-68.

By turning in your work to me, you attest that you are abiding by the Pack Pledge (“I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment”). Violations of academic integrity will result in referral to the Office of Student Conduct with a recommendation of a failing grade for the assignment, and they will be reported to the department head. Note that academic misconduct includes **plagiarism**. The Student Code of Conduct defines plagiarism as the “use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another and the representation of the other’s work as [your] own.” In your written work you must ensure that “any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use [are] fully and correctly acknowledged” (POL11.35.01, 8.4).

Trans-Inclusive Statement: In an effort to affirm and respect the identities of transgender students in the classroom and beyond, please contact me if you wish to be referred to using a name and/or pronouns other than those listed in the student directory.

Accommodations for Disabilities: Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with the Disability Resource Office on the third floor of [University College Commons](#) (Suite 304). For more information on NC State’s policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.01).
<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-01>.

Additional University Policies

Electronically-hosted Course Components

Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course, via electronic tools like email or web postings, where relevant to the course. Examples include online discussions of class topics, and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

NC State University Policies, Regulations and Rules

Students are responsible for reviewing the PRRs which pertain to their course rights and responsibilities. These include: <http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05> (Equal Opportunity and Non-discrimination Policy Statement),
<https://oied.ncsu.edu/divweb/policies/> (Office for Institutional Equity and Diversity),
<http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01> (Code of Student Conduct),
<http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-03> (Grades and Grade Point Average),
<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-04> (Audits), and
<https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-50-03> (Incompletes).

Non-discrimination Policy

NC State University provides equality of opportunity in education and employment for all students and employees. Accordingly, NC State affirms its commitment to maintain a work environment for all employees and an academic environment for all students that is free from all forms of discrimination. Discrimination based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Harassment of any person (either in the form of quid pro quo or creation of a hostile environment) based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation also is a violation of state and federal law and/or NC State University policy and will not be tolerated. Retaliation against any person who complains about discrimination is also prohibited. NC State's policies and regulations covering discrimination, harassment, and retaliation may be accessed at <https://policies.ncsu.edu/category/campus-environment/> or <https://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-04-25-05/>. Any person who feels that he or she has been the subject of prohibited discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should contact the Office for Equal Opportunity (OEO).

SCHEDULE

Please note that the schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in class and on Moodle. You can always find an up-to-date version of the schedule on Moodle.

INTRODUCTION TO SERIALITY

- Jan 6 Introduction to Seriality and *The Woman in White (WiW)*
- Jan 8 Read: *WiW* weeks 1 & 2 (to p. 45) along with *All the Year Round* issues (Moodle)
Consider: How does the context of their publication shape your response to these early chapters of the novel?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SERIAL FICTION

- Jan 13 **Story Cycles**
Read: *One Thousand and One Nights* excerpts (Moodle)
Consider: In what way is this series of stories *serial*? What type of seriality do we find here, and how does it compare to your other experiences of serial fiction? What other story cycles have you read (Wikipedia has a [useful, though not exhaustive, list](#))
- Jan 15 **Pleasure, Repetition, Art**
Read: Umberto Eco, “Interpreting Serials”
Watch: watch one episode from the middle of any television series you haven’t seen before!
Consider: Question to consider: Look at the question Eco asks on page 100 about Columbo. Imagine you are asking this question about the TV episode you picked. How would you “read” this work?
Due: Please let me know on Moodle (see prompt under this class session) where you have chosen to host your Serial Journal.
- Jan 20 *No class, MLK Jr Day*

CHARLES DICKENS, VICTORIAN SERIAL FICTION, & MULTIPLE STORYLINES

- Jan 22 *Bleak House (BH)* and Introduction to the Working Notes
Read: *Bleak House* books 1 & 2, to p. 114
- Jan 27 Read: *BH* books 3-5, to p. 264
Read Butt & Tillotson “Dickens as a Serial Novelist” (Moodle)
- Jan 29 Read: *BH* books 6-7, to p. 366
- Feb 3 *WiW* Interlude: ongoing seriality
Read: be sure you have read up to end of *WiW* week 11, p. 197 (end of 1st epoch)
Read: TBD
- Feb 5 Read: *BH* books 8-10, to p. 519

- Feb 10 Read: *BH* books 11-14 to p. 718
- Feb 12 Read: *BH* books 15-16, to p. 816
- Feb 17 Read: *BH* books 17-20 (end) p. 989
- Feb 19 *WiW* Interlude: ongoing seriality
Read: *WiW* be sure you have read up to end of week 17, p. 293
Read: Linda K. Hughes & Michael Lund “Textual/sexual pleasure and serial publication” (Moodle)

TO BE CONTINUED... SERIAL TELEVISION AND PODCASTS

- Feb 24 From Dickens to Television
Watch: *Bleak House* 2005 BBC television adaptation, available on Hulu. (Note: The show was originally produced as 15 separate episodes (the first was 1 hour; the rest were 30 mins). The version available in the U.S. was adapted into 8 hour-long episodes. Try to watch at least 2 to get a sense of how the serial novel is adapted into serial tv parts.)
Consider: What decisions do the writer and director make in adapting Dickens’s novel? How does the medium shape, alter, or impact the story’s seriality?
- Feb 26 Installments, Episodes, Seasons
Watch: Pilot episode of “Scandal” and one episode of a show we will pick together
- March 2: Installments, Episodes, Seasons
Read: Frank Kelleter, “Five Ways of Looking at Seriality”
Sean O’Sullivan, “Broken on Purpose: Poetry, Serial Television, and the Season”
Jason Mittell, “Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television”
- March 5 Podcasts
Listen: TBA
Due: Bleak House annotations and essay
- Spring Break* (note changes to syllabus after spring break)

CASE STUDY: SHERLOCK HOLMES

- March 16 Bleak House project feedback
WiW check in (read up to the end of week 25, asterisk on p. 399)
Group project check-in
- March 18 Sherlock Holmes
Read: Conan Doyle, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” (July 1891); “The Red Headed League” (Aug. 1891)
- March 23 Sherlock Holmes

“The Final Problem” (Dec. 1893); “The Adventure of the Empty House” (Sept. 1903)
(Moodle)
WiW check-in (read up to end of week 31, p. 488)

March 25 Sherlock Holmes, Sherlockiana, & seriality criticism
Read: scholarly article and excerpts from graphic novels on Moodle
(<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ncsu/reader.action?docID=1822923>
)??

Group project check-in

March 30 Sherlock Holmes
Watch: *Sherlock* BBC Episodes: “A Scandal in Belgravia” (S2, E1) and “The Reichenbach Fall” (S2, E3) (optional: you might want to watch S2, E2 too!), Available on Netflix or on reserve at D.H. Hill Library
Discuss research paper

WiW & GROUP PROJECTS INTERLUDE

April 1 WiW check in (read up to the end of week 33, page 515)

April 6 Group Presentations
Due: Group Projects

CYCLES, CONNECTIONS, AND (MORE) EXTENDED TIME

April 8 *Homegoing* (to p. 110, end of “James” chapter)
Due: Final Research Paper Proposals!

April 13 *Homegoing* (to p. 221, end of “Willie” chapter)

April 15 *Homegoing* (to end)

April 20 Catch up day! Discuss final research paper progress

April 22 The End! - WiW and class wrap-up
Reading: finally finish WiW!

May 4, 1PM Due: Final Research Paper (Moodle) - *No exam*