

Christiana Salah (English)

UConn Humanities Institute Fellows' Public Talk

January 28, 2016 -- 4:30-6:00 PM

AUSTIN 301

“The Governess Captured on Film: Framing Victorian Womanhood in *The Turn of the Screw*”



The figure of the Victorian governess—desirable, tyrannical, or put upon—has intrigued authors for nearly two centuries. When Henry James wrote *The Turn of the Screw* in 1898, he drew on a rich tradition of governess stories that call gender binaries, class segregation, and Romantic ideals of childhood innocence up for scrutiny. Yet twentieth-century film adaptations of his novella create a new tradition: removing the governess from James's frame and diagnosing her as a dangerous, sex-starved hysteric. By tracing one text's lineage of adaptation, this talk examines the shifting ways that writers, readers, and scholars mediate the Victorian era and especially the independent Victorian woman.

Christiana Salah is a Ph.D. candidate in the English Department at the University of Connecticut. She has published articles in *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *Children's Literature*, *The Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies*, and the centennial critical volume on *Anne of Green Gables*. She is currently completing her dissertation, "The Popular Invention of the Victorian Governess, 1815-2015," which examines intersections of gender and class in the Victorian literary imaginary and its afterlife. Her major advisor is Professor Margaret Higonnet.