Eng 3807-001: English Victorian Literature

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Why the fascination today with nineteenth-century culture? From Merchant/Ivory films to Masterpiece Theater, from Jane Austen as Hollywood's hottest property to Charles Dickens Christmas celebrations, from A.S. Byatt's Possession to underwear from Victoria's Secret--nostalgic trips back to the prior century were a major growth industry in the 1990s. In this course we will read four important nineteenth-century novels against the backdrop of today's revival of "Victoriana," including film.

The course follows, in part, a course designed by my mentor, Jay Clayton at Vanderbilt University. It provides students an opportunity to explore how commerce produces culture--from two perspectives, the nineteenth century and the twentieth. Students will study textual production and consumption and the silent control market forces hold over epistemology and ideology. The presence of the past will be explored as we contemplate the popular mediums of the serial novel and the circulating libraries both in the nineteenth century and in our own (movies and circulating libraries like Blockbuster Video).

Our study will also include the poetry of Tennyson and the Brownings. Novels, as we will see, are not the only literary commodities that have been appropriated by popular culture. Popular misappropriations of the past have much to teach us about the real nature of the Victorians and about ourselves. (Group 4)
Syllabus for English Victorian Literature -- English 3807 at EIU (Spring 2000)

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Texts

- Trilling and Bloom, Victorian Prose and Poetry.  
- Altick, Victorian People and Ideas.  
- Jane Austen, Emma.  
- Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre.  
- Charles Dickens, Great Expectations.  
- Wilkie Collins, A Woman in White.

Movies

- Heckerling's "Clueless" (1995 film)  
- Zeffirelli's "Jane Eyre" (1996 film)  
- Lean's "Great Expectations" (1946 film)  
- Cuaron's "Great Expectations" (1997 film)

Goals. This course has three primary goals. The first goal is to read critically and widely from representative figures of the English Victorian period (ca. 1830-1901). Proceeding from this first goal, the second aim is to work toward some definition of the term "romanticism" (how is the term useful? how is it misleading? what are its central tenets or competing ideas? how has the term influenced our own time?). By realizing the difficulty of this second goal (as well as the need to attempt it), you should leave the class better prepared—and encouraged—to read those many writers not on our list but still important in shaping the literary history of the period.

The third aim of the course is the broadest, most practical, and probably the most difficult goal: to become more sophisticated and critical readers of poetry and its various modes. We will be reading other genres, of course; however, some of the most challenging and captivating reading in this course lies in the poetry.

Requirements.

- Literature Presentation and Paper (7-10 pages) 40%  
- Final exam (comprehensive) 25%  
- Backgrounds Report and Paper (4-6 pages) 20%  
- Participation / DSIR's 15%

Please Note!! You must complete the literature paper and presentation, the
backgrounds report and presentation, and the final exam to complete the course. Failure to complete any one of these three components represents incomplete work for the semester and any one with incomplete work will not receive a passing grade for the course—however masterfully he or she has completed the other components.

Course Participation. This is not a lecture course. The format of the course and its overall success depend upon your active and informed contributions. The response papers (oDSIR's) and the group report will allow you a couple of "formal" ways to guide and participate in class discussion. But since this class will cover material that most of you will be reading for the first time, I expect that you will come to class with lots of questions. Note that 15% of your final grade will be determined by your participation including your work onDSIR's (see below). That means a significant portion of your grade will be up to you and how much you want to participate in the course's various conversations.

Papers. You will write a major literature paper (7-10 pages) and a backgrounds report (4-6 pages). Due dates and subject choices will be scheduled during the first week of classes. I will handout a subject assignment sheet the second day. You will take this home and come to class ready to sign up on Wed. 19 January (our next class meeting). Sign up will be on a first come, first serve basis, so make sure you review choices among the texts so you choose subjects and authors of real interest to you.

By the end of the second week, you will know the subjects and times for both your literature paper and your backgrounds report. In conference, we will discuss in detail these projects. I will provide a list of possible topics to give you some ideas for the literature papers, although I'm quite flexible about the topics you decide upon or the methodologies you employ. Generally, I expect your literature paper to advocate and to develop an inventive reading of the work or groups of works you sign up to consider. For the papers, you may want to read some additional works by a writer on the reading list and write a paper that investigates how these other texts help us understand—or further complicate—this writer. Of course, there are other possibilities, too. For instance, if you are interested in politics, history, popular culture, or art you could easily direct your paper more toward those contexts.

All research must be scrupulously documented. Plagiarism shouldn't be a problem, but if it is, it's a serious one, and can only result in failure.

Revisions. You may revise one of your two papers for a better grade. However, you must speak with me prior to submitting the revision. I will not accept it otherwise.

Late Papers. Papers will be due precisely one week from the date you present your reading to the class. Papers turned in after this final due date will be
penalized one-third of a grade for each calendar day they are late—unless you have already made arrangements with me prior to the due date. Although I encourage you to turn in your paper in class, you have until 4:30 p.m. on the due date to hand in your paper (either to me in my office or in my mailbox, 308 Coleman). In other words, I want you to be in class the day the final draft is due whether or not you have your paper fully completed.

Double-Sided Illuminated Readings. You will be required to submit a close reading (or brief analysis) for each class meeting when new reading is assigned. The close reading will be a critical analysis of some aspect of that day's assignment. The DSIR's will be a half page typed or hand-written summary and critical analysis of that day's reading assignment.

