

Dr. Dejan Kuzmanovic dkuzmano@uwsp.edu CCC 427	English 385.1: Oscar Wilde Tuesday 6:15-8:50 pm, CCC 207	Office Hours: W 1-2, Th 1:45-2:45 & by appointment
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“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 late-nineteenth-century writer in 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 course emphasizes writing and discussion. Upon the completion of it, 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

- Response Essay 1 (10%)
- Response Essay 2 (10%)
- Research Essay (20%)
- Exam (30%)
- Daily Work Grade (30%)

To pass the course, you must:

- Take the exam and submit the research essay and at least one response essay.
- Earn at least 610 course points, including at least 180 daily work points.
- Miss no more than 3 class meetings, except for prolonged, documented illness.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Oscar Wilde, *The Major Works* (Oxford University Press)

Oscar Wilde, *The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* (Dover Thrift Editions)

Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* (Wordsworth Classics)

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

Many Wilde's works are available on websites such as <http://www.online-literature.com/wilde/>, 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. I will also provide occasional required readings in the forms of handouts or electronic documents in Canvas.

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, available in our campus library, will be helpful as you work on your essays, 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.cmjgw.com/historic/wilde>) and other sites dedicated to your new favorite writer.

COURSE GRADE

A = 940-1000 points	C = 740-769 points
A- = 900-939 points	C- = 700-739 points
B+ = 870-899 points	D+ = 670-699 points
B = 840-869 points	D = 640-669 points
B- = 800-839 points	D- = 610-639
C+ = 770-799 points	F = 0-609 points

Important: This course uses the Canvas default grading system. You must earn at least 61% of the points for a passing grade, for both the course and individual assignments. Avoid missing assignments. If you get an F on an assignment, you will still receive some points for it, but if you simply fail to turn it in, you will receive no points, which could lead to a low grade or failure.

RESPONSE ESSAYS

All essays should be double spaced, with a title, a common font (size 11-12), and one-inch margins, and turned in on time. I will deduct half a letter grade for each day an essay is late.

Each response essay will be **3-4 pages** in length (no less than 1,000 words) 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 different texts, rewrite a scene from a different point of view, or write a letter from a character's perspective). There will be more detailed instructions for each assignment.

EXAM

The exam will have an **in-class part** (tentatively scheduled for October 25) and an **at-home part** (due in Canvas on October 29). The in-class part will consist of multiple-choice questions (possibly including identification of quoted passages), and the at-home part will consist of written responses to several questions, completed in Canvas within a specified amount of time.

You will receive detailed guidelines well in advance of the exam, which will be based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions. It 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. You will do well if you read all assignments, keep engaged, and review my PowerPoint notes.

RESEARCH ESSAY

This essay (**8 pages, no less than 2,000 words**) 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. There will be detailed guidelines, topic suggestions, and peer reviews of drafts or outlines.

Working on this essay will take several weeks. First you will turn in a research proposal, then a draft or an extended outline, and finally the revised and final version. Do not wait until December to start thinking about it. Begin collecting ideas and notes as early as possible.

The students who write particularly successful research essays will be encouraged to present them at the COLS Undergraduate Research Symposium in the spring of 2023.

DAILY WORK GRADE (attendance, group work, class discussions, and reading quizzes)

A = 282-300 points	B = 250-259 points	C = 220-229 points	D = 190-199 points
A- = 270-281 points	B- = 240-249 points	C- = 210-219 points	D- = 180-189 points
B+ = 260-269 points	C+ = 230-239 points	D+ = 200-209 points	F = 0-179 points

All students automatically receive 10 welcome points!

Attendance: You can earn 6 points every week by being present in class – in body *and* in mind! Students who doze off, repeatedly check their phones, or appear inattentive in other ways will receive fewer, if any, points for that day. **Please turn off all electronic devices** unless you use them only for taking notes. Texting, emailing, or Web browsing in class is not allowed because it will distract you and others from class activities. This is an easy way to earn **up to 90 points**.

Reading quizzes: There will be weekly reading quizzes worth 5-10 points (**up to 150 points**). The quizzes will be simple and short, and they may take place in class or in Canvas.

Group work: In addition to sharing ideas during regular discussions, each group will prepare a thirty-minute class activity twice in the semester. One of them will be related to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the other to one of Wilde's plays. For this, you can earn **up to 50 points**.

If you miss more than 3 class meetings, you will fail the course. The only absences I will excuse are those caused by documented medical reasons or official university business.

