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Office Hours: Weds 1-4PM, or by appointment

English 417W
Spring 2015
Fisher Hall 554
Tues & Thurs, 3:05-4:20PM

Nineteenth-Century British Literature: Progress and Change



Course Description

This course will survey British literature in the nineteenth-century by focusing on novels, poetry, and prose dealing with progress and change, including works by authors such as William Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, Matthew Arnold, Alfred Tennyson, Charles Darwin, and George Eliot. The nineteenth-century has often been labeled “The Age of Progress” in Britain; it was a time of massive population growth, industrial and technological advancement, new scientific theories, imperial expansion, and rapid cultural change. By examining the literature of this period, we will explore just what “progress” meant in the Romantic and Victorian periods. What, or who, was excluded from this progressive history? This will engage us in questions about gender, class, imperialism, science, religion, and art.

Course Objectives

- To critically read and analyze poetry, prose, and fiction from nineteenth-century Britain, demonstrating through writing and discussion an ability to closely read and interpret these texts.
- To recognize and evaluate the relationship between literary works and their historical and cultural contexts in the nineteenth century, in particular changes in science, industry, labor, gender, empire, evolutionary theory, and the relationship of the individual in a world of change.
- To collaborate as a class to develop an online project and resource based on one Victorian novel and its contexts.

- To construct an argument about a text/texts in the Romantic or Victorian period and write a persuasive, well-organized, and well-researched paper that contributes to a critical conversation on that topic.

Our Texts

Please purchase or rent the following editions of our three novels so that we can all stay on the same page during class discussions. These are available at the Duquesne University Bookstore.

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Oxford University Press; ISBN: 9780199537150)
- Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (Norton Critical Edition; ISBN: 9780393979084)
- George Eliot, *Mill on the Floss* (Oxford University Press; ISBN: 9780199536764)

All other readings for the class will be provided as PDFs on Blackboard. Please **print and bring these to class with you.**

Course Policies

In-Class Expectations Overview:

I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. There is a lot of reading to cover in this class, and you cannot learn and do well 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. However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors.

A Note About Reading: There is a lot of reading in this class (Victorian novels tend to be long!) so please plan ahead accordingly so that you can complete the required pages in time. Some weeks have lighter reading loads than others, so you might use those weeks to get a head start on a novel, for instance. Spread out your reading across the time available so you don't run out of time. You might find it useful to figure out how long it takes you to read 10 pages of a novel and plan out the time you need to finish it accordingly.

Disability: Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact me privately by the second week of the class. If the disability is not yet officially documented, contact the Office of Freshman Development and Special Student Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658.

Attendance: You are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete all reading and written assignments, and to participate in class discussions. Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class. More than 3 absences will result in a lower final grade. Latenesses will be added up on the same principle. I will take attendance at the beginning of the session, and any quizzes will also take place at the beginning of class. If you miss a class for some reason it is your responsibility to catch up on missed material by contacting a classmate. During the first week you should share contact information with two of your peers. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date.

Meetings/Contacting Me: I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours (1-4 p.m. Wednesdays, or by appointment). My office is College Hall 630. 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.

Late papers: 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 grant one extension, due one class session after the assigned due date. The final essay is except from this allowance. Additional late assignments will not be accepted.

Electronics: Unless I let you know in advance that you will be able to use a laptop/tablet for a specific reason (e.g. if we are working together on the web project) please put all electronics away during class. You can take notes on paper. Turn off your cell phone before you come to class. If I find you texting, chatting, or using a phone in class I will ask you to leave, which means you will miss important material. This will also adversely affect your attendance.

Online privacy: The web project we will create together this semester will be a public website. You do not have to choose to use your real name when posting to this blog if you do not wish to do so. I encourage you to set up a pseudonym with wordpress (I can help you to do this), even if you have one already, that you can use for this class. We will share our usernames with one another in the classroom so we know each other online, but I respect your online privacy and I do not require that you post online with your name. This also applies to your personal blog if you choose to keep your reading journal online.

Academic Integrity: 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.” Come see me or visit the Writing Center if you’re using outside sources and are not sure whether or not 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. *You will fail the course if you plagiarize.*

Assignments

Reading Journal/Blog: You will be responsible for keeping a reading journal in this class. You can either type up and print these entries or create a blog (free blogs available at wordpress.com) for the class in which you record your responses. I encourage you to use these journals to record your responses to all or most of your reading in this class, but at minimum you are responsible for at least six entries (of at least a page single spaced) during the semester, at least three of which must be posted/turned in before spring break, and at least three of which must be posted/turned in after spring break. You must hand in or email me a link to your entries on the day upon which we are discussing the text in question. These responses will not receive a letter grade; I will use ✓-, ✓, and ✓+ to grade them. Please collect these together and turn them all in at the end of the semester (not necessary, of course, if you are keeping a blog – just make sure all the posts stay up until the end of the semester).

