

ENG4936: Writing, Publishing, and Book Collecting During the Victorian Era

team taught by
Dr. Rae Yan (English) & Dr. Neil Weijer (UF Libraries)

Note: This is a draft of the course syllabus as of 7/31/23.

Yan Office Hours: Mondays, 11am-1pm
Yan Campus Office: Turlington 4332
Yan Zoom Office Hours:

Weijer Office Hours:
Weijer Campus Office: Smathers Library 200G
Weijer Zoom Office:

ENG4936-23432
Section 8RY1

Fall 2023
W 6-8, 12:50-3:50
TURL 2350



Course Description

Just as there is a tendency to imagine film directors as auteurs, we similarly tend to imagine major authors as self-made titans laboring entirely on their own. If we go back to the beginnings of the novel and the cult of the celebrity author, a study of the history of the major literary figures of the Victorian era reveals that they did not work alone but rather alongside and within

complex social and professional circles of literary collaborators, publishers, and members of the book trades—just as many writers still do now. Their readers were just as complex and demanding. The century saw the rise of enormous private and public libraries, which developed out of a desire to control, preserve, or possess the incredible output of Victorian presses, and to promote individual and societal taste. It’s not surprising that, like the readers and publishers, the characters in these books are also collectors of all stripes - some restrained and some maniacal.

This research-intensive course is designed to introduce advanced honors undergraduate students to the expansive world of Victorian publishing, writing, and collecting to consider the ways in which art has been inflected by social, political, and personal needs as much as artistic desires. In our class, we will read works by some of the most famous Victorian writers of the age—Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and George Gissing—as we explore the fascinating periodical and print culture that made their names flourish during the nineteenth century and into our present. We will examine famous literary magazines and newspapers where major authors published and influenced the Victorian public, as well as the depths of the history of the book that bring us to consider the world of the circulating library and the “triple-decker” novel, the place of the railroad system in distributing popular fiction, and the grimmer and grimmer implications of publishing markets.

This course is designed in a workshop model. Students will pursue hands-on experiences with independent research into this world of Victorian writers and publishers via university and local community libraries and collections, which will include field trips to nearby collections.

Content Notice

As you will find, Victorian literature often explores deeply complicated and disturbing subject matter relevant to our contemporary moment. We will be reading works that feature topics such as classism, domestic violence, homophobia, misogyny, racism and racial slurs, religious prejudice (anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, etc.), sexual assault, suicidal ideation, xenophobia, and many other forms of violence. Please prepare yourself knowing this content will be part of our semester.

Primary Texts

Please purchase the following specific editions of the primary readings for our course, copies have also been reserved as part of “Course Reserves” for our class at the circulation desk of UF Library West. Instructors will provide you PDF copies in Canvas of your secondary readings.

- **Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (1850), Penguins Classics Edition**
 - ISBN: 978-0140439441
 - Project Gutenberg (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/766>)
 - LibriVox Audio Book (<https://librivox.org/david-copperfield-by-charles-dickens/>)
- **Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (1856), Norton Edition**
 - ISBN: 978-0393962987, we will read Books I and II
- **George Gissing, *New Grub Street* (1891), Oxford World’s Classics**
 - ISBN: 978-0198729181

- Project Gutenberg (<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1709/pg1709-images.html>)
- LibriVox Audio Book (<https://librivox.org/new-grub-street-by-george-gissing/>)

Charles Nodier (tr. Mabel Osgood Wright), *The Bibliomaniac*, (1894)

PDF in Canvas

Online via HathiTrust

Assignments

I. In-Class Work

As a research-intensive and workshop-structured course, students will be required to complete in-class written work and assignments regularly throughout the semester.

Due: by end of class sessions

Deliverable: variable by week

II. Letters from the Field

To stay engaged with our literary readings and to help you synthesize what you learn in class with your own personal interests, students will regularly submit reflective emails to both of their research mentors, Dr. Yan and Dr. Weijer, by 12pm on Wednesdays before class. Write the email in your role as a collector, critic, researcher, and/or writer in a professional manner meant for your intellectual mentors about specific ideas or interests that pique your curiosity from our most recent readings or class work. You may want to submit a close-reading, share some research that you've conducted, or write a more personal reflection on a point from class or one of our readings that means something to you. This assignment is meant to encourage you to be more descriptive, precise, and thoughtful in the way you examine the materials around you.

