

Addiction and Obsession in Victorian Literature

Instructor: Claudia Mitchell

Term: Fall 2024

Email: claudiamitchell@ufl.edu

Schedule: MWF, Period 6

Office Hours: Monday, 3:30-5:30PM

Course Description:

In Victorian England, religious and moral values dominated public life and culture. Moralists and evangelicals sought to reform Victorian society, working to remove what they saw as great social evils—gambling, prostitution, drinking, and drug use. Deviation from dignity and propriety was pathologized; excessively emotional women were diagnosed as hysterical, and obsession with a single object was feared as “monomania.” At the same time, wealthy and middle-class men gambled away huge sums of money, there were thousands of sex workers in London alone, and opium dens and “gin palaces” overflowed with patrons. What did addiction and obsession signify in Victorian England? Why did the Victorians fear these preoccupations—and why do we? In this class, we will consider how the Victorians variously constructed passion, sensation, obsession, and addiction through key literature of the period, both popular and canonical. We will examine these novels for gothic, sentimental, sensational, and morally instructive elements, comparing their observations and statements on the society in which they arose to their historical and cultural contexts.

Required Texts:

- *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), George Eliot
- *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), Thomas De Quincey
- *Danesbury House* (1860), Mrs. Henry Wood
- *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Emily Brontë
- *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) Oscar Wilde

Supplementary Readings Provided:

- “Obsession—Beginning with the Brontes” by Kenneth King
- “Intellectual Disability” by Martha Stoddard Holmes
- *Obscure* Podcast with Michael Ian Black
- *The Anatomy of Drunkenness*, Robert Macnish
- *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* by Fred Kaplan

Learning Objectives:

This course is designed to provide an introduction to reading and writing about Victorian literature, building students' knowledge of and context for the literature of the period. The specific themes of obsession and addiction will be traced throughout the course as a guiding thread through analysis of a variety of canonical and popular Victorian novels. In this course, students will:

- Understand how to situate key Victorian texts within their specific cultural and historical contexts
- Develop critical examination and high-level reading comprehension
- Learn persuasive writing techniques
- Practice close reading
- Gather, assess, and apply textual evidence

Attendance Policy: This class will be primarily discussion-based, and attendance and participation are both extremely important to your success in the course. Attendance at each class session is expected with the exception of up to three unexcused absences, and any excused absences. Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy. Excused absences include those involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, and absences due to illness or injury (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class. More than three unexcused absences will result in a lowered course grade. There will be a separate participation grade that will be evaluated based on your level of active engagement in class. This grade will take into consideration your participation in class discussion, your attentiveness in lectures, and your engagement in class activities.

Late Policy: Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class. If a student is late, they are responsible for speaking with the instructor after class to ensure they were counted as present. Persistent tardiness distracts other students and the instructor and will affect the student's final participation grade.

Cell phone policy: Students must turn cell phones to silent before coming to class. Each time a student's cell phone rings or each time that a student texts during class, 1% will be deducted from that student's final grade.

Paper Format & Submission: Class assignments are to be submitted via Canvas, in .doc or .docx format. Papers in .pages format will not be accepted. Remember to convert your paper to .docx format before submitting it to Canvas if you are not writing in Microsoft Word.

Late Papers/ Assignments Policy: Work submitted late without a previously-arranged extension will receive an automatic lowered score of one letter grade per day late. All assignments are due via Canvas **by the due date and time stamp**. Your papers should be formatted according to MLA style and should be in 12-point Times New Roman font and double-spaced with 1-inch margins with the appropriate heading and pages numbered.

Canvas and Email: Be sure to check Canvas often for announcements, assignments, readings, and updates to the schedule. When emailing me, allow one business day for a response.

Academic Honesty:

Students are required to be honest in their coursework, may not use notes during quizzes or exams, and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students, and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course. ***On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'*** The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

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:

- a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
- b. 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.
- c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
- d. 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.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center (<https://disability.ufl.edu/>) for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

Whatever you face, it is my responsibility as an educator to work with you to achieve the learning outcomes of ENL 3122. If I am not meeting your learning needs, please see me directly about ways I can adjust the course requirements to your situation.

UF Grading Policies: For information on UF Grading policies, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Counseling and Mental Health Resources: Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/>).

