

Women, Emotion Work, and the Emotional Labors of Literature

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Office Hours TBD

Arlie Hochschild famously coined the term “emotional labor” to refer to the regulation and performance of emotions by workers in service industries. She also coined the term “emotion work,” which has tended to be less used in pop culture and common parlance, to refer to similar kinds of regulation and performance done in our private lives and personal relationships. This course will examine the concepts of emotion work and emotional labor as they appear (unnamed) throughout literature, specifically with regard to the role of women in literature. We will discuss a useful blurring of the concepts of emotion work and emotional labor to understand the ways in which the jobs women perform and have been restricted to performing throughout history have been (under)valued and marginalized. However, emotional labor in literature is not just the labor female characters perform in the lives of the other characters; it is also the labor they do for the literary text, and by extension, for the reader. What would these texts look like without the women? The course builds toward a final recognition that the labor we all do as readers and consumers of literature is emotional labor. Note that though the course leans heavily on sociology and other theoretical methods, it is, like all other courses in the department, focused on the close analysis of literary texts.

Course Goals

- Use the concept of emotional labor as a way to reorganize our traditional understanding of the progression of women’s roles in literature throughout history.
- Identify what kinds of labor depicted in literary texts constitute emotion work as opposed to emotional labor.
- Identify the most common literary contexts and sites where we see emotional labor being done.
- Use emotional labor as a concept that highlights continuities in literary representations across periods rather than following a periodizing logic.
- Use emotional labor as a theme that highlights both commonalities and distinctions in literary representations across genres (e.g., novels, poetry, drama, criticism).

- Design a research question.
- Develop a critical bibliography around that question, including diverse methods and viewpoints.
- Put secondary criticism in conversation with your own ideas, close reading, and other criticism.
- Write with greater clarity and precision.

Assignments

- **Short Essay** (Week 5, 10%): A 5-7 page paper, an extended close reading of a primary text; this will be followed by an individual student conference to discuss the paper.

- **Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography** (Week 8, 15%): two-page prospectus of the project before you begin working on it. An annotated bibliography of 8-10 sources should

accompany the prospectus. The bibliography should reproduce in a few sentences the main argument of the work you intend to make use of. It should also include, in a few sentences, how you plan on engaging with the thesis of the work you have summarized.

- **Drafts** (15%): one partial and one full draft of the final paper due in weeks 11 and 13 respectively.
- **Final Paper** (Reading Period, 40%): 20-25 page critical paper on a major literary work read in this class.
- **Participation & Preparation** (20%): A small seminar like this one thrives only when you have read and thought about the texts before we've met. I will occasionally request an informal written response to the readings for that week in advance of the start of class.
- **Conference Presentation** (ungraded but required): a 5-minute presentation on your research paper during the Junior Tutorial Program conference.

Required Texts:

Arlie R. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (California – ISBN 0520048008)

John Green, *Paper Towns* (Penguin – ISBN 9780142414934)

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (Oxford – ISBN 9780199536498)

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (Penguin – ISBN 9780140434248)

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Vintage – ISBN 1400033411)

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Penguin – ISBN 9780142437346)

All other texts will be available via Canvas or provided as handouts.

Critical Readings:

Literary Criticism - Christine MacLeod, “Stella Speaks: The Petrarchan Convention Revisited”; Sara Tavela, “‘The Absolute Necessity of Seeming Herself’: Anne Elliot’s Work in *Persuasion*”; Donald Reiman, “The Real Clerk’s Tale; or, Patient Griselda Exposed”; Robyn Warhol, “How Narration Produces Gender: Femininity as Affect and Effect”; Janice Schroeder, “A Thousand Petty Troubles”: Margaret Hale’s Emotional Labour in *North and South*”; Katie Baker, “Radically Extending Domesticity in *North and South*”; Renee Lee Gardner, “Subverting Patriarchy with Vulnerability: Dismantling the Motherhood Mandate in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”

Literary Historicism – Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts”

Sociology - Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*; Guy and Newman, “Women’s Jobs, Men’s Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor”; Julie Beck, “The Concept Creep of ‘Emotional Labor’”

Narrative Theory - James, preface to New York Edition of *Portrait of a Lady*; Jesse Matz, “Impressions of Modernity” in *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics*

Psychology and Psychoanalysis - Heinz Kohut, from *The Kohut Seminars 1 & 2*; Mitchell and Black, “The British Object Relations School” in *Freud and Beyond*

Queer Theory - Heather Love, “Emotional Rescue: The Demands of Queer History” in *Feeling Backward*; Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage”; Laura S. Brown, “Sexuality, Lies, and Loss: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Perspectives on Trauma”

