

ENGLISH 1C SECTION 9  
APPLIED INTERMEDIATE WRITING:  
**FREAK AESTHETICS**  
**SUMMER 2017**

Instructor: Dr. Ann Garascia  
Office hours: TWR: 11:30-12:30  
Email: [agara004@ucr.edu](mailto:agara004@ucr.edu)

Class time: MTWR 12:40-2:00pm  
Location: Olmstead 1132



"Cheng and Eng" Bunker; the Hilton Sisters from *Freaks*; *Iphy and Elly* from *Geek Love*

**Course description:**

Bearded Ladies. Rubber Men. Electric Girls. Dog-Faced Boys. The term "freak" may be difficult to define, but we know one when we see one. This course seeks to develop a visual and discursive poetics of freakery by tracing its genealogy from its Victorian birth to its surprising millennial re-emergence by employing semiotic reading and writing practices. The course starts with freakery in Victorian period (approximately 1830-1900), investigating how it served as mode of cultural production capable of indexing some of the period's major technological, political, social, and scientific changes. To emphasize the ubiquity of freakery in Victorian culture, our discussions will pair Victorian literary production with freak show photography and ephemera. These studies will be grounded primarily in England, but will also branch out to the US, in order to pay homage to the transnational lives of the freak show. The end of the Victorian period did not signal the end of the freak show. We will then proceed into the twentieth century by looking at reinterpretations of Victorian freakery, centering our analyses primarily on Tod Browning's cult film *Freaks* (1932). We will then finish the course with Katherine Dunn's freak show novel, *Geek Love*, contextualizing our interpretations through Victorian and early-twentieth-century freak show source materials. Even though this course spans nearly two hundred years, we will anchor all of our readings and viewings in Victorian freak show source materials so as to illuminate how our ways of negotiating cultural belonging and difference are grounded in persistently Victorian attitudes toward gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and disability.

English 1C is the third in the series of required undergraduate courses. It is designed to address the function of writing in a range of contemporary situations, including that of the academy, from a critical and theoretical perspective.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To acquaint students with the material-literary culture of Victorian period through archival materials and literary texts from England and US.
2. To interrogate the relationship between popular culture and literary studies.
3. To explore how freak show aesthetics reflect and constitute our understandings of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and disability.
4. To develop cross-media close reading skills.
5. To refine analytical skills as they pertain to reading, critical thinking, and communicating in written and oral forms.

**Required Readings:**

- \*\*Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* (available in UCR bookstore)
- \*\*the rest of the readings will be uploaded to iLearn

**Grade Scale**

Letter Grade	Grade Point	Percentage
A	4.0	94 - 100%
A-	3.7	90 - 93%
B+	3.3	87 - 89%
B	3.0	83 - 86%
B-	2.7	80 - 83%
C+	2.3	77 - 79%
C	2.0	73 - 76%
C-	1.7	70 - 72%
D+	1.3	67 - 79%
D	1.0	60 - 66%
F	0.0	0 - 59%

**Grade Breakdown**

- Paper 1 Archival Document: 25%
- Paper 2, Comparative Analysis: 25%
- Paper 3, Research Paper: 30%
  - written plan: 5%
  - in-class presentation: 5%
  - final draft: 20%
- Discussion Questions: 10%
- Journal Entries, Quizzes, Participation, and Attendance: 10%

**Course Requirements:**

**Papers:** You will be writing three papers for this class and you must turn in all of them to receive a passing grade.

**1. Archival Document Analysis (4-5 pages / MLA citation conventions / at least two outside sources):** One of this course’s primary goals is to develop your fluency in semiotic reading and writing practices that pay attention to specific cultural and historical contexts. For this assignment, you will choose one freak show archival document. You may discuss one presented in class, or you may find one of your own. You will conduct a semiotic analysis of the document’s major signs, as well as taking into consideration its material condition to answer the following question: “how does this specific document help to define “freak” as an overdetermined phenomenon?”

