
VICTORIAN SENSATION!

Location: Rockwell 304

Office Hours: TTh 11-12:30 or by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will investigate a peculiar Victorian phenomenon: sensation! At the heart of our syllabus will be the genre of fiction that came to be known in the 1860s and 70s as “sensation fiction,” epitomized by Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley Secret*. Full of intrigue adapted from popular trials and news, these page-turners focused on adultery, madness, murder, or intrigue, and it is perhaps no surprise that they were some of the earliest detective stories. But while we focus on these fictional “sensation” stories and the public response that surrounded them, we will also investigate just what “sensation” in the Victorian era has to do with both bodily sensation and popular interest and excitement. We will consider the relationship between mind and body in Victorian psychology and ask what light this might shed on with the fiction we read. And we will learn about sensations in the British media in the second half of the nineteenth century, which will take us from the excitement surrounding the Great Exhibition of 1851 to the rise of photography, and from coverage of the “Jack-the-Ripper” murders to the trial of Oscar Wilde at the end of the century. In addition to our sensational texts, we will also read canonical fiction by George Eliot (“The Lifted Veil”), Arthur Conan Doyle (“A Study in Scarlet”), and Wilde himself (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*). You will have two main assignments in this class. In addition to a traditional research paper, which you will build up across the second half of the semester with an opportunity for revision based on feedback, you will also take charge of “curating” an event or object from the Victorian era as part of our class Victorian Sensations web exhibit.

Learning Objectives

- To demonstrate through writing, presentation, and class discussion the ability to critically read and interpret fiction and prose from the Victorian period and to analyze relationships between these texts within and across genres.
- To recognize and evaluate the relationship between literary works and their historical and cultural contexts.
- To identify the historical, cultural, and social context(s) and generic conventions of “sensation fiction” in the Victorian period and to describe the relationship between this sub-genre and Victorian media and culture.
- To practice public writing, online writing, integration of writing and illustration, and group project building by crafting part of our online exhibit on Victorian Sensation.
- To master the generic conventions of the project proposal, annotated bibliography, academic research project, and online public writing about historical objects.
- To build up a research project from proposal to annotated bibliography to draft to final project, and to construct an argument about a text/texts and write a persuasive, well-organized, and well-researched academic research paper that contributes to a critical conversation on that topic.

Assignments

“Victorian Sensation” Creative Curation Project (20%)

This is a research assignment with a twist. Your goal is to select, present, curate, interpret, and analyze one object or event, one “sensational” thing, from the Victorian era—that is, something that caused a “sensation” among the Victorian reading and viewing public. That “sensation” can be associated with nervous stimuli, heightened feeling, community experience, or media representation. This project will involve substantial online and library research. You will present your Creative Curation as part of a website we are all creating together (<http://victoriansensation.annagibson.com>). You should consider your contribution as the equivalent of at least 5 written pages of work, though you are free to play around with other forms of presentation in place of, or alongside, writing (including movies, audio files, and other forms of mixed media presentation). This is an opportunity to transform the usual college essay into a form of public writing or media. You will give one another feedback on your web content. To receive full credit for this assignment you must upload a full and complete draft by 10/3, give your two assigned peers feedback by 10/12, and submit the final edits to your project based on that feedback no later than 11/2.

Research Paper Project (45%, see breakdown)

During the second half of the semester you will work on a 10-12-page research paper that makes and sustains an argument about one or two of the texts on our syllabus, furthering the critical conversation about that text and topic with use of secondary critical research. This project will be broken into three stages:

1. Proposal (5%): A short written proposal, which will receive feedback from me.
2. Annotated bibliography (10%): You will summarize and evaluate 5 scholarly sources related to your argument.
3. Polished draft of at least 7 pages (5%): This will receive detailed feedback from me, and we will meet to discuss revisions. You will be expected to fully revise this draft for your final paper.
4. Final paper and revision summary due at the end of the semester (25%)

Formatting Research Paper Assignments

- Standard 1-inch margins
- 12-point standard font (e.g. Times New Roman)
- Single-spaced header (no longer than 2 lines)
- Double-spaced text
- Pages numbered
- Please use MLA in-text parenthetical citations and works cited.

