

# Victorian Literature: The One and the Many

English 536/636  
Spring 2016  
Instructor: Anna Gibson  
Tuesdays, 6-8:40PM  
College Hall 643 (conference room)  
Dr. Gibson's Office: College Hall 630  
Office Hours: Weds 1-3PM; Thurs 10:30-11:30AM  
Email: gibsona@duq.edu



## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This graduate class will introduce you to many of the key literary features of the Victorian era, with a particular focus on the major literary forms of the period (including the multiplot novel, the dramatic monologue, serial installments, and sensation and detective fiction). Our subtitle – “the one and the many” (borrowed from the title to Alex Woloch’s book *The One vs. The Many*) – ties together many of the texts we will be reading this semester. Consequently, our questions might include the following: What is the relationship between the individual and society in Victorian literature? Is the individual conceived as one contained self or as many interrelated components? How do we understand a whole text or a single installment in relation to a novel’s many serial parts? How do the plots of a multiplot novel relate to one another? How does this era consider its relationship to an increasingly expanding evolutionary past?

Our reading method in this class will be a little unusual. We will begin the semester in the 1840s with Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Robert Browning’s dramatic monologues and end the semester in the 1880s with *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*, but between those texts and dates we will read like the Victorians: serially. Our central texts will be George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* and a Wilkie Collins sensation novel, *The Moonstone*. We will read both novels in installments simultaneously, along with some short excerpts from contextual non-fiction from the period, contemporary reviews, and critical pieces.

You will write regular reading responses, present on a contextual topic related to the course material, and write and revise a final conference paper.

## TEXTS

Please purchase the following editions of the novels so that we can stay on the same page:

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780199535590  
Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone*, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780199536726  
George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Broadview Press, ISBN: 9781551112336  
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Broadview Press, ISBN: 9781554810246

You can find all other reading material on Blackboard, including critical articles for presentations.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### **Presentation:** (20%)

Each student enrolled in 536 or 636 will give one scheduled presentation in this class. This presentation will have two components:

1. You will read a critical article related to material we are all reading for that day's class and write a 3-page review of that article and its topic of interest that you will give to me *and* to the other students in the class (please bring copies for everyone). This review should a) summarize the article and its main claims (keeping in mind that your colleagues may not have read it); b) evaluate and discuss the article in relation to your own interpretation of the primary text and topic hand. This discussion will likely require you to delve a little further into the topic; please include a list of any works you consult beyond the assigned article so that the rest of the class can further explore the subject if they wish.
2. During class, you will give a 20-minute presentation that will consist of both a) your article review (you can choose to read this or present it more informally) and b) your own choice of response to the topic and reading for that day. These two parts of your presentation may well be intertwined, and I do encourage you to draw a thread between them somehow, but the second part gives you the freedom to research and discuss with the class an aspect of the reading and topic that interests you. For instance, if you are giving a review of Paul Young's article "Carbon, Mere Carbon" on March 8, you might be interested in also presenting on the broader context of Victorian Empire and its relationship to *The Moonstone* or even on the relationship between The Great Exhibition and the other novel we will be discussing that day, *Middlemarch*. You should be prepared to field questions and generate discussion at the end of your presentation.

The goal of these presentations is twofold. First, it exposes the whole class to a variety of critical opinions and approaches without overloading the syllabus with reading material. Second, it offers some contextual and critical information to the class on a topic related to the reading for that week, thereby sparking discussion.

You will have an opportunity to sign up for a presentation date and topic on a Blackboard wiki, which is set to be available for sign up from January 20 at 10AM.

### **Paper:** (50%)

The culmination of your work in this class will be a research paper of approximately 15-20 pages on a topic related to the material covered in this class. This scholarly paper should engage in critical discussion on your topic and contribute a new idea to that discussion in elegant and well-organized prose. As you begin to work on this paper, you should submit a 1-page abstract/proposal no later than March 22 so that I can give you feedback. Your final paper will be due on April 26 during our last session (the exam session).

Written work should be double-spaced in a standard typeface with 1" margins, page numbers, and MLA-style citations.

## **Participation** (20%)

A small seminar like this one only works if we all actively participate in the discussion, sharing our own critical insights and responses to the reading. You should each come to every class with at least three leading questions for discussion based on your reading so that you are prepared to kick-start a new line of discussion on the text(s) at hand and share your thoughts on the material.

