

Studies in Fiction: Spunky Women in Literature

Last Updated: Fri, 01/02/2026

Course prefix: Literature, Media, and Communication

Course number: 3202

Section: CS

CRN (you may add up to five):
35034

Instructor First Name: Carol

Instructor Last Name: Senf

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

The course will open with a detailed study of The General Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" and the class will examine how several historical developments (including the plague and the Crusades) impacted the development of fiction that focuses on the lives of ordinary people. Students will have the opportunity to read various examples of fiction (*Pride and Prejudice*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Wife of Willesden*, and *The Mere Wife*) and will also explore the various components of fiction, including setting, characterization, and point of view. Perhaps even more important, students will look at the ways that various writers have created fiction to examine the times in which they lived and wrote. Focusing on Marion Turner's historical study of women in the Middle Ages and Rebecca Romney's study of the women writers who influenced Jane Austen, students will develop a better understanding of the circumstances that led writers to create women characters who resisted the conditions that faced them and then worked to establish themselves as fully human beings.

Course learning outcomes:

- Science and Technology Knowledge Construction: Students will understand that scientific and technological innovation occurs in a social context, and they will be able to recognize how the social influences scientific and technical discourses.
- Textual/Visual Analysis: Students will learn to read, analyze, and interpret cultural products (cartoons, paintings, fictions) and scientific and technical documents.
- Interpretive Frameworks: Students will become familiar with a variety of social, political, and philosophical theories and apply those theories to creative and scientific texts and to their own cultural observations.

- **Historical Analysis:** Students will study literary and cultural texts within an historical framework to become familiar with the various forces that shape artistic and commercial production. They will learn to interpret history actively, rather than passively accepting archival information.

Required course materials:

In many cases, students can use their own editions of commonly published works such as *The Canterbury Tales*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *Jane Eyre* or borrow a copy from the library. In fact, part of the class discussion will be to examine how particular editions of familiar texts may impact our reading experience. Depending on which editions students choose (such as e-versions or audio books), we may well discuss how formats impact our reading experience.

In the case of more recent books -- *The Wife of Willesden*, *The Mere Wife*, and *Catherine the Ghost*, students will be expected to buy or borrow an existing edition.

Grading policy:

Because most students will go on to professional careers, they are expected to practice professional behavior in this class. As a result, due dates are firm, and late work will not be accepted unless students have a personal or family emergency that they tell me and the Dean of Students Office about BEFORE the due date. That means that assignments that are to be turned in on-line must be uploaded to Canvas by midnight of the due date.

In the case of Daily Work, the precise due date may vary. It is up to students to keep track of Daily Work.

Grading Criteria: Since I am requiring you to submit work on time, I will also be prompt in returning graded work. I will follow the standard Georgia Tech grading scale (89.45 to 100 = A and so forth). If students have any questions regarding my comments or their grade, they should make an appointment to see me right away. Because the assignments have different criteria (some focus on clear presentation of factual material while some are more interpretative; some assignments are individual while others require collaboration), additional information on grading is available on Canvas.

Students with Disabilities: Any student who feels that he or she may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours. The Office of Disability Services for Students offers a variety of resources for students with disabilities. Learn more about the Office of Disability Services at <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>).

Attendance policy:

Because class discussion and in-class assignments make up a significant percentage of the final grade, excessive unexcused absences (more than 3) could result in an unsatisfactory mark. Submit the appropriate documents to the instructor for medical, athletic, or other justified absences. Extended absences away from campus for family, medical, or legal reasons should be reported to the Dean of Students Office. The Georgia Tech Office of Student Life in Atlanta also has information:

<https://studentlife.gatech.edu/content/class-attendance>Links to an external site.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Humanities area. Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas.

This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals. This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I interpret the human experience through creative, linguistic, and philosophical works.

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcome:

- Students will effectively analyze and interpret the meaning, cultural significance, and ethical implications of literary/philosophical texts or of works in the visual/performing arts.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Ethical Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Intercultural Competence