See assignment sheet (on Blackboard) for more detailed information about this assignment.

Presentations

You will each be responsible for two short in-class presentations in this class. You will have a chance to sign up for your chosen presentation dates on Blackboard beginning September 1 at noon.

1. Close Reading: Pick a short passage or a few lines (aim for no more than 8 lines of poetry or 15 lines of prose as a rough guide, though shorter is fine) from our reading for your assigned day. You will begin your presentation by drawing our attention to this passage, reading it aloud for us. Then you will lead a short close reading of this passage, paying attention to

word choice, imagery, formal features, and any other features of the text that stand out to you as significant. Why do you think they are significant? As you lead us through this close reading, make sure you are doing more than just showing us words and phrases and formal features that are *interesting*; tell us *why* you think they are significant. What might your close reading help us better understand about both this passage and the text as a whole (or the part we have read of it up to that point)? Does the interpretive work you are doing in your close reading raise any questions or implications for you that you can share with the class? The idea is to spark discussion with your close reading, so feel free to pose questions as well as offer answers. You should aim for 5-10 minutes for your close reading presentation.

2. Sensation Flash Presentation: In this “flash” presentation you will take no more than 5 minutes to give us a quick lesson on the topic you chose for your Creative Curation project. Teach us, in this short time, about your sensational event, issue, or object. You will want to briefly summarize *what* it is, *why* it is significant, *how* it was “sensational” or “sensory,” and perhaps include one or two interesting tidbits, facts, or intriguing things you learned. Five minutes is not a lot of time, so your goal here is to keep it punchy and intriguing. We will have the website open on the screen for you to refer to any visuals you have on there if you wish, or you can feel free to provide a *short* handout (but please don’t just read us the handout!).

In-class Free Write Quizzes

This class requires careful and attentive reading and preparation for class. These quizzes/free writes give you the opportunity to demonstrate that you have done your preparation. I do not give quizzes that test your memory of specific passages in a text. Instead, I will give a variety of short in-class quiz assignments that might include the following:

1. Free Writes: The most common quiz will be a free-write based on a prompt or question about the text. These free writes are designed to do two things. First, they give you the opportunity to show me that you have carefully completed the reading for class by mentioning specific details that stood out to you as significant as you were reading. For this reason, you need to put your books away for these free writes and offer as many details in your response as possible. Second, and more importantly, free writes give you the opportunity to generate your own thoughts about one or more of the texts we will be discussing that day. This can be very helpful for students who find it difficult to talk in class, because it gives you a chance to formulate your thoughts before we begin discussion.
2. Discussion Questions: As mentioned under “participation,” I expect you to come to each class session with 1-2 questions for discussion that day. Sometimes I will ask you to jot down one or two of these discussion questions as a quiz assignment at the beginning of class.

I will grade each quiz/free write on a 5-point scale. Quizzes and free writes will not be announced in advance. They will take place at the beginning of class and last for approximately 5 minutes. If you come late to class you run the risk of missing a quiz or free write. There will be no make-ups offered, but I will drop the single lowest grade.

In-Class Participation

This is a discussion-based class in which we all need to contribute our thoughts and questions. You need to actively read your assignments, which means annotating your reading as you go and coming to class prepared with your annotated reading and with questions and topics for discussion. I am not measuring your participation on the complexity or profundity of your comments, but I am looking for you to respond to the topic and text that we are discussing thoughtfully and to make substantive contributions to discussion. To aid in your participation, I ask that you come to each class prepared with 1-2 discussion questions based on your reading. Try to stay away from factual/plot-related questions with easy answers and instead ask interpretive questions that generate discussion.

Grading for In-Class Participation:

A: Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read and thought about the material beforehand. Shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes actively and significantly to discussion in most classes.

