

ENL 4303.8SG1: Major Figures in British Literature and Culture
Charles Dickens the Radical
Fall 2024

Professor Sean Grass / sean.grass@ufl.edu / (352) 294-2831

Course Meets: T 3:00-4:55; R 4:05-4:55, 0113 Matherly Hall
Office Location: 4332 Turlington Hall
Office Hours: TR 1:00-2:30 (in person) and by appointment
Required Texts: Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Penguin)
Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Books* (Oxford)
Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (Penguin)
Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford)

Course Overview

In 1937, on the eve of World War II and nearly seventy years after Charles Dickens's death, the playwright George Bernard Shaw wrote of Dickens's novel *Little Dorrit*, "[It] is a more seditious book than *Das Kapital*. All over Europe men and women are in prison for pamphlets and speeches which are to *Little Dorrit* as red pepper is to dynamite." Dickens, Shaw believed, had been a visionary and a radical, an indispensable threat to the ruling class. In many ways, Dickens had the opinions—about women, about race, about colonialism—that we would expect of a 19th-century man. But he also advocated tirelessly and ferociously for legal, economic, sanitary, and other major social reforms. He advocated for the poor, attacked American slavery, championed the cause of "fallen women," pushed for access to liberal education, and sneered at the snobbery that allowed England to believe it had and was the best of everything.

This class has two primary aims: first, studying the enormously popular and significant literature and journalism that Dickens wrote 1834-1870; and second, assessing the extent to which his advocacy for social and other transformations continues to shape our own culture and resonate in the twenty-first century. We will read three of Dickens's novels—*Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, and *Our Mutual Friend*—and his famous novella *A Christmas Carol*. We will also read widely from Dickens's journalism and letters and from biographies of the author. We want to understand the ways in which he was a "radical," and the ways in which he was not. And we want to understand how his concerns with the politics and social issues of the day impacted his art.

Course Objectives and Assessment Methods

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to: (1) express a complex understanding of Charles Dickens and his works by referring to a broad array of primary texts; (2) articulate the ways in which biographical, historical, and critical considerations influence our understanding of Dickens and his works (3) articulate the significance of Dickens's journalism and shorter works as complements to his classic novels; and (4) conduct a research project on Dickens that demonstrates a capacity to work with primary and secondary sources and unite them into a thesis-driven argument.

Assessment methods include: (1) class participation, by which I mean consistent participation in cogent, intelligent classrooms conversations about our primary and secondary readings and the ideas they engage; (2) short response essays, in which you express your immediate thoughts

about elements of the major novels we read; and (3) a final research-inclusive essay, in which you utilize historical, primary, and secondary sources to write a sophisticated study of one or more of Dickens's works.

Course Policies

Handouts and PDF Readings

Handouts, class lecture slides (when there are any), and PDF/electronic readings will be made available via Canvas, and PDF/electronic readings are also available via ARES (course reserves). Since I expect you to have handouts and readings with you during our class time, you must plan either to download and print copies to bring to class or bring an electronic device that will allow you to access them during our class time. Additional information about my policy on electronic devices appears below.

Email

For the purposes of our class, you must use your university-issued email account ending in ufl.edu. From time to time, I may need to contact the class as a whole (for instance, to send a newly updated handout or notify you if I'm ill) or I may need to contact you individually to discuss a particular concern. My only real means of contacting you outside of class time is via email, and that method *must be reliable*. Consequently, you are responsible for any messages I may send to your ufl.edu account and for observing all guidelines and information provided in those messages. Also, though I will certainly respond to any email messages I receive, there is no way to be sure that messages you send me from other accounts might not get filtered to "Junk." So I will be accountable *only* for those messages you send from your ufl.edu account.

Grades

Grades for this course depend upon three major areas: class participation (20%); three short essays (15% each); and a final research-inclusive essay (35%). We will discuss each formal assignment during class time, and I will give you appropriate guidance (e.g., handouts, review opportunities) regarding each.

For now, just know that I encourage you to complete them all to the best of your abilities. Your class participation score will depend upon your coming to class prepared with the reading and prepared also to help us make sense of it in discussion. The short essays will allow me to see and comment on your writing throughout the semester, allow you to work on and improve any trouble spots as you study the major novels, and generally prepare you to be very successful with the final essay at the end of the semester. Also, while there is no final exam, we will decide as a group whether we want to use our designated final exam time (we don't have to!) to get together for one last discussion about Dickens and his works.

