

Course Syllabus
090.286
Marriages Made in Heaven and Hell

W 2:15-5:15

RAB 018

Professor Louise Barnett

Office 205C

Office Hours: W, Th 10:00-12:00 and by appointment

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Description:

This seminar will explore the institution of marriage, the foundation of modern society. While laws and customs surrounding marriage vary from one society to another--often enormously--historically, marriage has been an effective institution. Most human beings who have lived in historical times have married, and most marriages function more or less well from the point of view of society. We will examine a particular subset of married couples, those whose marriages work unusually well or unusually poorly. These married couples are all well known historical or literary figures (with the exception of the fictional couples we will read about), and all are now deceased. The marriages are complicated and interesting, which is why I chose them.

Required Texts:

Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*

Elizabeth B. Custer, *Boots and Saddles: Life in Dakota with General Custer*

Kimberly J. Largent, *Defining Moments in the Lives of Mary Todd Lincoln and Varina Howell Davis: First Ladies of the Civil War*

Marguerite Merington, editor. *The Custer Story: The Life and Intimate Letters of General George A. Custer and His Wife Elizabeth*

Kate Moses, *Wintering: A Novel of Sylvia Plath*

Class Requirements:

Strong attendance and class participation are essential. We will have brief in-class writing assignments and some short out-of-class papers as well. In-class writing cannot be made up.

The major piece of writing will be an analytical research paper of 12 pages plus an annotated bibliography.

** Prolonged absence will make it impossible to receive credit for the course.

Cell phones must be turned off in class.

**Students are expected to know and observe the university's standards of academic integrity in all coursework. Please familiarize yourself with <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Work must be handed in on time or an extension agreed to by the instructor. Missed assignments cannot be handed in during the last week of class.

Evaluation:

Classwork	20%
Short papers	40%
Research paper	40%

Objectives:

By reading historical and fictional accounts of well known marriages, as well as poetry and memoirs, students will acquire an understanding of this basic and profoundly important social institution in different time periods and cultures, an understanding that should serve them practically as well as theoretically. They will consider the question of what makes a successful marriage, and how the marriages examined measure up. They will continue to develop analytical ability in reading texts and writing about them.

Tentative Schedule of Assignments

January	20	Introduction
	27	Raymond Carver short stories**
February	3 & 10	Largent: Lincoln and Davis marriages
	17	Film: "Adam's Rib"
	24	Merington, <i>The Custer Story</i>
March	3	<i>Boots and Saddles</i>

	10	<i>The Professor's House</i>
	24	Ernest Hemingway short stories**
	31	Film: "Tom and Viv"
April	7 & 14	<i>Wintering</i>
	21	Autobiographical poetry of Plath and Hughes
	28	Final reports

**** Assigned materials will be posted on sakai.**