When the phrase “nasty woman” rose to the forefront of our cultural discourse over the past year, the label rested on a long-standing conception that women can be dangerous just by being women. In this class, we will look at the particular formations of dangerous women that materialized in the nineteenth century, an era in which women simultaneously remained held down by the law and yet unbound by newly possible social roles. We will consider what precisely made women dangerous as well as the other side of the coin: what put women in danger? What forms of female agency, sexuality, or sociability generate power and which engender fear? And what do we make of men’s roles: what does it look like to be a dangerous man or a man in danger? How do nineteenth-century notions of danger reify a gender binary and what are the ways in which this binary breaks down or becomes fluid? By reading texts across genres—some novels, a novella, poems, and a play—we will immerse ourselves in the particular history of gender, fear, and power articulated by nineteenth-century writers while also avidly seeking out points of connection between these Victorian conceptions of dangerous women and those of our own twenty-first century. Students in this course are forewarned that they will be in danger of reading dangerously fascinating texts, and will be expected to generate dangerously fascinating ideas in response.

**Required Texts**

Jane Austen, *Lady Susan* (1794/1871)  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (1856)  
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862)  
George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876)  
Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891)  
George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893)  
Poetry Packet: Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti, Alice Meynell, Michael Field, Sarojini Naidu

**Assignments and Grading**

Paper 1: 30% (recommended: due Friday, February 16)  
Paper 2: 35% (recommended: due Friday, March 30)  
Public Intellectual Article: 15% (due Friday, May 4)  
Reading Responses: 10%  
Participation: 10%

You will receive separate instructions on the two papers and the public intellectual article.
**Reading Responses:** You will write five 300-word reading responses, one for each of the five longer texts we are reading. Responses are due by 8pm on the day before the final class covering the text you are writing about, and should be uploaded to the assignment tab on our course’s Collab website. These reading responses are informal yet important; they will guide our discussions and lead you to intriguing paper and article topics. The due dates are as follows:

- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*: response due Wednesday 2/7
- Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*: response due Monday 2/26
- Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*: response due Wednesday 3/21

**Participation:** This course exists only through your lively participation. Every single day when you come to class, you are expected to talk! As such, you must be present, have completed the reading before class, and be eager to share your ideas during our time together. Please plan to be at all classes and let me know in advance if you are unable to attend.

**Office Hours:** I will hold office hours every Thursday from 1:00pm until 4:00pm, and am also available for separate appointments. During these times I am available for help, consultation, and discussion. Particularly as you work on your essays and article, office hours provide you with a chance for individual assistance with the development of your interests and ideas. Don’t be afraid to come talk to me!

**Electronics Policy:** Think of this class as a seventy-five minute technology fast. You will not need your laptops, tablets, or smart phones, as we’ll be talking with one another face-to-face and reading books in their paper form.

**Email Policy:** You are free to contact me through email, and I typically respond within 24 hours (albeit sometimes slower on weekends). I will not respond to essay- or article-related emails received within 24 hours of the due date. I am very happy to help you develop ideas for your papers and the creative project and encourage you to discuss your ideas, thesis statements, outlines, etc. with me as you write, but please plan ahead as I will not respond to last-minute questions.

**Paper and Late Policy:** All papers should be written in 12pt font, Times New Roman or similar, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins. Please email your paper to me, preferably in Word. All papers are due by 8pm on the listed date. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day.

**Plagiarism:** Don’t do it. Plagiarism is defined as using another person’s language, ideas, or thoughts and representing them as your own. Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism will be turned over to the Honor Committee.

**Student Resources:** Student Disability Access Center (SDAC): sdac.studenthealth.virginia.edu; Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 434-243-5150
Schedule of Readings

Week 1:
Thursday, 1/18: introductions, and what does it mean to be dangerous?

Week 2:
Tuesday, 1/23: Jane Austen, *Lady Susan*
Thursday, 1/25: selected recipes from “Every Lady’s Cook-Book”; Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market”; Sarojini Naidu, “Street Cries” and “Harvest Hymn”

Week 3:
Tuesday, 1/30: Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret* (volume 1)
Thursday, 2/1: *Lady Audley’s Secret* (volume 2, chapters 1–9)

Week 4:
Tuesday, 2/6: *Lady Audley’s Secret* (volume 2, chapters 10–13; volume 3, chapters 1–3)
Thursday, 2/8: *Lady Audley’s Secret* (volume 3, chapters 4–10)

Week 5:
Tuesday, 2/13: Robert Browning, “Porphyria’s Lover” and “My Last Duchess”; Michael Field, “La Gioconda” and “Penetration”
Thursday, 2/15: Alice Meynell, “Cradle-Song at Twilight” and “The Modern Mother”

Week 6:
Tuesday, 2/20: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (book 1) [optional: books 2 and 3]

Week 7:
Tuesday, 2/27: *Aurora Leigh* (book 9) [optional: books 7 and 8]
Thursday, 3/1: Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (phase the first)

Spring break: no class 3/6 and 3/8

Week 8:
Tuesday, 3/13: *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (phase the second, phase the third)
Thursday, 3/15: *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (phase the fourth)

Week 9:
Tuesday, 3/20: *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (phase the fifth)
Thursday, 3/22: *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* (phase the sixth, phase the seventh)

Week 10:
Tuesday, 3/27: George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (acts 1 and 2)
Thursday, 3/29: *Mrs. Warren’s Profession* (acts 3 and 4)

Week 11:
Tuesday, 4/3: George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (book 1)
Thursday, 4/5: *Daniel Deronda* (book 2)
Week 12:
Tuesday, 4/10: Daniel Deronda (book 3)
Thursday, 4/12: Daniel Deronda (book 4)

Week 13:
Tuesday, 4/17: Daniel Deronda (book 5)
Thursday, 4/19: Daniel Deronda (book 6)

Week 14:
Tuesday, 4/24: Daniel Deronda (book 7)
Thursday, 4/26: Daniel Deronda (book 8)

Week 15:
Tuesday, 5/1: wrapping up—dangerous women then and now