Feminist Criticism - Susan Bennett Smith, “Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf’s Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*”; Roxane Gay, “The Careless Language of Sexual Violence”

Reader Response and Education - Kari Storla, “Beyond Trigger Warnings: Handling Traumatic Topics in Classroom Discussion”

Schedule of Meetings

Unit 1: Emotional Labor Begins

The origins of emotion work and emotional labor; what kinds of labor constitute each; the ways they align with, mirror, or supplant actual other labors in literature. Here metaphors might come to our aid—digging, lifting, pulling, propping. We will discuss preliminary positives and negatives to emotional labor; contexts and sites wherein we see emotional labor being done; and the concept as a way to reexamine or recast women’s roles in literature. We will trace how emotion work often begins in literature: with being the site or object of emotions, and the repository for projected emotions.

Week 1. The cruel mistress, the manic pixie dream girl: the issue of a “sympathetic soul”

Primary Reading:

Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* (1591), 1, 34, 44, 45, 57, 60, 100, 101, 106
John Green, *Paper Towns* (2008)

Critical Reading:

Christine MacLeod, “Stella Speaks: The Petrarchan Convention Revisited”
Heinz Kohut, *The Kohut Seminars* 1 (pp. 3-12) & 2 (pp. 25-30)

Week 2. Origins of and the work of uncovering “emotional labor”

Primary Reading:

Henry James, preface to New York Edition of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1908)
Elizabeth Bishop, “Filling Station” (1965)

Secondary Reading:

Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, Chapter 1 “Exploring the Managed Heart” (3-23);
Chapter 8, “Gender, Status, and Feeling” (162-184)
Sara Tavela, “The Absolute Necessity of Seeming Herself”: Anne Elliot’s Work in *Persuasion* (1-14)

General Meeting: Tutorial Program Welcome and Overview (time TBD)

Unit 2: Emotional Maintenance

An examination of the way Hochschild's two broad types of emotion work, evocation and suppression, are reformulated and performed by literary women. We will examine the coerced yet voluntary changes or restrictions women make to their emotions to fit someone else's needs. Emotional withholding or (self) erasure, (compliance with) emotional policing, (suffering) emotional neglect and emotional betrayal on the one hand; emotional disclosure and effusion on the other.

Week 3. Holding In: emotional neglect, policing, erasure

Primary Reading:

Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (1353) X, tale of Griselda

Browning, "My Last Duchess" (1842)

Critical Reading:

Laura S. Brown, "Sexuality, Lies, and Loss: Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Perspectives on Trauma"

Donald Reiman, "The Real Clerk's Tale; or, Patient Griselda Exposed"

In class library visit

Week 4. Putting Out: emotional effusion and promiscuity

Primary Reading:

Richardson, *Pamela* (1740) to page 259

Critical Reading:

Robyn Warhol, "How Narration Produces Gender: Femininity as Affect and Effect"

Unit 3: Holding the Family Together

Troubling the distinction between the concepts of emotion work and emotional labor, examining the ways "women's work" has traditionally been undervalued and not thought of as a "real job." Troubling the distinction between functions of "private" and "public" life through examination of the various position of women in families and communities.

Week 5. Wives

Primary Reading:

Richardson, *Pamela* (1740), finish

Wollstonecraft, Chapters 4 and 9 in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

Short paper (5-7 pages) due in class

Week 6. Daughters

Primary Reading:

Shakespeare, Act 1 Scene 1 and Act 5 Scene 3 of *King Lear* (1606)

Gaskell, *North and South* (1855), through chapter 27

Critical Reading:

Janice Schroeder, "A Thousand Petty Troubles": Margaret Hale's Emotional Labour in *North and South*

Week 7. (Over)Extended Family

Primary Reading:

Gaskell, *North and South* (1855), finish

Critical Reading:

Guy and Newman, “Women’s Jobs, Men’s Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor” (289-296)

Katie Baker, “Radically Extending Domesticity in *North and South*” (17-27)

General Meeting: Seniors Reflect on the Junior Essay (time TBD)

Week 8. (S)Mothering

Primary Reading:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987), part I

Critical Reading:

Mitchell & Black, “The British Object Relations School” in *Freud and Beyond*, 124-138

Renee Lee Gardner, “Subverting Patriarchy with Vulnerability: Dismantling the Motherhood Mandate in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”

Two-page final paper prospectus and annotated bibliography due by midnight

Unit 4: Emotional Labors of Marginalization

Taking emotional labor out of its “straight” context (i.e., the labor of cis- and straight women for their nuclear families) and often white context. Investigating the labor marginalized individuals do for their communities and in order to have a community. Exploration of the emotional labor of queer people—that is, the labor involved in denying or hiding your sexuality or identity, having others deny or reject it, continuing to attach yourself to loved ones who reject your identity, and confessing your identity.

