COURSE DETAIL

THE BOOK AND THE BODY: THE VICTORIAN NOVEL OF SENSATION
Country Germany
Host Institution Free University of Berlin
Program(s) Free University Berlin
UCEAP Course Level Upper Division
UCEAP Subject Area(s) English
UCEAP Course Number 105
UCEAP Course Suffix A
UCEAP Official Title THE BOOK AND THE BODY: THE VICTORIAN NOVEL OF SENSATION
UCEAP Transcript Title VIC NOVEL:SENSATION
UCEAP Quarter Units 4.50
UCEAP Semester Units

3.00

Course Description

The serialization of Wilkie Collins's mystery novel *The Woman in White* in Charles Dickens's periodical *All the Year Round* from 1859 to 1860 is often regarded as the birth of a new type of fiction in Victorian England that came to dominate the literary market in the 1860s: the sensation novel. Even though recent criticism has widened the remit of the genre to include examples from earlier decades, Collins's novel of mystery, deception and murder exerted an unprecedented cultural influence: readers (like the seasoned novelist W. M. Thackeray) are reported to have sat up all night ploughing through the pages of Collins's doorstopper in a frenzy to find out what happened next. The novel became a singular object of consumption in other respects as well: ladies with money to spare could treat themselves to *Woman-in-White* fashion and *Woman-in-White* perfume, and music lovers could dance to *Woman-in-White* waltzes. Other novelists followed Collins and created ever more exciting 'novels with a secret', and the 1860s alone saw two further genre-shaping examples with Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (1861). This overwhelming popular success prompted conservative critics to rail against these titillating productions: the novelist Margaret Oliphant was appalled by the representation of sensation fiction's heroines as "fleshly and unlovely", and the Dean of St Paul's, Henry L. Mansel, condemned sensation authors like Collins, Braddon and Charles Reade for offering cheap literary fare and – more dangerously – for "preaching to the nerves" of their readers. In this seminar, students will read two long sensation novels (*The Woman in White* and *Lady Audley's Secret*) and one shorter example taken from the genre of detective fiction (Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*) – a form that can be fruitfully traced to the sensation novels of the 1860s. We will place these novels in their rich historical and cultural contexts and engage with the immediate responses to the genre. We will study sensation fiction's generic predecessors (such as the Gothic romance and the silver-fork-novel) and weigh its significance for modern forms like the crime novel and the psychological thriller.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number
17355

Host Institution Course Title
PERIODS-GENRES-CONCEPTS: THE BOOK AND THE BODY: THE VICTORIAN NOVEL OF SENSATION

Host Institution Course Details
https://www.fu-berlin.de/vv/en/lv/861608?query=sensation&sm=814672

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department
Englische Philologie

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