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>.

Recording Policy: Class lectures may only be recorded for purposes defined by House Bill 233/Section 1004.097. A class lecture does not include academic exercises involving student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. A recording of a class lecture may not be published without the con-sent of the lecturer. Publish is defined as sharing, transmitting, circulating, distributing, or providing access to a Recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. A recording, or transcript of the recording, is considered to be published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper or leaflet. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

Grading Scale (& GPA equivalent):

A 100-93 (4.0)	A- 92-90 (3.67)	B+ 89-87 (3.33)	B 86-83 (3.0)	B- 82-80 (2.67)	C+ 79-77 (2.33)	C 76-73 (2.0)	C- 72-70 (1.67)	D+ 69-67 (1.33)	D 63-66 (1.0)	D- 62-60 (0.67)	E 59- (0)
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Note: A grade of C– is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Grading and Assessment Rubric

You should strive to excel in all three of these areas in each written assignment:

- 1) **Content:** How strong is your argument, development, and support? Does the paper offer a strong understanding of the text and is your content relevant to your argument/assignment? Do you provide adequate support, such as outside sources and textual evidence?
- 2) **Organization:** How well-structured are your paragraphs? Do your overall ideas flow well? Does the paper employ topic sentences? Do paragraphs support the thesis statement?
- 3) **Mechanics:** How frequently do you make errors in grammar, style, and spelling? Is the paper formatted correctly in MLA style?

A-level paper: Follows and meets the assignment requirements. The paper has a thesis statement that is clearly articulated, supported, and is analytical. Paragraphs build and support the argument of the paper. Examples and quotes from texts are used to support ideas and claims. Writing is clear and the paper uses varied sentence structure and diction. Paper is free of most grammatical and spelling errors. MLA format is correct. The paper should have a clear conclusion that does more than just summarize.

B-level paper: Follows and meets most of the assignment requirements. The paper includes a thesis, but wording may be unclear or weaker in argument. Paragraphs build on the argument, but do not necessarily offer strong connections between the text and argument. The paper does not analyze the text as in-depth as the “A” paper. Paper may have vague language, spelling and grammar errors, or superficial analysis. MLA formatting is correct. Paper includes a strong conclusion.

C-level paper: Follows and meets some of the assignment requirements. Does not have a fully developed or articulated thesis statement. It is descriptive rather than analytical. Paragraphs do not engage or defend the thesis statement. Writing is disorganized, but may include some analysis of text. Paper does not incorporate sufficient textual evidence to support the main argument. MLA format has some errors. Conclusion lacks clarity.

D-level and below paper: Does not meet assignment requirements. The paper lacks a developed thesis statement. Paper does not engage or defend key arguments. Does not successfully incorporate textual evidence. Paper includes disregard of proper grammar and spelling rules.

Writing is vague and includes errors and weak argumentation. Does not follow MLA format. Paper does not include a conclusion.

For Writing Support: Review all instructor comments on all graded work, and reach out to the instructor if there are criticisms or suggestions regarding your writing which you do not understand. For additional support, your instructor is available to you during office hours.

I strongly encourage students of all levels of writing ability to take advantage of the UWP Writing Studio! This is a free resource available to students to help you with your writing, at all stages of the drafting process from brainstorming to final edits. To schedule an appointment with a UWP Writing Studio tutor, visit this link: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/for-students/schedule-an-appointment/> Appointments are available both online and in-person.

Course Responsibilities and Grading:

As undergraduate students in an upper-division course, you are expected to complete reading assignments and prepare effectively for each class.

Your final grade in the course will be determined as follows:

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| • Discussion Board Posts | 30% |
| • Film Adaptation Assignment | 15% |
| • Literature Review | 10% |
| • Final Paper “Pitch” presentation | 5% |
| • Final Paper | 25% |
| • Participation & Activities | 15% |

1. Critical Responses (500 words each, 2500 total) 60*5 = 300 points [Due: Various]

For each major primary text, students are required to write a brief (500 word) response to the week's reading. These responses must be uploaded to our course Canvas discussion board BEFORE class the day on which they are due.