B: Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes some to class discussion in most classes.

C: Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Sometimes shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance. Contributes occasionally to class discussion in most classes.

D: Comes to class but does not participate in most class discussions. Rarely shows evidence of having prepared discussion questions in advance.

F: Comes to class but does not show evidence of engaging with the material or participate in class discussion.

0: Does not attend class, sleeps during class, uses electronic devices in class outside pre-approved usage, or causes substantial disruption to class.

Assessment

Some important points about grades:

- Grades are not negotiable.
- I do not discuss grades via email. This is for privacy reasons and because it is much more productive to discuss these matters in person. However, I am very happy to talk to you about any aspect of your learning experience in the class, including any concerns about assessment, in person. Just make an appointment with me or come to my office hours.
- Grades will be posted to Blackboard and are calculated using the grading scale below. Please check Blackboard regularly to see your grades. If you do not see your grade for an assignment posted on Blackboard within two weeks of completion/turn in, feel free to email me to ask about this.
- If you are concerned about your performance in the class or with any of the assignments, please do come talk to me as early as possible. There is not much I can do to help you if you come to me the week before the final paper to ask me how to get an A if you have a B- average. If you have particular concerns about writing or presentations, talk to me about these things early in the semester so that I can help you develop strategies and direct you to useful resources.

Grading

Creative Curation:	20%
Research Proposal:	5%
Annotated Bib.:	10%
First Draft of Paper:	5%
Final Research Paper:	25%
Presentations (5% each):	10%
Free Write Quizzes:	15%
Participation:	10%

Grading Scale:

A	93-100 %	Consistently excellent; demonstrates mastery of material
A-	90-93 %	Very good to excellent
B+	87-90 %	Very good
B	83-87 %	Consistently good
B-	80-83 %	Fair to good
C+	77-80 %	Acceptable
C	73-77 %	Falls short of expectations, but acceptable
C-	70-73 %	Falls short of expectations
D	60-70 %	Poor
F	0-60 %	Failing

Course Policies**Expectations Overview:**

I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. You cannot learn and do well in this class unless you do all the reading. Please arrive on time, remain in the room during class (e.g. if possible, please try to use the bathroom before class), and remain attentive during the class. I also expect you to participate in class discussions so that we are all engaged in the learning process (this is part of your participation grade). However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors. To make this class a positive environment, I ask that you all adhere to a social contract of mutual respect. We need to respect one another's opinions, abilities, differences, and backgrounds. This applies to me too: as your professor, I expect your respect, but I will also treat you with respect. This policy extends beyond the classroom to email correspondence.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class. I do understand that certain emergencies and life events might mean you need to miss class (e.g. illness, personal emergencies, active military duty). Because of this, you have up to but no more than 3 absences without attendance negatively affecting your grade. For each absence *after* three, your final grade will be dropped by ONE grade level (e.g. from B to B-). Six absences (the equivalent of three weeks) will result in automatic failure of this class.

Please note that this absence policy is meant to accommodate emergencies and illnesses. It's a good idea to save up your allowed absences in case of emergency towards the end of the semester. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out from another student what you missed in class. Please do not email me to see if you missed anything; assume that you have missed something and contact a classmate or make an appointment to talk with me. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date. Please arrange with a classmate to turn in your work for you, place it in my mailbox, or upload it to Blackboard when appropriate.

Required Texts

Please get these specific editions:

- Wilkie Collins, *A Woman in White* (Oxford UP), 9780199535637
- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Oxford UP), 9780199537242
- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford UP), 9780199535989

Suggested editions, but you can get others if you prefer:

- George Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" (Oxford UP), 9780199555055
- Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (Penguin), 9780140439083

All other course texts are provided as URLs or PDFs via Blackboard.

Meetings/Contacting Me:

I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours. I'm here to talk to you! My office is College Hall 626, and my office hours this semester 11-12:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If these times do not work for you, just send me an email with your availability and we can set up an appointment at a different time. It is my policy not to discuss grades via email. If you have any question about your progress in the class you need to set up a meeting to discuss this with me in person.