In addition to sustained contribution to class discussion, you will also take part in three scheduled discussion activities across the course of the semester. The first will involve responsibility for close reading and/or leading discussion about one of Robert Browning's monologues on January 19. The second involves signing up to read one of three critical articles on *Jane Eyre* for our February 2 class and summarizing and discussing that article in class (along with two other students). The third involves studying one issue of Charles Dickens's journal *All the Year Round*, in which *The Moonstone* was published in 1868; in class on February 9 you will summarize the issue's content and consider its relationship to the novel's early installments. In each of these cases, you will sign up on Blackboard for your chosen slot/text.

In order to eliminate distractions, please set your cell phone to silent and put it away during class. Although you are welcome to take notes on a laptop/tablet and bring supplemental readings from Blackboard to class electronically if you prefer to do so, I do encourage you to consider putting away these devices so that they do not become distractions or barriers to conversation. I reserve the right to restrict the use of these devices should it appear that they are interfering with discussion.

Attendance is mandatory in this class. While I do understand that emergencies can arise that give you no reasonable alternative to missing class, frequent absences will negatively affect your final grade.

***A Note on Serial Reading!*** Because part of our focus this semester is on the form and experience of serial fiction, we need to be attentive to the serial parts of *The Moonstone* and *Middlemarch*. This is fairly simple in *Middlemarch* because each volume of the novel was published separately. *The Moonstone*, however, was published in 32 installments between January 4 and August 8, 1868. You will need to use a resource published on Blackboard to note the installment breaks in your text before or while you read so that you are aware of when each new issue began. If in doubt about installment breaks, take a look at scans of the original issues at Dickens Journals Online (<http://djo.org.uk/all-the-year-round/volume-xix.html>).

## **“Conference” Presentation:** (10%)

At the end of the semester we will have two “conference” sessions during which each 536 student will read a 20-minute version of her final paper. Keep in mind that a 20-minute paper is approximately 9 pages long and should be designed to be *heard* rather than read. At the end of the panel, the presenters will answer student questions and respond to student comments. Students not presenting should listen closely and be prepared to pose questions at the end of each panel.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **636 Students**

Although you are not required to write a final paper or participate in the final conference, I do expect you to participate in class discussions, scheduled activities, and the presentation assignment.

### **Office Hours**

Please feel free to drop by my office to talk to me about any matter related to the class or to your graduate work, especially if you have any questions about an assignment, a draft, or an idea you want to run by me for a paper or presentation. My office hours are Wednesdays from 1-3PM and Thursdays from 10:30-11:30PM, but I am also available by appointment. You can contact me via email at gibsona@duq.edu (please allow me 24 hours to respond, and a bit longer on the weekends).

### **Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism, will result in a zero for the assignment and university sanctions.

### **Late Work**

Please do not turn in work late without prior approval from me. If you need an extension for a good reason, talk to me well in advance and we will arrange this together. A paper turned in late without prior approval will receive an F for that assignment.

### **Disabilities and Accommodations**

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation that could impact their performance in this class should talk to me privately within the first two weeks of class.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

*Schedule is subject to change depending upon our progress during the semester. I will notify you of any changes in class and via email.*

### January 12: Introduction and Victorian Society

- Reading: Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*
- In class: Introduction to the Victorian era, the syllabus, and one another
- In class: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "The Cry of the Children" and Letitia Elizabeth Landon "The Factory" – poetry for social change

### January 19: The Person and the Population

- Robert Browning dramatic monologues: "Porphyria's Lover," "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," "My Last Duchess," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "Caliban Upon Setebos"
- Industrialism: Progress or Decline? (*Norton Anthology* contextual reading)
- Short excerpt from Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*

Sign Up on Blackboard Wiki (wiki opens 1/13 at 10AM): In class this day, each student will lead the class in discussion and close reading of 1-2 poems (depending on poem length). You can do this by focusing on a particular element of the poem, by offering a close reading of a section of the poem, or with discussion questions.