Week 9. Community Service

Primary Reading:

Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987), part II

Critical Reading:

Heather Love, “Emotional Rescue: The Demands of Queer History” in *Feeling Backward* (31-52)

Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts” (1-14)

Week 10. Queer emotional labor and betrayal trauma

Primary Reading:

Heldris de Cornüalle, *Roman de Silence* (13th century), transl. Sarah Roche-Mahdi

Joshua Jennifer Espinoza, “Every Morning I Walk Through a Field” (2017)

Christopher Soto, “All the Dead Boys Look Like Me” (2017)

Critical Reading:

Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage” (195-211)

Unit 5: Labors of Love

In the final classes we will examine women as the foundation and engine of texts, especially when the characters performing labor are ostensibly absent from or invisible in the texts. Labor of the reader in consuming texts and labor of the writer in creating.

Week 11. The in/visible woman: effaced women as foundation of text

Primary Reading:

Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), parts I-III

Critical Reading:

Jesse Matz, "Impressions of Modernity" in *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (33-42)

10 pages of final paper draft due by midnight

Week 12. The in/visible woman continued

Primary Reading:

Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist* (finish); brief selections from *Ulysses* (1922) (handout)

No critical reading

Week 13. "Hard to read" and "hard to write": the labors of consuming and creating

Primary Reading:

Roxane Gay, "The Careless Language of Sexual Violence"
(with revisit in discussion of *Beloved*)

Critical Reading:

Kari Storla, "Beyond Trigger Warnings: Handling Traumatic Topics in Classroom Discussion"

Susan Bennett Smith, "Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*"

Full rough draft of final paper due in class

Junior Tutorial Conference [date TBA]

Content and Compartment:

The texts in this course contain sensitive and difficult material, including sexual assault, physical violence, violence against children, pregnancy and pregnancy loss, misogyny, racism, and homophobia. I will do my best to prepare you for the content of specific texts in advance, but students taking this course must be able to read the assigned texts and engage in discussions about upsetting and potentially triggering material. **If you have concerns about course content, please meet with me early in the term and we can discuss how our readings might or might not affect you and then devise any necessary accommodations.** Our classroom will make space for both intellectual and emotional responses to the course material, and we will work to support one another as we tackle difficult subject matter and provocative ideas. I encourage you to engage with each other and with the assigned readings in good faith, but to monitor and prioritize your well-being, even if this means stepping away from the conversation. Our course content concerns sensitive social issues; our conversations may at times generate moments of exclusion or discomfort, and I pledge to be careful of my language, assumptions, and arguments, to support a safe, affirming, and energizing classroom environment. I ask that you work toward that same end. We should all treat each other with respect by attending carefully to others' comments, responding honestly and directly, approaching disagreements as learning opportunities, and working to remedy the situation when we cause harm or fail to engage productively.¹

Note on Language: Some of our texts feature offensive language, including the n-word. I ask that when reading aloud, students do not voice the n-word or other slurs and instead skip over these words.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Harvard University values inclusive excellence and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. Our goal is to remove barriers for disabled students related to inaccessible elements of instruction or design in this course. If reasonable accommodations are necessary to provide access, please contact the [Disability Access Office \(DAO\)](#). Accommodations do not alter fundamental requirements of the course and are not retroactive. Students should request accommodations as early as possible, since they may take time to implement. Students should notify DAO at any time during the semester if adjustments to their communicated accommodation plan are needed.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to even more serious actions. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: "*Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity – that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.*"

Collaboration: You are absolutely encouraged to talk with other students about the course and its readings, and to read each other's work. In individual assignments (which may include midterm or

¹ Modified from Jocelyn Sears's "Imagining Otherwise" syllabus.

term papers, short writing assignments, homework or reading questions and responses, or take-home exams), academic collaboration and external sources should be always cited.

Attendance: Your attendance in tutorial is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; so is your attendance in Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. I will allow each student a “free” tutorial absence to be used in case of sickness, travel, etc: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in failing the course. Also, being late really disrupts the work we’re doing together: 2 lates = 1 absence. If you have extenuating circumstances, you must communicate with me in a timely manner so that we can discuss how to deal with it.

Due Dates & Late Grades: Assignments will be due either in class or by midnight on the day of class, as specified in the weekly schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late, except for the final paper, which must be turned in before the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

Email: I’ll use our course listserv to distribute important info throughout the semester—from emailing you handouts to adjusting assignments and deadlines. You are responsible for checking your email on a daily basis. If you have a question that you need to ask me by email, be sure to give me at least 24 hours, or you may not get a response until it's too late.