Due: at least 5 letters relevant to submission weeks, submitted Wednesdays by noon

Deliverable: at least 5 separate emails to both Dr. Yan and Dr. Weijer by end of semester

III. Curating a Dickensian Character

Each student will pick a character to follow during the course of their reading of *David Copperfield* and by the completion of Week 6 will submit and present to the class a small curated collection of textual materials inspired by the character they followed during their reading of the novel. Students may select between 3-5 materials that are inspired by their character and must write a 250-300 word exhibition description that explains the significance and relation of their curated collection as a reflection of their character's history or personality.

Due: Week 6, 9/6, by 12:50pm

Deliverable: a 250-300 word exhibition description, 3-5 curated materials

IV. Library Additions/Editions

During Week 9, students will take a field trip to the Alachua County Friends of the Library warehouse of booksale books or on a booksellers' site to find a text that UF

should include in their collections. Your task will be not only to find an appropriate and interesting text, but justify its purchase to our curator of the Rare Books (Dr. Weijer) as well as the Dean of University Libraries, Dean Judith Rusell. Compose a formal justification for purchase that includes information about its context and importance to the area and to teaching and learning at UF. Strong justifications will also identify other books or collections in the Libraries where the acquisition will fit.

Due: Week 12, 11/8, by 12:50pm

Deliverable: a 250-300 word reflection and edition assignment to Canvas

V. End of Term Creative Project

Make an artifact or write a polemic that speaks to the “future” of collecting, publishing, and/or writing.

Due: Week 16, 12/6

Deliverable: a 250-300 word reflection and artifact/polemic created by students on individual level

Contract Grading

Our course this semester will be evaluated via a contract grading system between the instructors and students, whereby students and instructors agree to how letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the meeting of course-determined criteria to meet students’ desired learning outcomes. We will create this contract together during the first 2 class sessions, deciding the parameters of assessment by updating the Assignment section of this syllabus and have a follow-up vote to update the contract mid-semester if additional changes need to be made. Students will write reflections alongside their assignments to detail how they have met the contractual requirements for the assignments this term and what they would adjust in their work.

Course Policies

All students must do the following to receive participation credit for this course:

1. **Maintain good communication.** Keep up-to-date with Announcements on our Canvas site and emails addressed to you directly through your school email account or Canvas inbox at least once a day. Ensure that you reach out and communicate with your instructors via their emails (raeyan@ufl.edu and n.weijer@ufl.edu) in case of emergency or any concern about the ability to meet goals or requirements in class as soon as possible. You are strongly encouraged to ask your instructors for help, including requests for clarity or repetition during class discussions or for help with time-management, research, writing, and/or understanding content outside of class via email and office hours.
2. **Please speak with your instructors if there are ways they can better accommodate your learning at the beginning of the semester or as soon as necessity arises.** A central goal for this course is to be accessible to you so that you may do your best work.

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and offers services for students who need disability support. Students interested in accommodations and additional resources should register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565 or [website](#)). Students may also contact the Dean of Students through U Matter, We Care (umatter@ufl.edu) in case of family and/or medical emergencies that may require prolonged absences over the semester.

3. **Request excused absences for medical and extenuating circumstances via email or through Zoom office hour meetings.** Do not come to class if you are sick or not feeling well. Your health and wellness, as well as the health of your classmates, university staff, and faculty, truly matters. Please rest at home and take health precautions such as using masks, social distancing, and washing hands frequently to avoid spreading transmissible diseases if applicable.
4. **You may take 3 unexcused absences during the semester without penalty to your final grade or need for explanation for your personal needs; however, please let both instructors know if you are safe should you miss class.** Professor Yan will check-in and offer help with planning for future absences via email after a fourth unexcused absence. Please keep in mind that students who miss more than 7 class sessions in a course fail that course according to university guidelines. University exemptions to this policy include absences in case of university-sponsored events, military duty, court-mandated responsibilities, and religious holidays. The official UF Attendance Policy can be found [here](#).
5. **Complete submission of assignments by stated deadlines and in specified format or ask for extensions before assigned deadlines.** You may freely ask for extensions on any assignment in advance of a deadline via email. Late assignments without prior request for extension will receive a flat, 10% grade deduction. Incomplete assignments submitted will receive partial credit appropriate to effort expended. Plagiarized assignments will receive a zero and be submitted to UF's Student Honor Court. Double-check submissions after uploading to Canvas; you are held responsible for ensuring submission of the complete, correct version of your assignment on time.
6. **Abide by [the UF Student Honor Code](#).** The Honor Code requires students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing assignments. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and misrepresentation. Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. Examples of plagiarism include presenting information from other resources as your own or citing phony sources or quotations to include in your assignments. Information on how to avoid plagiarism can be found on the Writing Studio's website [here](#). Assignments containing plagiarized materials will receive a zero and be submitted to the Student Honor Court.

