“Heav’n has no rage, like love to hatred turn’d, / Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorn’d,” – William Congreve

DESCRIPTION
20th-century writers and filmmakers including Simone de Beauvoir, Jean Rhys, Claire Denis, and Lynne Ramsay, have constructed rich and complex portrayals of the elation, humiliation, grief, radicalization, ecstasy, and abjection that characterize the plight of a woman who is cast aside or abandoned by her lover, friends, colleagues, or kin. What does it mean to be abandoned, and more specifically, what does it mean to be a woman abandoned? The stories, novels, essays, and films that comprise the corpus of this seminar invite us to take a closer look at how the archetype of the abandoned woman has been produced, described, and resisted in a range of genres. What does the state of abandonment have to tell us about shifts in women’s social, legal, and economic status across cultures, classes, and epochs? How do the meanings assigned to a woman’s abandonment crucially reflect and inform what literature and film has to say about being a woman?

OBJECTIVES
In this Freshman Seminar, you will:
1. practice close reading of texts
2. practice critical discussion of texts and ideas
3. practice analytical writing to help you develop arguments for your papers

By engaging in these activities, you will learn:
1. how to develop sound habits of critical reading, including effective note-taking
2. how to contribute in a meaningful way to a group discussion
3. how to conduct yourself in a cordial, professional way among peers and colleagues
4. how to write analytical papers that stake out a clear, concise, and well-argued position
5. how to approach difficult texts with skeptical intelligence and curiosity
6. how to begin to define your own intellectual purpose in your career as a college student

SCHEDULE
Abandonment: Definitions and Mythologies
1. Jan. 27 / Introduction

Domestic Disputes: Abandoned at Home

Working Girls: Poverty and Abandonment
5. Feb. 24 / Reading: Jean Rhys, After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie, 9-116 / Due in class: Reader Response
6. March 2 / Reading: Jean Rhys, After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie, 117-191 / Due in class: Reader Response

A Matter of Life and Death: Surviving Abandonment
   * March 16: No class, Spring Recess (3/14 - 3/20)

Abandonment as Excess
9. March 30 / Reading: Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary, Part II, 61-202 / Due in class: Reader Response
10. April 6 / Reading: Gustave Flaubert, *Madame Bovary*, Part III, 205-311 / Due in class: THIRD WRITING ASSIGNMENT (4-5 pages)

**Obsession and Trauma: Reliving Abandonment**
11. April 13 / Reading: Marguerite Duras, *The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, 1-100 / Due in class: Reader Response


**Presence and Absence: Ghosting and Contemporary Forms of Abandonment**


* May 11, 5pm / FOURTH WRITING ASSIGNMENT (6-8 pages) DUE

**REQUIRED TEXTS**
* The following books are required:

* Additional required readings on the syllabus will be made available as PDFs.

* All films are available on reserve at the Avery Fisher Center, on the 2nd floor of Bobst Library, and may be checked out for four hours at a time.
COURSEWORK

Participation
Your active participation in this course comprises being prepared, engaged, and alert during seminar. This holistic requirement can be broken down into the following five elements:

1. **Be on time.**
2. **Come prepared.**
   - Read all the texts and watch all of the films carefully and attentively.
   - Bring your texts, paper, and something to write with to each class.
   - Complete all assignments by their due dates.
3. **Participate in class discussion.**
   - Contribute to each discussion by speaking up at least once.
   - Listen actively and sensitively to others.
   - Demonstrate respect for other points of view by letting others speak.
4. **Be responsible to your classmates** by your vocal, supportive, and collaborative participation during small group and partner activities.
5. **Refrain from using any screens** during class, no matter what. This includes cellphones, tablets, and laptops.

I evaluate your participation grade simply by observing whether or not you meet these five requirements at each class session. Consequently your participation grade is transparent; you should be able to calculate it yourself at any given moment, based on a self-assessment of how well you fulfill the above, each time we meet.

Attendance
We meet only 14 times, so every absence counts. For the sake of fairness, and in acknowledgement that you are the best judge of whether or not you absolutely must miss class, there are no “excused” or “unexcused” absences in this course. Although illness and other personal issues are a fact of life for everyone, no matter how legitimate the reason for your absence, missing class adversely affects your work, and consequently, your final grade.