Blackboard:

PDFs and web links to readings not contained in your purchased books can be found under "Course Content" in a folder titled "Readings." Please either print these documents to read, annotate, and bring to the class in question, or bring your annotated copies on a tablet or laptop. I will post announcements with any changes to the syllabus on our Blackboard announcements page. You will receive these as emails. Please check your Duquesne email regularly. You can also check your Blackboard grade book to view assignment grades. You will also be uploading two assignments to Blackboard as Word documents.

Late Work:

Work is due at the beginning of the class session. Please contact me as far in advance as possible if you need more time for an assignment because of a crisis, illness, or family emergency. I will only grant extensions if they are requested and approved at least 48 hours in advance of the due date (since you should have already started working on the assignment by then).

Electronics:

Because this is a seminar, we need to engage with one another in discussion without hiding behind screens. For this reason, during certain classes I ask that you put all of your electronics away during class. For classes when we are discussing a hard-copy text (Collins, Braddon, Conan Doyle, Wilde) you need to put away electronics. For classes when we are discussing material uploaded to Blackboard, you are free to use your laptops or tablets to refer to the material and your annotations. Please don't try to read these one a phone; the screen is just too small for this to work. You should only be using devices for class related work and never to email, check social media, or buy shoes! Turn off notifications, messaging, and other distractions while in class. When we have no electronics days, you should take notes on paper. Please put your phones away. If you misuse electronics in the classroom you will receive a "0" (F) for participation that day. If you have a special circumstance (e.g. a sick child; a family member in the hospital) and need your phone with you for a particular class please talk to me about this before class begins.

Email

Please check your Duquesne email account daily for any announcements or messages from me (and from your other professors). Impolite or unprofessional emails forfeit the right to a response. Please check the syllabus before emailing with a question. Please note that I do not accept assignments via email unless I have agreed to do so in advance.

Accommodations:

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658. I am very happy to accommodate all needs documented with this office. Please also contact me privately/come to talk to me by the

second week of class so that we can make necessary arrangements. Per university rules, I am only able to accommodate disabilities and learning difficulties if they are documented with the Office of Disability Services.

Athletics:

If you are involved in a university athletic program and will miss class because of it, you must bring an official list of the classes you will be missing from the athletic department in the first week of class. Moreover, ALL work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence. You are responsible for any announcements and/or class notes that you miss.

The Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to make use of this excellent resource on campus. The Writing Center is not just for struggling writers; it can be helpful for any writer at many stages of the writing process. For more information and to make an appointment see <http://www.duq.edu/academics/resources-and-technology/writing-center>

Academic Honesty:

The Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, whether by summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work or specific ideas of a person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the use of material prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials.” This means that plagiarism includes using language or ideas you find on the Internet or in another source and not clearly attributing them to their source. Make sure you cite and document your sources clearly.



If you do plagiarize, you will receive one of the following penalties as specified in university guidelines: “0” (F) on an assignment or portion of the course, failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university. In order to avoid these penalties, ask questions, carefully cite and document your sources, and come to see me or visit the writing center if you are using outside sources and you are not sure whether your incorporation of the material is fair use. Start writing your essays well in advance, and consult with me if you are having trouble interpreting an assignment, generating ideas, or documenting sources. I am here to help you, so please come to talk to me if you have any concerns.