Illustrations, mathematical equations, doodles are welcomed. These close readings should cite a passage from the reading, and then analyze and interpret the passage. You should consider these open, free, and informal. This is the place to muse freely.

I will not evaluate these responses in the same way I will your major papers. I'm more concerned that you are reading with discernment. I will, however, assign a grade of either "+", "−" or "−" on DSIR's. Satisfactory responses make a genuine effort to engage an important quote from our reading. Unsatisfactory responses are slap dash efforts that invest little interest in the assignment.

DSIR's cannot be made up or turned in after class. DSIR's turned in late or not at all are automatically "−". If you know you will not be in class to turn yours in, make arrangements to have someone else turn it in for you.

Attendance Policy. You need to be in class all the time. I allow up to four absences, whether excused or unexcused. Each absence after that will lower your final grade one full grade (if your calculated final grade is a B, for instance, and you have four absences, you will receive a C for the course). Seven or more absences will result in a failing grade.

Students with Disabilities. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Reading Schedule (Weeks 1-8)

Victoria's Secret Schedule

Be prepared to discuss the following works on the date indicated. We may not be able to discuss in class each assigned text; however, you will be expected to have read and be familiar with all the assigned selections unless I indicate otherwise. Although we will try to keep to schedule, modifications are bound to occur, which I will always announce in class. It is your responsibility, however, to keep aware of any changes—especially if you are absent from class.

Week 1 (Jan 10 - 14)
Jan 10  Introduction to Course
12  Syllabus / Reports / Papers
14  No meeting

Week 2 (Jan 19 - Jan 21)
19:  "Riddle-Me-Riddle-Me-Ree: Riddles and 19th-Century Literature" (lecture)
21:  No meeting

Week 3 (Jan 24 - 28)
Jan 24:  Victorian Literature in Context
26:  Emma
28:  Emma
Week 4 (Jan 31 - Feb 04)

31: Emma
02: Emma
04: Reports: "Role of Women in the Nineteenth Century" (Jennifer Kidder); "Rural England" (Cal Callahan); "Victorian Music" (Stephanie Schwaninger) (Todd Beard)

Week 5 (Feb 07 - 11)

07: Clueless (Film)
09: Sartor Resartus
11: LINCOLN'S B'DAY NO CLASSES

Week 6 (Feb 14 - Feb 18)

14: Reports: "Victorian Serial Publishing" (Kristy Dahl); "The Common Reader" (Heather Rothrock)
16: Jane Eyre
18: Jane Eyre

Week 7 (Feb 21 - 25)

21: Jane Eyre
23: Jane Eyre
25: Jane Eyre (Film)

Week 8 (Feb 28 - Mar 03)

28: Reports: "Evangelicalism" (Jennifer Suits) (Doug McGaghie); "Evolution and Religion" (Josh Brandt) (Melissa Hale)
01: In Memoriam (Poetry)
03: Reports: "Prostitution" (Pat Quinn) (Kristi Brownfield); "Fashion" (Stephanie Harshbarger) (Deborah Johnson)


weeks 9 - 16
## Spring 2000

### Reading Schedule (Weeks 9 - 16)

#### Week 09 (Mar 06 - 10)

**Mar 06**
- Browning's Dramatic Monologues (Poetry)
- Emma Papers Due: Jennifer Suits, Johnna Kelly, Matt Donoho; and Heather Marciniak

**Mar 08**
- Browning's Dramatic Monologues (Poetry)

**Mar 10**
- Reports: "Victorian Sexual Attitudes" (Johnna Kelly) (Jenny Johnson); "Victorian Furniture" (Karie Leffers) (Stephanie Carpenter)

#### Week 10 (Mar 13 - 17)

**SPRING HOLIDAYS**

#### Week 11 (Mar 20 - 24)

**Mar 20**
- Reports: "Victorian Architecture" (Megan Quick) (Lishka Seamon); "The Idea of a Gentleman" (Eddie Larsen) (Sarah Tabor)

**Mar 22**
- Prose / Poetry (Selections TBA)

**Mar 24**
- Prose / Poetry (Selections TBA)
- Emma Papers Due: Jenny Johnson, Sarah Tabor; Lishika; Browning Paper Due: Stephanie Schwaniger
## Week 12 (Mar 27 - 31)

Mar 27: Great Expectations  
29: Great Expectations  
31: Great Expectations

*Jane Eyre Papers Due: Jennifer Kidder, Megan Quick, Cal Callahan; Poetry Paper Due: Stephanie Carpenter*

## Week 13 (Apr 03 - 07)

Apr 03: Great Expectations  
05: Great Expectations  
07: Great Expectations

*Jane Eyre Papers Due: Kristy Dahl, Dough McGaghe; Great Expectations Papers Due: Pat Quinn, Stephanie Harshbarger, Karie Leffers*

## Week 14 (Apr 10 - 14)

Apr 10: Great Expectations (Film)  
12: Woman in White  
14: Woman in White

*Great Expectations Papers Due: Josh Brandt, Todd Beard, Eddie Larson, Ryan Garrity*

## Week 15 (Apr 17 - 21)

Apr 17: Woman in White

19: Woman in White  
21: Woman in White

*Woman in White Papers Due: Kristi Brownfield, Melissa Hale, Deborah Johnson*

## Week 16 (Apr 24 - 28)

Apr 24: Woman in White (film)  
26: Review
20. Review

Weeks 1-8