The Honor Code defines plagiarism violations as follows:

Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- *Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.*

- *Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.*
 - *Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.*
 - *Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.*
7. **Abide by UF's policy regarding sexual discrimination and sexual harassment.** UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from gender discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. More about UF policies regarding harassment can be found [here](#).
 8. **Behave respectfully toward your classmates and instructor.** UF students come from very diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. This means that you will likely encounter ideas that may differ from your own. Relish this by showing respect. Disrespectful behavior in class will result in dismissal from the class period and will be counted as an absence.
 9. **Participate fully as much as positively in class discussion and in-class activities.** Finish all assigned readings and written assignments before class so that you can fully engage in class discussion and work. Participate actively in class discussions by asking questions, volunteering to read, drawing class attention to details, or offering possible interpretations for the objects and ideas we encounter. Students should participate in class discussion at least once a week.
 10. **Silence electronic devices and refrain from checking non-class related sites or materials during class.** Working on non-class related material or consistent distraction will result in your being marked absent and asked to leave the class.
 11. **Feel free to take a brief break during class** to get air, stretch, check a phone message, refocus, drink water, eat, use the restroom, etc. as needed without requesting formal leave. Be mindful not to distract fellow classmates too much in taking breaks and alert your professor to necessity for extensive breaks in case prolonged absence may give the professor concern for safety.
 12. **Save instructor comments and feedback for yourself.** It is your responsibility to collect and save copies of your assignments with professor feedback. This is especially important if you believe you will need a letter of recommendation, as you will need to provide samples of your writing with the grades and comments given for these assignments before your professor writes you a letter. Directions for how to find and download instructor feedback in Canvas can be found [here](#).
 13. **Complete online faculty evaluations at the end of the course.** These evaluations are conducted online [here](#).

Course Schedule

Week 1: An (Admittedly) Brief History of the Book Up Until the Nineteenth Century Part 1

Wednesday, 8/23

- Introductions

Week 2: An (Admittedly) Brief History of the Book Up Until the Nineteenth Century Part 2

Wednesday, 8/30

- Nodier, Charles “The Bibliomaniac”
- What does a library say? The building of private libraries and the rise of the gentleman collector

Week 3: Periodical Culture

Wednesday, 9/6

- Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Ch. I “I am born” through Ch. XV “I make another beginning”

Week 4: The Rise of Dickens Part 1

Wednesday, 9/13

- Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Ch. XVI “I am a New Boy in more sense than one” through Ch. XXXI “A greater loss”

Week 5: The Rise of Dickens Part 2

Wednesday, 9/20

- Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Ch. XXXII “The Beginning of a long Journey” through Ch XLVI “Intelligence”

Week 6: Dickens and His Collaborators (Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell)

Wednesday, 9/27

- Dickens, *David Copperfield*, Ch. CLVII “Martha” through Ch. LXIV “A last Retrospect”

Week 7: Workshop Week

Wednesday, 10/4

- Baldwin Day

Week 8: Building Libraries

Wednesday, 10/11

- thinking about American libraries / National libraries

Week 9: Our Warehouse

Wednesday, 10/18

- Visit the Friends of the Library Warehouse

Week 10: The Brownings and the World of Poetry Publishing
Wednesday, 10/25

- Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, Book 1

Week 11: The Brownings Collected
Wednesday, 11/1

- Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, Book 2
 - o talk about the Armstrong library at Baylor, Wellesley College's Library

Week 12: Workshop Week, Cheap Prints
Wednesday, 11/8

- TBD

Week 13: Writing as Profession, Writing as Job
Wednesday, 11/15

- definite half day of workshopping
- selections from Trollope, *An Autobiography*

Week 14: A Netherworld / Thanksgiving Break
Wednesday, 11/22

- Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Ch. I "A Man of his Day" through Ch. XIII "A Warning"

Week 15: Publish or Perish
Wednesday, 11/29

- Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Ch. XIV "Recruits" through Ch. XXV "A Fruitless Meeting"

Week 16: Publish or Perish
Wednesday, 12/6

- Gissing, *New Grub Street*, Ch. CCVI "Married Woman's Property" through Ch. XXXVII "Rewards"