Notes and names and contact details of two peers to contact if I miss a class:

Schedule*

DATE	TOPICS /PLAN FOR CLASS	HOMEWORK & ASSIGNMENTS (read/complete by the day listed)
WHAT IS SENSATION?		
Tu 8/22	Introduction: What is “Sensation”?	
Th 8/24	Empiricism and Sensation The Poetry of Sensation	John Locke, excerpt from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> Arthur Hallam, excerpt from “On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry” Tennyson, “Mariana” and “The Lady of Shalott”
READ ALL ABOUT IT! - MEDIA & SENSATION		
Tu 8/29	Case Studies: The Great Exhibition, Steam Trains	“A Great Sensation” chapter from James A. Secord, <i>Victorian Sensation</i> (BB)
Th 8/31	Case Study: Whitechapel Murders In class: Discuss Victorian Sensation Creative Curation Project, online writing, public writing, integrating illustrations	“Murder” chapter from Michael Diamond <i>Victorian Sensation</i> <i>(Reminder: sign up for presentation dates on BB beginning 9/1 at noon)</i>
BODIES & SENSATIONS		
Tu 9/5	Bodies, Sensation	Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess” and “Porphyria’s Lover” (BB) Henry Mansel, “Sensation Novels” excerpt (BB)
Th 9/7	Psychology & Physiology, Sensation & Consciousness	George Henry Lewes, “What is Sensation?” William Carpenter, Excerpt from <i>Principles of Mental Physiology</i> (1874) Frances Power Cobbe “Unconscious Cerebration”
Tu 9/12	The Lifted Veil: Strange Psychology	George Eliot, “The Lifted Veil” (note, either purchase the book or find an online copy)
Th 9/14	Creative Curation Work Day	Work on creative curation project. Bring computer or tablet. (Start reading <i>The Woman in White</i>)
SENSATION FICTION (& DETECTING SENSATION)		
Tu 9/19	Collins	<i>The Woman in White</i> (at least page 127)
Th 9/21	Collins	<i>The Woman in White</i> (to page 244)
Tu 9/26	Collins	<i>The Woman in White</i> (to page 407)
Th 9/28	Collins	<i>The Woman in White</i> (to page 502)
Tu 10/3	Collins	<i>The Woman in White</i> (to end)
Th 10/5	Sensation Novel Criticism Discuss annotated bibliography, evaluating sources	Patrick Brantlinger, “What is Sensational about the Sensation Novel?” (BB)

DUE by end of day Friday 10/6: First draft of Creative Curation Project (note date change here)		
Tu 10/10	Braddon In class: Pre-Raphaelites & Sensation	<i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> to page 151
Th 10/12	Braddon	<i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> to page 226
Tu 10/17	Braddon	<i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> to page 342 DUE: Peer Feedback on Creative Curation Project (email by end of day)
Th 10/19	Braddon In class: Proposal peer discussions	<i>Lady Audley's Secret</i> to end Bring initial outline/draft of proposal, or at least concrete idea for proposal, to class
DUE: Proposal, on Blackboard by end of day Saturday, October 21		
Tu 10/24	Sensation & Melodrama Feedback on proposals	Hazlewood, <i>Lady Audley's Secret In Two Acts</i> (BB)
Th 10/26	Flesh, Sensuality, and Ecstasy: An Interlude	D. G. Rossetti's "Nuptial Sleep" A. C. Swinburne, "Anactoria" Short BL.com article about Buchanan Gerard Manly Hopkins, "The Windhover" and "God's Grandeur" (all on BB)
Tu 10/31	Sherlock Holmes	Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet" Part 1
Th 11/2	Sherlock Holmes	Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet" Part 2 DUE: Final edits to Creative Curation Project must be finished by now
WILDE SENSATION & AESTHETICS		
Tu 11/7	Wilde	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> (to page 53)
Th 11/9	Wilde In-class workshoping thesis and evidence	<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> (to page 124) Bring a draft of your thesis paragraph DUE: Annotated Bib. (BB, end of day)
Tu 11/14	Wilde (& trials)	Wilde, <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> (to end) Articles about Wilde trials (BB)
Th 11/16	No class (professor at NAVSA Conference)	DUE: Paper Draft—on BB
<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>		
11/28	In-class Workshoping (And some sensational photography)	<i>Individual conferences about papers this week Sign up for session</i>
11/30	Meetings/Optional Workshoping	
12/8	DUE: Final Paper—on BB	

* Note that this initial schedule is subject to change. I will announce changes on Blackboard and in class.