English 330:
Law and Literature
Spring 2021

Instructor: Nancy Wright
Email: <nancywright@uvic.ca>

Course Description:

The concept of the law calls to mind ideals informing the justice system. The law, however, was used to obscure the injustice of slavery. Mark Twain described the concept of racial difference as "a fiction of law and custom" used to justify slavery. His perception directs our attention to a point where law and literature intersect and invite interpretation. We will read slave narratives side-by-side with nineteenth-century legal texts that they challenged – statutes, judicial opinions and treaties that transformed people into slaves and property. We will examine how novels, plays and films revise the genre of the slave narrative to represent the ongoing personal and social consequences of slavery.

Proposed Assignments:

- Three 500 word discussion papers (30%)
- One Research Portfolio equivalent to 750 words (30%)
- One 1000 word essay (40%)

Proposed Texts:

- Dash, Julie. *Daughters of the Dust*.
- Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.
- Jacobs, Harriet. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*.
- Rhys, Jean. *The Wide Sargasso Sea*.
- Twain, Mark. *Puddn'head Wilson.*
- Wilson, August. *The Piano Lesson*.