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| Dr. Dejan Kuzmanovic  dkuzmano@uwsp.edu  CCC 427; 346-4719 | **English 385.2: Oscar Wilde**  T/Th 3:35-4:50 CCC 238 | Office Hours:  T 5-6, W 3:15-5:15  & by appointment |

“I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age.”

(Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course explores the work and life of Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), perhaps the most (in)famous writer of the late-nineteenth-century England. A playwright, poet, novelist, critic, and wit, Wilde was also a proud Irishman, London celebrity, husband, father, “homosexual,” and eventually a convict condemned to two years of hard labor for the crime of “gross indecency” with other men.

His literary career and personal life became an important focus for understanding late-Victorian ideas about art, morality, sexuality, identity, and critical views about “truth” and “authenticity.” He died in exile and poverty, but later critics and admirers brought him back into the center of attention, stressing his enduring relevance for many contemporary artistic and ethical debates.

Examining Wilde’s work will enable you to learn about various cultural, artistic, and literary issues of the late nineteenth century as well as some recent representations of “the Wilde myth.” The course combines class discussion with mini lectures on diverse literary and historical topics.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This class satisfies the Communication in the Major requirement for English majors, so it emphasizes writing and discussion. Upon the completion of the course, you will be able to:

* Analyze Wilde’s opus critically and develop cogent oral and written arguments about it, based on discipline-specific standards for organizing, supporting, and documenting ideas.
* Examine your own and others’ arguments constructively and provide effective feedback.
* Identify and explain several late-nineteenth-century literary and cultural concerns, as well as relate these historically specific concerns to universal and enduring issues relevant today.
* Recognize and apply a range of literary and critical concepts, traditions, and methodologies.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING POLICY**

* Daily Work Grade (10%)
* Response Paper 1 (10%)
* Response Paper 2 (10%)
* Discussion Paper (20%)
* Exam (20%)
* Research Paper (30%)

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Oscar Wilde, *The Major Works* (purchase)

Oscar Wilde, *The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* (purchase)

Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis* (purchase)

Moisés Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (purchase)

Karl Beckson (ed.), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s* (rental)

Many Wilde’s works are available online (for example at <http://www.oscarwildecollection.com>),

but for the ease of finding passages in class and being (literally) on the same page with others, please obtain the inexpensive editions available in the campus bookstore, including one rental. There will also be occasional required readings in handouts which I will provide.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Richard Ellman, *Oscar Wilde* (the most comprehensive biography of Wilde) – PR5823 .E38

Karl Beckson, *Oscar Wilde Encyclopedia* (brief entries about all things Wilde) – PR5823 .B34

# These two books, placed on reserve in the campus library, will be helpful as you work on your papers, prepare for the exam, or simply desire to satisfy your growing curiosity about the life and work of Oscar Wilde. You may also want to explore *The Official Web Site of Oscar Wilde* (<http://www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde>) and other sites dedicated to your new favorite writer.

**DAILY WORK GRADE (attendance, in-class discussions, and pop-up reading quizzes)**

Regular attendance and participation will help you do well on assignments, so please come to class prepared and ready to take notes, ask questions and exchange ideas. There will be frequent **pop-up reading quizzes**, usually with a few simple, factual questions. Since these quizzes are meant to gauge your preparation for a particular class, they cannot be made up later.

I will assign your **Daily Work Grade** based on this policy:

**Attendance** **Class** **Participation Reading Quizzes** **Grade**

1-2 absences frequent outstanding (++) A / A-

3 absences occasional good (+) B+ / B / B-

4 absences rare mostly satisfying () C+ / C / C-

5 absences only when asked mostly unsatisfying (-) D+ / D

6-7 absences F

**More than 7 absences will lead to failing the course**. I can only excuse absences due to medical emergency or official university business, which would require written documentation.