Other policies related to grading are:

1. You must *complete* all three short essays and the final essay to be eligible to pass the course.
2. Late papers will be penalized one grade per day (i.e., a paper that would otherwise be a B+ will first become a B, then a B-, etc.). *However*, for one essay during the course of our semester, including the Final Essay, you may use what I call your "Oh \$&#@" card. This allows you to turn in your essay up to 72 hours late without penalty and without providing an explanation. *You must declare that you are using your "card" at the time*

that you submit the essay. Also, if you elect to use your “card” for the Final Essay, I might not be able to give you a full 72 hours of grace, depending upon when final semester grades are due to the university.

3. Papers turned in more than one week late—though you still *must turn them in to be eligible to pass the course*—will receive an F unless we have discussed, and I have approved, the late submission in advance, or there are extraordinary circumstances covered by the University’s policy on attendance.
4. Grades will be determined according to a standard scale (A=4.00, A-=3.67, etc.) and weighted and averaged according to the percentages given above.

Attendance

You should do what you can to attend every class. In English, we come together to discuss what we read because we begin from a basic assumption that these works of art do not tell us freely and openly exactly what they want us to know. Gathering in class to discuss—to struggle and sift for meaning—is at the heart of our work. So every minute of our class time is valuable. You will always “miss something” when you miss class, and with the exception of some mini-lectures or a few slides here and there, what you will miss cannot be recreated because we can’t always know where the discussion will go. You’re all going to think and say brilliant things. That said, COVID is still with us, to say nothing of RSV, influenza, monkeypox, polio, and god knows what else, and we don’t need to share *those* things.

So here is what I’ll say. I hope and expect to see you all, healthy and well, every class day. But if you feel sick, please stay at home. We want to see you, but we’d rather miss you temporarily than resent you for spreading some thousand-year plague. You can always catch me in office hours to discuss the reading or anything else if you feel left behind.

It’s also important to keep this in mind: while there will be no automatic penalty for particular numbers of absences, you obviously cannot participate in class discussions if you aren’t present, and missing our discussions could very well impact your ability to write effectively about the issues that come up in the novels. Missing class time can certainly, then, have a substantial effect on major elements of your grade, even in the absence of an automatic penalty. So come to class as frequently as you possibly can.

Academic Integrity

You should adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty, as described in UF’s [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#). We will discuss those standards, and we will review guidelines for identifying and citing sources as appropriate. *Ignorance* of academic integrity standards is not *innocence* of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism or other dishonesty—**intentional or not**—will result in an F for my course, a report to the Dean of Students, and possibly disciplinary action by the university. Your purpose in my class is to learn. You can’t do that if you are stealing others’ ideas. And, just so that you are aware, I expect the work that you turn in for this class to be HI-generated, not AI-generated. Use your own human intelligence. Abuses of ChatGPT and other engines, if detected, will be prosecuted to the utmost extent. Your writing for this course should reflect *your* thoughts and understanding, not an algorithm’s.

Classroom Civility and Access

My goal is to make this class accessible to all students without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, creed, sexual orientation, physical limitation, or any other factor not directly related to classroom performance. I also hope to cultivate a comfortable and lively classroom, where we can exchange ideas freely but with respect for all members of our classroom community. So let's try to observe these guidelines for good conduct:

1. Please voice your opinion on topics in class, but do so in a way that is sensitive to others. Do not interrupt someone else who is speaking. Don't direct derogatory or demeaning language at a person or group. When you disagree with me or a classmate, express your dissent in a way that fosters more dialogue. Besides learning about Dickens, we're also honing our skills at having civilized discussions and disagreements. Neither hate speech nor personal incivilities will be tolerated.
2. Please turn off cellular phones before class begins. No texting, TikTok-ing, tweeting, tundering, twitching, twaddling, twiggling, teeter-tottering, or other technological transgressing. You may use a laptop computer or tablet during class in lieu of printing and bringing hard copies of handouts and reading assignments ... BUT I reserve the right to bar you from using electronic devices in class if you cannot confine yourself to using them for legitimate purposes associated with our class.
3. Food and drink are welcome, but please use common sense. Noisy, crunchy foods and rustling wrappers really annoy everyone. Also, avoid disgusting foods such as monkey jowls, beets, or freshly ground kittens.
4. Please listen respectfully to whoever is speaking. Your classmates have awfully insightful things to say. I do, too, once in a while.