Please contact me (in advance if possible) in the case of exceptional circumstances, such as religious holidays, or medical emergencies.
**Reader Responses**
You will be responsible for completing 10 reader responses over the course of the semester. I will provide you with more specific guidelines for each reader response; they will vary in form, from reading notes, to one-paragraph long written reviews of a text or film, to brief critical responses to a prompt. Reader responses are designed to help you: practice writing; keep a record of your first reactions to texts and films; and keep you on track with your reading and viewing. Occasionally you will be asked to write a reader response in class, instead of completing it as homework.

**Writing Assignments**
Your four writing assignments for this course will be of varying genres, including analytic, research, expository papers, and personal, however in each assignment, you will seek to present and develop clear arguments, supported by textual evidence. We will work together in seminar to help you formulate arguments and to express them persuasively in writing. I will provide you with a more detailed assignment sheet for each paper. Late papers lose one letter grade for each day that they are late.

**Grade Breakdown**
- Participation: 15%
- Reader Responses: 15%
- Writing Assignment 1 (2 pages): 10%
- Writing Assignment 2 (3-4 pages): 15%
- Writing Assignment 3 (4-5 pages): 20%
- Writing Assignment 4 (6-8 pages): 25%

**Office Hours**
Come and see me anytime between the hours of 12:30 and 2:30pm on Mondays, in office B06 on the basement level of 19 University Place. You can also speak to me in advance, or email me at youna.kwak@nyu.edu (allow 24 hrs. for a response) to set up an alternative meeting time.

**Writing Center**
Contrary to popular opinion, the Writing Center is not a place for remedial writing help, nor is it a proofreading service. Rather, it is an excellent resource for free 40-45 minute consultations to help you work on any specific aspect of your writing you’d like to improve. Located on the 4th floor of 411 Lafayette, the Writing Center is staffed by professionals and faculty members with extensive experience teaching and tutoring writers. I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center at least once to find out what it’s all about. For more information, go to: http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/object/writing.center. To schedule an appointment online, go to: nyu.mywconline.com.
**Plagiarism**
If you use any outside sources in your written work, you must cite them, to avoid plagiarizing. If you’re not sure what constitutes plagiarism, make it your responsibility to find out. If you have any doubts about whether or not you’re citing sources correctly, don’t hesitate to ask me during class or office hours, or by email. Do yourself a favor and don’t underestimate how serious an offense plagiarism is. A single instance of plagiarism can jeopardize your career as a college student, your relationship with faculty members, and your academic self-respect. You’ll find the University’s Statement on Academic Integrity and Academic Standards at: http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

**Classroom Ethos**
In a New York Times article entitled “Do You Suffer from Decision Fatigue?” (August 17, 2011), journalist John Tierney cites a German study in which psychologists called more than 200 people a total of 10,000 times at random over the course of a week, to repeatedly ask a simple question: are you experiencing a desire at this moment, or have you recently experienced a desire? According to Tierney, the study proves that in our daily lives, experiencing a desire—whether to sleep, eat, check Facebook, play a game, surf the internet, have sex, avoid work—is a norm and not an exception. He goes on to conclude that “people spend between three and four hours a day resisting desire. Put another way, if you tapped four or five people at any random moment of the day, one of them would be using willpower to resist a desire” (my emphasis).

What I take away from this study is the disturbing suggestion that modern life now requires a precious and nearly constant expenditure of our resources—intellectual, emotional, spiritual—simply to maintain self-control by resisting distraction. If we are each spending three or four hours a day using willpower to resist a desire, as the authors of the German study claim, we are daily wasting a considerable amount of time in an exhausting and unproductive exercise.

All of the above guidelines regarding conduct and performance in this Freshman Seminar are designed to benefit you and your classmates, by creating a classroom environment in which you will not waste your precious time. I ask you to do your part to create a classroom ethos in which we can all: relax our defenses; relax our resistance to outside distractions and desires; concentrate; be present, alert, and able to focus on the task at hand without being assailed by a thousand other pressures and commitments. I ask you to think seriously of classroom etiquette as a permission, and not a restriction: not that you are “not allowed” to use your cellphone, but rather that you are allowed, for 75 minutes, to be unavailable and unreachable—allowed, in other words, to commit to a single task with intensity and purpose.

**Thank you in advance** for being present, in the fullest sense of the word, during the short amount of time we have together. I look forward to our Freshman Seminar this semester.