If you miss a class, you should obtain the assignments and handouts from me or from D2L. Take a look at a classmate’s notes to see what you missed. **Check D2L and your e-mail regularly** for any updates. And always feel free to email me with quick questions or to make an appointment.

**DISCUSSION PAPER**

You will write a **two-page paper** about the reading assigned for a specific day, with the purpose of engendering class discussion. You should not merely summarize the assigned reading or try to discuss all of it. Instead, focus on a particular aspect of the text (a character, an idea, a passage, a motif, etc.), offer your interpretation of it, and end the paper by posing **2-3 discussion questions**.

Based on your discussion questions, **you will be in charge of class discussion for 15 minutes**. Ask specific questions in the paper (not simply “Do you agree with me?”) and prepare follow-up questions and comments that you can use to handle silences and encourage further discussion.

Your grade will be based on the quality of the paper as well as your effort to lead the discussion. Bring or email the paper to me at least an hour before class, and I will make copies for everyone.

**TWO RESPONSE PAPERS**

Each response paper will be **three pages** in length and based on one of several offered prompts. Some prompts will be **analytical** (such as to analyze specific characters, scenes, themes, or symbols) and others will be **creative** (such as to imagine a dialogue between characters from two different texts, rewrite a scene from a different character’s point of view, or write a letter that a character might have written). There will be more detailed instructions for each assignment.

**EXAM**

The exam, which you must take at the scheduled time, will consist of multiple-choice questions (including identification of quoted passages) and mini-essay questions. It will be based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions. You will receive specific instructions in advance of the exam. The exam will gauge how carefully you read the texts and how well you understood the key issues and ideas covered in class. It will not be excessively difficult, and you will do well as long as you read all assigned texts, follow class discussions, and review my PowerPoint lectures.

**RESEARCH PAPER**

This paper (**8 pages**) will be a formal literary analysis of a specific issue in one or two of Wilde’s works (not historical or biographical in nature). It must include references to secondary sources (scholarly essays) and proper documentation in the MLA style. You will receive guidelines and topic suggestions, and there will be small-group peer reviews in my office to discuss your drafts.

Working on the paper will take several weeks. First you will turn in a research proposal with an annotated bibliography, then a complete draft, and finally the revised and final version. Do not wait until May to start thinking about it. Begin collecting ideas and notes as early as possible.

**All papers should have titles, be double spaced, printed in a common font (size 10-12) with one-inch margins, and turned in on time. Late papers will be downgraded for tardiness.**

**ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS**

**Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct are serious violations.** Please familiarize yourself with UWSP Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures (<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf> ). If you are unsure whether certain action is appropriate or not, please feel free to talk to me about it.

**All members of the campus community have the right to be free from physical or verbal harassment of any kind.** Become familiar with UWSPCommunity Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/CommunityRights.pdf>) and be aware of Bias/Hate Incident Reporting Form (<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Bias-Hate-Incident.aspx>), which can be used to report (anonymously, if preferred) any bias/hate incidents a student experiences or witnesses, such as sexual assault and blatantly racist or homophobic behavior. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at UWSP, and it is your right and duty to report it.

**The classroom should be a safe space for all students**, which requires appropriate classroom conduct. Showing respect for every individual – regardless of their age, sex, race, ethnicity, religious or political opinions, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other forms of difference – is essential for everyone’s success and wellbeing. Treat others as you would like to be treated!

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, UWSP provides accommodations allowing people with disabilities to participate in and benefit from all its programs and services. I am committed to **accommodating students with a documented disability**. For the procedure and paperwork, please contact UWSP Disability Services (Learning Resource Center, Room 609, [datctr@uwsp.edu](mailto:datctr@uwsp.edu), <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/toQualifyForDisabilityServices.aspx>).

**Please turn off all electronic devices** unless you use them for the sole purpose of taking notes. Texting, emailing, or Web browsing in class is not allowed because it will distract both you and others from class activities. Being inattentive will adversely impact your Daily Work Grade.