One final note: some of you may have a learning disability or physical limitation that, if unacknowledged, would prevent you from performing as well as you should in my class. I will do my utmost under UF guidelines to accommodate your particular learning needs, but you *must* first register with campus officials through the [Disability Resource Center](#). By university policy, I cannot accommodate undocumented learning issues. If you've already registered with the DRC, please come by and talk to me at your convenience about how I can assist and promote your learning.

Please let me know if you have concerns about these policies or needs of which I should be aware. Come by my office hours, or contact me for an appointment, which we could conduct in person or via Zoom. I am happy to speak with you about your concerns regarding Dickens, literature generally, or anything else on your mind.

Online Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Aug	22	Introduction: Charles Dickens the Radical
	27	Bad Dickens I: Race and Colonialism “ The Great Exhibition and the Little One ,” <i>Household Words</i> , 5 July 1851; “ The Noble Savage ,” <i>Household Words</i> , 11 June 1853; “ Lost Arctic Voyagers ,” <i>Household Words</i> , 2 December 1854; Dickens, [Letters on the Indian Uprising, from <i>The Letters of Charles Dickens</i> , Volume 8] (ARES)
	29	Bad Dickens II: Gender Claire Tomalin, <i>The Invisible Woman</i> , Chapter 7 (ARES); Dickens, <i>The Letters of Charles Dickens</i> , Volume 8, Appendices F and G (pp. 739-751) (ARES); “ Chapter IV: Telescopic Philanthropy ,” <i>Bleak House</i>
Sep	3	John Forster, <i>The Life of Charles Dickens</i> , Chapter 2 (ARES)
	5	Peter Ackroyd, <i>Dickens</i> , Chapter 4 (ARES); Claire Tomalin, <i>Charles Dickens: A Life</i> , Chapters 2-3 (ARES); Discussion of Short Essays
	10	“The Streets — Night,” <i>Sketches by Boz</i> (ARES); “Seven Dials,” <i>Sketches by Boz</i> (ARES); “A Visit to Newgate,” <i>Sketches by Boz</i> (ARES); “The Stroller’s Tale,” <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> (ARES)
	12	<i>Oliver Twist</i> , Book the First, Chapters 1-7
	17	<i>Oliver Twist</i> , Book the First, Chapters 8-22
	19	<i>Oliver Twist</i> , Book the Second, Chapters 1-7
	24	Short Essay #1 due
	26	<i>Oliver Twist</i> , Book the Second, Chapters 8-end; Discussion of Final Essay
Oct	1	“Appendix A: The Author’s Introduction to the Third Edition (1841),” <i>Oliver Twist</i> ; “ Author’s Preface to Nicholas Nickleby ”; “ Chapter 17: Slavery ,” <i>American Notes for General Circulation</i>
	3	Claire Tomalin, <i>Charles Dickens: A Life</i> , Chapter 10 (ARES); Introducing <i>A Christmas Carol</i>
	8	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>
	10	“Ignorance and Crime,” <i>Examiner</i> , 22 April 1848 (ARES); “Ignorance and Its Victims,” <i>Examiner</i> , 29 April 1848 (ARES); “Speech to the Metropolitan Sanitary Association,” 10 May 1851 (ARES); “ Home for Homeless Women ,” <i>Household Words</i> , 23 April 1853; “ Trading in Death ,” <i>Household Words</i> 27 November 1852
	15	<i>Hard Times</i> , Book the First, Chapters 1-8
	17	<i>Hard Times</i> , Book the First, Chapters 9-16
	22	Short Essay #2 due

	24	<i>Hard Times</i> , Book the Second, Chapters 1-12
_____	29	<i>Hard Times</i> , Book the Third, Chapters 1-end; James Fitzjames Stephen, " The License of Modern Novelists ," <i>Edinburgh Review</i> , July 1857; " Curious Misprint in the Edinburgh Review ," <i>Household Words</i> , 1 August 1857
	31	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the First, Chapters 1-5
_____	Nov 5	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the First, Chapters 6-17
	7	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the Second, Chapters 1-5
_____	12	Short Essay #3 due
	14	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the Second, Chapters 6-16, and Book the Third, Chapters, 1-6
_____	19	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the Third, Chapters 7-17
	21	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the Fourth, Chapters 1-5
_____	26	THANKSGIVING BREAK
	28	EAT TURKEY
_____	Dec 3	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i> , Book the Fourth, Chapters 6-end

Final Essay due Wednesday, December 11 by 5:00 p.m.