*Notes:*

1. Please limit your discussion to one document. Your analysis should comprise the bulk of the assignment, so make sure that your gloss of the historical/cultural context does not dominate the paper.
2. You may write about a literary text, but you will want to treat it as an archival object by focusing equally on its content and materiality. Should you choose this route, I strongly suggest making use of UCR's Eaton Special Collections to look at a particular Victorian edition of a particular book (for example, you could write an analysis of a first-edition (1859) of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* at the Eaton.)

**2. Comparative Semiotic Analysis (5 pages / MLA citation conventions / at least two outside sources):** One of this course's primary goals is to developing cross-media analytical skills, or reading and writing across written and visual texts. This assignment will build on the previous one, as you will choose two texts that we have discussed so far this course: one visual text and one (written) literary text. You will conduct a semiotic analysis of these texts that answers the following question: how do these two texts work together to define "freak" as an overdetermined phenomenon that might not reveal itself if these texts were read singly?

*To help you write this paper, you will complete a worksheet that helps you identify major similarities and differences between your two chosen texts.*

**3. Final Research Paper:** This paper is the culmination of the comparative semiotic analyses you have been doing for this course. This will be a 10-page research paper that offers an extended definition and analysis of a "freak" of your choosing. You must find at least three primary sources (one visual, one written, and one of your choice) that you will synthesize and analyze, and at least five secondary sources. I will pass out a detailed prompt for and example of this paper during Week 3. You will be required to submit a topic plan and bibliography by Thursday Week 4 (5%) and create a 3-5 minute presentation using audio-visuals on your research during Week 5 (5%).

**Discussion Questions and/or Short Response:** This is a discussion-based class. While I will lecture, for the most part, the course content and discussion points should be generated by you. That being said, each student or group of students will sign up for one class period during the quarter. For that day, the student or group of students will be responsible for leading discussion for 25 min. To prepare for this, you have one of two options:

1. a list of open-ended questions based on the readings
2. a short response paper to the readings that your fellow classmates will then respond to.
3. Or, if you would like: you may bring in a video clip, photograph that speaks to the day's readings and present it to your classmates to start discussion.

This is not a presentation in which you will be talking for 15 min, but a facilitation of a class discussion. You will submit your questions to me by **8:00am the day of your discussion**. If you are shy, use this as an opportunity to challenge yourself! (I will pass out a more detailed rubric of for this assignment that further clarifies expectations and grading policies.)

**Journal Entries:** Throughout session I will have you complete journal entries on iLearn. I will give you a prompt and have you write a short response (1-2 paragraphs at most.)

**Class Expectations:**

I expect you to attend class regularly ready to discuss the assigned reading. To ensure you keep up, I will give reading quizzes at least once a week. The readings will often require serious reflection and sometimes a second read-through. If I suspect that the class is not sticking to the reading schedule, I will give a reading quiz every day. That being said, do not expect to do well in the class by only skimming the readings. Because in-class lecture and discussion are crucial to your success in the class, please plan on taking thorough notes that you can refer to when writing your papers.

The readings for this class are challenging. If you feel as though you need extra help, don't hesitate to make arrangements to see me in office hours. You may drop by during the time I have allotted, or, if you are unavailable then, you can make plans to see me at an alternate time.

Finally, I expect you to respect your fellow classmates and myself. Please turn off or silence your cell phones before class begins. You may use electronic devices in the classroom, such as laptops, iPads, etc. since a lot of your readings will be found online. However, if I find students using these for non-class-related or personal readings, I will discontinue electronic use in the classroom and require all students to print out the class readings. Any disruptive behavior (speaking while someone else is speaking, texting, frequently arriving late to class, frequently leaving class early, sleeping in class, etc.) will negatively impact my assessment of your final performance in the course.