The English Department policy is that students may not make audio, video, or photographic recordings of lectures or other class activities without written permission from the instructor.

**READING SCHEDULE**

**Please complete all readings before the assigned date and always bring them to class!** Reading quizzes and in-class activities are an important part of your work and will be evaluated. Also, if you do not have the text in front of you, you will not be fully able to follow the lecture or participate in discussion, which will have a negative impact on your Daily Work Grade.

This schedule is specific but tentative. We will be flexible about making any changes necessitated by a need to spend more time on some material or by any canceled classes.

**Week 1-3: Wilde the Storyteller & Lecturer**

## 1/24 Oscar Wilde and His Age

1/26 Wilde, “The Canterville Ghost” (*The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* 1-24)

1/31 Wilde, “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” (*The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* 35-61)

2/2 Wilde, “The Sphinx without a Secret,” “The Model Millionaire” & Poems in Prose (*The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* 25-34 & 62-69)

2/7 Wilde, “The Happy Prince” and “The Devoted Friend” (*The Major Works* 28-45);

“The Nightingale and the Rose” and “The Selfish Giant” (handouts)

2/9 Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of Renaissance* (*Aesthetes and Decadents* 280-91)

Wilde, “The Decorative Arts” and “Personal Impressions of America” (handout)

**Weeks 4-5: Wilde the Aesthete & Poet**

2/14 Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” (*Aesthetes and Decadents* 167-94)

2/16 Wilde, “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (handout)

2/21 Wilde, *Salomé* (*Aesthetes and Decadents* 190-237)

2/23 Selection of poems from *Aesthetes and Decadents*

**Response Paper 1 due** **in D2L by 11:30 pm on Saturday, February 25**

**Weeks 6-7: Wilde the Novelist**

2/28 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters I – III (*The Major Works* 47-80)

3/2 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters IV – VIII (*The Major Works* 81-127)

3/7 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters IX – XV (*The Major Works* 127-184)

3/9 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters XVI – XX (*The Major Works* 184-214)

**Response Paper 2 due in D2L by 11:30 pm on Saturday, March 11**

**Weeks 8-11: Wilde the Playwright**

3/14 Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* Acts 1 & 2 (*The Major Works* 331-363)

3/16 Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* Acts 3 & 4 (*The Major Works* 363-387)

March 21-23: NO CLASS – ENJOY SPRING BREAK!!!

3/28 Wilde, *An Ideal Husband* Acts 1 & 2 (*The Major Works* 389-439)

3/30 Wilde, *An Ideal Husband* Acts 3 & 4 (*The Major Works* 439-475)

4/4 **EXAM**

4/6 Research Paper Workshop 1

4/11 Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* Acts 1 & 2 (*The Major Works* 477-525)

4/13 Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* Act 3 (*The Major Works* 525-538)

**Research Paper Initial Proposal due in D2L by 11:30 pm on Saturday, April 15**

**Weeks 12-15: Wilde the Outcast – and the Subject of Your Final Paper**

4/18 Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*

4/20 Research Paper Workshop 2

**Research Paper Developed Proposal due in D2L 11:30 pm on Saturday, April 22**

4/25 Wilde, *De Profundis* (1-61)

4/27 Wilde, *De Profundis* (62-114)

5/2 Wilde, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” (*The Major Works* 548-566)

5/4 **Research Paper Draft due**

5/9-11 NO CLASS: peer reviews and individual conferences instead

**Research Paper (final version) is due at the time of the final exam: Tuesday, May 16, 5 pm. There is no final exam in this class; there will be a mandatory special activity instead.**

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**Keep in mind**: “Education is an admirable thing. But it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught” (Oscar Wilde, “The Critic as Artist”).

This is how I understand Wilde’s statement: The teacher can organize the material, present the facts, introduce interpretations, and facilitate your reading, but learning is about independent discovery, not about passive reception of another person’s knowledge and views. Bottom line: Take advantage of the opportunity and make something of it!