### January 26: *Jane Eyre*

- Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

### February 2: *Jane Eyre* and The Woman Question

*Contextual Readings:*

- Excerpt from John Ruskin's *Of Queen's Gardens*
- Excerpts from Sarah Stickney Ellis, *The Women of England* (the file is large, but you need focus only on these pages: 35-37, 40-47, 59; skim or skip the rest)
- George Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (in your Broadview *Middlemarch* 659-677)
- Poems: Coventry Patmore, "The Paragon" from *The Angel in the House*; Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott"; Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Jenny"; Augusta Webster, "Circe"

Sign Up on Blackboard Wiki (wiki opens 1/23 at noon): Each third of the class will read ONE of the following articles and be prepared to summarize and discuss the critic's argument(s) and claims about *Jane Eyre* for the other members of the class. This activity will generate a discussion about these critical points of view on this text. **Sign Up on Blackboard Wiki.**

1. Sandra M. Gilbert, "Plain Jane's Progress"
2. Nancy Armstrong, excerpts from *Desire and Domestic Fiction*
3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism"

## February 9: Serial Form

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* to the end of issue 9
- Sign Up on Blackboard Wiki Each student responsible for studying ONE issue of *All The Year Round*, in which *The Moonstone* was published. Come to class with short (5-7) minute summary of the issue and how you might consider the novel text alongside the rest of the issue. See Blackboard **wiki** to sign up for an issue number and **course content** for link to web archive of *All The Year Round* issues.

Presentation: Serial Form: Hughes and Lund, *The Victorian Serial* excerpt

## February 16: Building and Reforming a Fictional World; Sensation Fiction

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* (to issue 13) and *Middlemarch* Book 1
- Reading: From *Middlemarch* Appendices: “The Roman Catholic Relief Act” and “An Act to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales”

Presentation: Sensation Fiction. Brantlinger, Patrick. “What is ‘Sensational’ About the ‘Sensation Novel’?” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37.1 (1982): 1-28.

## February 23: Art & Realism

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* (to issue 16) and *Middlemarch* Book 2
- Victorian Reading: John Ruskin short excerpts
- Victorian Reading: Eliot’s review of Ruskin’s *Modern Painters* (*Middlemarch* appendix 654-58)
- Critical Reading (skim for an overview of Eliot and Realism): Caroline Levine. “Surprising Realism” from *A Companion to George Eliot*.

Presentation: Realism: George Levine, from *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (1981).

## *Spring Break*

## March 8: Pier Glass & Modern Individuals

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* (to issue 21) and *Middlemarch* Book 3
- Victorian Reading: J.S. Mill *On Liberty* (chapters 1 and 3)
- Critical Reading: Alex Woloch, *The One vs. The Many*, Introduction

Presentation: Diamond, Empire, Exhibition: Young, Paul. “Carbon, Mere Carbon?: The Kohinoor, The Crystal Palace, and the Mission to Make Sense of British India.” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 29.4 (2007): 343-358.

## March 15: Science and Novels

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* (to issue 28) and *Middlemarch* Book 4
- Victorian Reading: G. H. Lewes from *The Problems of Life and Mind* (109-176; 188-195)
- Victorian Reading: William Carpenter (paragraphs #812 and #813)

- Optional supplemental reading (if you're interested): Jill L. Matus, "George Eliot and the Sciences of Mind"

Presentation: Novels and Science. Sally Shuttleworth, selection from *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science*

### **March 22: Novel Reading**

- Serial Reading: *The Moonstone* (to end) and *Middlemarch* Book 5
- Critical Reading: D.A. Miller, "From Roman Policier to Roman-Police: Wilkie Collins's 'The Moonstone'"

Presentation: Types: Gallagher, Catherine. "George Eliot: Immanent Victorian." *Representations* 90.1 (2005): 61-74.

**Proposals Due** (*feel free to give these to me earlier than this deadline or make an appointment to talk with me if you would like earlier feedback*)

### **March 29: Darwin's Plots**

- Serial Reading: *Middlemarch* Book 6
- Victorian Reading: Charles Darwin, conclusions to *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871)

Presentation: Darwin's Plots. Reading: Gillian Beer, *Middlemarch* chapter from *Darwin's Plots*

### **April 5: The Whole of *Middlemarch***

- Serial Reading: *Middlemarch* Books 7 & 8
- Critical Reading: Laura Otis, "The Webs of *Middlemarch*"
- Supplemental Reading (optional): Married Women's Property Act, Appendix in your copy of *Middlemarch*

Presentation: Novel-Reading and Detachment: David Kurnick, "An Erotics of Detachment: *Middlemarch* and Novel-Reading as Critical Practice." *ELH* 74.3 (2007): 583-608.

### **April 12: Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde**

- Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde*

Presentation: Stevenson & Science: Anne Stiles, "Robert Louis Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde and the Double Brain." *SEL Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 46.4 (2006): 879-900.

### **April 19: Conference Session #1**

### **April 26: Conference Session #2 (Exam Period)**

- Final papers due