Extra points for in-class participation: At my discretion, I will award **up to 15 extra points** to students who make a strong effort to participate. Keep in mind: you don't need brilliant ideas; any relevant thought or question is valuable. Step outside of your comfort zone and speak up!

ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND RIGHTS

Being a Pointer entails rights and responsibilities. You should be familiar with the UWSP policies regarding student conduct: <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Student-Conduct.aspx>.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct are serious violations. Read about academic integrity: <https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Documents/AcademicIntegrityBrochure.pdf>. If unsure whether certain actions are appropriate or not, please feel free to talk to me about it.

You have the right to be free from physical or verbal harassment: Bullying is unacceptable. Be aware of the policies regarding sexual assault and incidents of bias or hate, and how to report them (<https://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Bias-Hate-Incident.aspx>). You can report (anonymously if you prefer) any incident of interpersonal violence or bias-based hateful behavior.

Copyright Note: All lecture materials and recordings are protected intellectual property. You may use them only for personal use related to class participation. Copying or sharing lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting them online or selling them to commercial entities constitutes illegal copyright infringement and violates university policies.

Names and Pronouns: Let me know if you would like to be addressed by a different name from the one in official records or if you identify with pronouns other than “he” and “she” (ex.: “ze” or “they”). Please join me in doing our best to respect other people’s self-identification choices. If you want to learn more about why pronouns matter, visit <https://www.mypronouns.org/>.

UWSP provides **accommodations for students with a documented disability**. For the procedure and paperwork, please contact UWSP Disability Resource Center: drc@uwsp.edu; <https://www.uwsp.edu/disability-resource-center/>.

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 ASSIGNMENTS

Please complete all readings before the assigned date and always bring the texts to class. If you do not have the text in front of you, you will not be fully able to follow the lecture or participate in class activities, which will have a negative impact on your Daily Work Grade.

The schedule is specific but tentative. We will be flexible about making changes if we need to spend more time on some material or if we fall behind.

The schedule is on the last page of the syllabus for easier use.

WILDE & KUZMANOVIC SHARE THOUGHTS ABOUT EDUCATION 😊



“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”)

Does Wilde mean that all teaching is useless? No! This is how I understand it:

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.

You are the agent of your own education. This course will be what *you* make of it. Take advantage of the opportunity and make the most of it!

READING SCHEDULE

Please complete all readings before the assigned date and always bring the texts to class.

- 9/13 “The Canterville Ghost,” “The Sphinx Without a Secret,” and “The Model Millionaire”
(*The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* 1-34)
“The Nightingale and the Rose” and “The Selfish Giant” (in Canvas)
- 9/20 “Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime” and Poems in Prose
(*The Canterville Ghost and Other Stories* 35-69)
“The Happy Prince” and “The Devoted Friend” (*The Major Works* 28-45)
- 9/27 *Salome* (*The Major Works* 299-329)
“The Harlot’s House” and “The Sphinx” (*The Major Works* 539-547)

Response Essay 1 is due in Canvas on Saturday, October 1st.

- 10/4 “The Decay of Lying” (*De Profundis and Other Writings* 139-171)
“The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (*De Profundis and Other Writings* 245-280)
“The Decorative Arts” and “Personal Impressions of America” (in Canvas)
- 10/11 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters I – VIII (*The Major Works* 47-127)
- 10/18 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters IX – XV (*The Major Works* 127-184)
- 10/25 *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Chapters XVI-XX (*The Major Works* 184-214)
Exam (in-class part)

Exam (at-home part) is due in Canvas on Saturday, October 29th.

- 11/1 *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (*The Major Works* 331-387)
- 11/8 *An Ideal Husband* (*The Major Works* 389-475)
- 11/15 *The Importance of Being Earnest* Acts (*The Major Works* 477-538)

Response Essay 2 is due in Canvas on Saturday, November 19th.

- 11/22 Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*
- 11/29 “De Profundis” (*De Profundis and Other Writings* 1-61)

Research Essay proposal is due in Canvas on Saturday, December 3rd.

- 12/6 “De Profundis” (*De Profundis and Other Writings* 62-114)
“The Ballad of Reading Gaol” (*De Profundis and Other Writings* 115-138)

Research Essay draft or extended outline is due in Canvas on Saturday, December 10th.

- 12/13 Peer reviews of Research Essay drafts or extended outlines

Research Essay (final version) is due in Canvas on Tuesday, December 20th.

There is no final exam.