**Writing Expectations:**

**\*At this stage, I expect each student to be competent with English grammar, syntax, and usage.** Students who are making significant grammatical and syntactical errors (i.e. those that impede meaning) will find it very difficult to pass this course. The resources at the back of the *Saint Martin's Guide to Writing* contain thorough lists of common grammar, syntax, and usage errors, as well as ways to fix those errors.

**Communication on iLearn and R'Mail:** This course will make heavy use of the online iLearn system, which is located at <http://ilearn.ucr.edu>. Please check this site daily because I will post important instructions for completing class assignments, as well as class announcements and reminders here. I will also contact you via your UC Riverside e-mail address, so I expect you to check your R'Mail at least once a day as well. This is also the best way to contact me: I welcome e-mailed questions and will try to answer them promptly. Please note that if you e-mail past 11:00pm, you will most likely not hear from me until the next morning. Also, keep in mind that e-mail can be unreliable. Servers may down or computers may malfunction. As a result, I cannot be responsible for any e-mail messages that are lost or addressed incorrectly. Similarly, if you e-mail right before class, I probably will not be able to read your message until after class. All e-mails should be legible and reasonably professional.

**Plagiarism:** UCR has posted clear guidelines on plagiarism and academic dishonesty that can be found on the Student Judicial Affairs' website, <http://www.conduct.ucr.edu>. Students are

expected to be familiar with these rules and to follow them. Failure to do so can result in a broad spectrum of penalties, ranging from loss of points on assignments to a failing grade in a class. Cheating and plagiarism may include the following: presenting the work of someone else as your own, presenting falsified source information, presenting your own work from a previous class, and collaborating on individual assignments.

### *Reading Schedule*

\*\*refers to photography collections you will be viewing

#### **Week 1: Monday, 6/26: Digital Victoriana: “Step Right Up!” to the Freak Show**

1. in-class viewing *Frontiers of the Body* (Digital Photography Exhibition)

#### **Week 1: Tuesday, 6/27: The Semiotics of Freakery**

1. Robert Bogdan, “Introduction” to *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit*
2. Charles Dickens, “Greenwich Fair” from *Sketches by Boz* (1835)
3. ”Deformitomania!” from *Punch* (1847)
4. Marmaduke Humphrey, “The Pranks of Nature” (1896)
5. William FitzGerald, “Side-Shows,” from *Strand Magazine* (1897)

#### **Week 1: Wednesday, 6/28: Africa in Victorian London**

1. \*\*Saartje Baartman “Hottentot Venus” Lithographs (1810-11)
2. Thomas Carlyle, “The Dandiacal Body” from *Sartor Resartus* (1836)
3. Charles Dickens, “Telescopic Philanthropy” from *Bleak House* (1852)
4. Charles Dickens, “The Noble Savage” (1853)
5. \*\*Flora and Martinus the African Earthmen Photographs (1853)
6. William Booth, “The Darkness” from *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890)

#### **Week 1: Thursday, 6/29: Greek Slaves and Circassian Beauties**

1. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, “The Greek Slave” (1850)
2. Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave* (sculpture; 1851 Exhibition)
3. \*\*Circassian Beauty Photographs and Advertisements
4. ?, “Biographical Sketch the Circassian Girl, Zalumma Agra; or, Star of the East” (1868)

#### **2: Monday, 7/3: “More than One and Not Quite Two”: Chang & Eng in London**

1. \*\*Chang and Eng Bunker, “the Siamese Twins” Photographs (1829-1839)
2. Edward Bulwer Lytton, *The Siamese Twins: A Satirical Tale of the Times* (1831)
3. William Livingston Alden, “A Case of Dual Consciousness” from *Among the Freaks* (1896)

#### **Week 2: Tuesday, 7/4: HOLIDAY**

#### **Week 2: Wed., 7/5: “More than One and Not Quite Two”: Conjoined Twins in the US**

1. \*\*Chang and Eng Bunker, “the Siamese Twins” Photographs (1839-1874)