The posts you turn in to me should be thoughtful responses to your reading. You might choose to focus on a particular passage or section of the text, a recurring image, a contextual issue or critical theme that emerges out of the text, or another aspect of the reading that interests you. *Do not summarize the text*; I am looking for your thoughtful engagement with the text rather than evidence that you merely understand a plot.

Close Reading Assignment: On Thursday, January 15 you have a short close reading assignment due. You will choose one of the poems due for that day. First, you will type out the text of the poem and annotate the text by hand (we will discuss this in class). You will then write an accompanying brief close reading analysis (of approximately 1-page single spaced) in which you will closely analyze the formal and linguistic elements of the poem that most interest you. This is not an argument-driven piece; rather it is an opportunity to immerse yourself in obsessively close reading.

North and South Web Project: This collaborative class project will be the central assignment for our class. Together we will create an online resource based on Elizabeth Gaskell's novel *North and South*. You will work together as a class to determine the sections of the website, and you will each be responsible for creating at least two pages of this website – one focused on the novel's context (e.g. historical, material, social, biographical, literary) and one focused on an analysis of one section or element of the novel itself (e.g. a theme, a pivotal scene, a character, a setting). You will also be responsible for reading and offering feedback to at least two of your peers and responding to revision suggestions made by your peers. By the end of the semester we will have created a comprehensive resource for others interested in this novel and its historical, social, and literary contexts.

Final Paper Project: Your final project in this class will be a well-researched paper in which you clearly articulate and support an argument about one of the texts on our syllabus. We will discuss this paper in more detail in class and you will receive an assignment detailing expectations. This research paper will be broken into components, including a **working thesis**, an **annotated bibliography**, the **final paper**, and a **flash presentation** of approximately 5 minutes in which you summarize your main argument and supporting evidence to the class (during the final exam period).

Quizzes: We may have occasional quizzes in the class. These will not be announced in advance. They are designed to ensure your engagement and reading. Quiz grades will be counted towards participation.

Participation: I consider your active and engaged participation in class discussions and in our group website project this semester to be one of your assignments for this class.

Grade Calculations

Reading Journal/Blog:	20%
Close Reading Assignment	5%
<i>North and South</i> Web Project:	25%
Annotated Bibliography:	5%
Final Paper:	25%
Flash Presentation:	5%
Participation (incl. quizzes):	15%

Schedule

NB: This schedule is subject to revision throughout the semester. I will let you know about any schedule changes in class and via email in good time.

Thursday, January 8	Introduction and Overview
Tuesday, January 13	Wordsworth, "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" Preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> "Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1803" "London, 1802" "My heart leaps up" "I wandered lonely"
Thursday, January 15	Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" and <i>Biographia Literaria</i> (excerpt) Blake, excerpts from <i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i> Close Reading Assignment
Tuesday, January 20	Shelley, "Mont Blanc" Keats, "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" Byron, "Don Juan" (excerpt)
Thursday, January 22	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Vol. 1 (1-68)
Tuesday, January 27	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Vol. 2 (69-123)
Thursday, January 29	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Vol. 3 (124-191)
Tuesday, February 3	Carlyle, <i>Past and Present</i> , excerpt Matthew Arnold, excerpt from <i>Culture and Anarchy</i> Asa Briggs "Victorianism" from <i>The Age of Improvement</i>
Thursday, February 5	Patmore, "The Angel in the House" excerpt Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (Chapters 1-7, to page 60)
Tuesday, February 10	Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (Chapters 8-16, to page 120) In Class: Web Project Overview and Brainstorming
Thursday, February 12	Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (Chapters 17-25, to page 187, end of Vol. 1)
Tuesday, February 17	Mid-Novel Pause for Context: Labor and Industrialization Engels, "The Great Towns" Dickens, "The Quiet Poor" Browning, "The Cry of the Children" In Class: Finalize Web Project Topics

Thursday, February 19	Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (Vol. 2, Chapters 1-6, to page 238)
Tuesday, February 24	Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (Vol. 2, Chapters 7-17, to page 321) Web project check-in
Thursday, February 26	Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> (to end, p. 395)
<i>Spring Break</i>	
Tuesday, March 10	Workshop Web Project in class
Thursday, March 12	Tennyson, <i>In Memoriam</i>
Tuesday, March 17	Charles Darwin and contexts (PDF) Web Projects Due
Thursday, March 19	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Book First)
Tuesday, March 24	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Book Second)
Thursday, March 26	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Book Third)
Tuesday, March 31	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Books Fourth and Fifth) Feedback to peers on web project due by this date
<i>Easter Break</i>	
Tuesday, April 7	<i>No Class – Monday Schedule</i>
Thursday, April 9	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Book Sixth)
Tuesday, April 14	Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (Book Seventh)
Thursday, April 16	TBD, or <i>Mill on the Floss</i> catch up day
Tuesday, April 21	Workshop Papers in Class (come with working thesis and initial outline) Annotated Bibliography and Working Thesis Due
Thursday, April 23	Excerpts from H. G. Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i>
Tuesday, April 28	Excerpts from BBC adaptation of <i>North and South</i> (in class) Web project finalized
Wednesday, May 6, 11-1	Flash Presentations; Paper Due