2. Mark Twain, "Those Extraordinary Twins" (1894)
3. \*\*Millie-Christine McCoy, "the Two-Headed Nightingale" Photographs (1853-?)
4. Millie-Christine McCoy, *History and Medical Description of the Two-Headed Girl* (1869)

**Week 2: Thursday, 7/6: Digital Victoriana**

1. "The Lost Museum" (City University of New York): <https://lostmuseum.cuny.edu/>
2. **Assignment #1: Archival Document DUE**

**Week 3: Monday, 7/10: Fin-de-Siècle Freakery: Eugenics and Decadence**

1. \*\*Eugen Sandow, the "Modern Hercules" Photographs (1881-1910)
2. Eugen Sandow, "My Childhood and Boyhood," from *Strength and How to Obtain It* (1897)
3. John Addington Symonds, "Youth" from *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (1895)
4. Oscar Wilde, Chapter Eleven from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)

**Week 3: Tuesday, 7/11: Spectacles of Emaciation**

1. Franz Kafka, "A Hunger Artist" (1922)
2. \*\*J.W. Coffey, "The Skeleton Dude" Photographs
3. George Conklin, "Great Britain and the Continent" from *The Ways of the Circus* (1921)

**Week 3: Wednesday, 7/12: Freaks**

\*\*In-class viewing of Tod Browning's *Freaks* (1932)\*\*

**Week 3: Thursday, 7/13: Freaks: Contexts**

1. Tod Robbins, "Spurs" (1923)
2. \*\*Reviews of *Freaks* (1932: *Harrison's Reports*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *New York Times*)

**Week 4: Monday, 7/17: Freaks: Eugenics**

1. Devon Stillwell, "Eugenics Visualized: the Exhibit of the Third International Congress of Eugenics, 1932)
2. \*\*Johnny Eck, "the Amazing Half Boy" Photographs
3. Johnny Eck—*Freaks*'s Extras clip

**Week 4: Tuesday, 7/18: Digital Victoriana: The Coney Island Eugenicists**

1. Cold Springs Harbor Eugenics Archives ("Circus Performers"; "Better Babies Contests)
2. **Assignment #2: Comparative Analysis DUE**

**Week 4: Wednesday, 7/19: Tales of Tails**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 1-7 (1-73)
2. Carl Bock, "The Tail-People of the Sultan of Passir" from *The Head Hunters of Borneo* (1882)

3. Farini's wonder of wonders. 'Krao,' a living specimen of Darwin's 'Missing link.' (1883)

**Week 4: Thursday, 7/20: Freak Show Miniatures**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 8-10 (74-124)
2. \*\*Tom Thumb Documents (“European Tour—Tom Thumb” from *Life of P.T. Barnum*, 1855; Threatening Letter to Thomas Hood... By Favor of Charles Dickens,” 1844)
3. \*\*”Quarrelsome” Carrie Ackers Photographs
4. \*\*Morris Gest’s “Little Miracle Town” Photographs (1939 World’s Fair)
5. \*\*Morris Miniature Circus (online exhibition; Museum of International Folk Art)

**Week 5: Monday, 7/24: Indignation Meetings, Protective Orders, Arturian Cults**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 11-13 (125-177)
2. \*\*“Freak” Activism Documents (“The Freaks’ Union,” 1883; “Indignant Freaks!,” 1899; “Freaks of Prodigies?,” 1903)

**Week 5: Tuesday, 7/25**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 14-18 (178-221)
2. oral presentations for research paper

**Week 5: Wednesday, 7/26**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 19-23 (221-294)
2. oral presentations for research paper

**Week 5: Thursday, 7/27**

1. Katherine Dunn, *Geek Love* CH 24-28 (295-end)
2. oral presentations for research paper

**FINAL RESEARCH PAPER DUE SATURDAY 7/29 BY 11:59 PM VIA EMAIL  
([agara004@ucr.edu](mailto:agara004@ucr.edu))**