These responses raise either interpretive or critical questions concerned with textual meaning. They comment on themes, figurative language and symbolism within the narrative. They also may make judgments regarding the period, history, politics and ethical questions that are relevant to the text. The open-endedness of interpretive and critical responses indicates that there may well be neither simply "right" nor simply "wrong" answers; the success of a response is based on the evidence and reasoning students employ to support their analysis and judgment. **Each discussion board post must include at least one quotation from the text incorporated into**

the discussion. This will help you to practice close reading, integrating quotes within an argument, and selecting quotations most relevant to the themes you seek to explore within a text.

Students are also expected to comment on their peer's responses at least 5 times across the semester; completion of these comments will be included in the student's Participation grade.

2. Adaptation Assignment: 750 words, 150 points

For this assignment, you will select one of the novels we have read for this class, and imagine how it might be adapted to a modern setting as a film, series, audio drama, music video, series of Instagram posts, or other modern media. How might a characters' values, traits, and manners of speech be translated to a modern setting? How would you alter plot points, settings, and social situations to create an analogous story set in the year 2024? Your creative response may take the form of either a 750-word essay describing your adaptation, or a creative production of the adaptation accompanied by a 250-word artist's statement. For example, this creative option might take the form of: a screenplay complete with stage directions, set descriptions, and character profiles of a key scene in the novel; a short video enacting a scene or character monologue; an Instagram account with at least 15 posts posted by one of the novel's characters.

3. Literature Review: 1000 words, 100 points

For this assignment, students will choose one text we have read in this course, and produce a well-developed literature review explicating the scholarly conversation surrounding that text. This paper may take the form of a critical history (an explanation of how scholars and literary critics have approached and responded to the text over time), or a focused analysis of a particular point, character, scene, or symbol in the text on which scholars have varying or clashing opinions. This paper may be used as "scaffolding," to aid students in building towards the final research paper, or may be an independent literature review on a different text. At least **five** scholarly sources must be used.

4. Final Paper: 2500 words, 250 points; Pitch Presentation 50 points

To synthesize what you have learned during the semester, you will submit a final paper at the end of the course. Choose one or more of the novels we have read in this class, and create a thesis-driven paper analyzing the themes in the text which interest you. This assignment is fairly open-ended, but you must cite at least **four** secondary sources, and construct a persuasive argument using textual evidence. You will "pitch" your paper topics to me and your classmates during Week 11/12 of the semester.

4. Attendance and Participation: 150 points

This class will be primarily discussion-based, and attendance and participation are both extremely important to your success in the course. Attendance at each class session is required and expected, with the exception of up to three unexcused absences, and any excused absences. Excused absences include those involving university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band, religious holidays, and absences due to illness or injury with a doctor's note. There will be a separate participation grade that will be evaluated based on your level of active engagement in class. This grade will take into consideration your participation in class discussion, your attentiveness in lectures, and your engagement in class activities.

Throughout class, students will participate in various activities guided by the instructor. These may take the form of short prepared questions, in-class writing, interactive activities such as on-the-board brainstorming, or discussions. These activities will be designed to help students engage with the required material in structured hands-on learning, and to ensure students are progressing effectively through readings and working through the questions posed by the course. Participation will be noted and recorded by instructor throughout the semester, and will be graded.

Graded in-class activities will be included as part of the participation grade.

Responses to discussion board posts will also be included in the participation grade. For these, students are expected to reply to a classmate's discussion board post at least 5 times throughout the semester—so, roughly once per discussion board, though students may choose to respond to two classmates on one board, but none on another, and so on, as long as 5 total comments have been posted by the semester's end.

"Hurricane" Policy:

Here in Florida, we sometimes cancel classes or postpone assignments during hurricane season in the event of severe weather. In these instances, the University and instructors recognize that personal health and safety comes first—meaning, before classwork. Likewise, I understand that sometimes students will experience extenuating circumstances that prevent them from attending class or submitting assignments on time—our own personal hurricanes. In addition to the allowed three unexcused absences, students in this class may submit to me a "hurricane policy request" once during the semester. In response to this request, I will grant a one-time, no-questions-asked excused absence and/or assignment extension. Additional excused absences and extension requests will require documentation.

Academic Honesty:

As a University of Florida student, your performance is governed by the UF Student Honor Code, (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>). The Honor Code requires Florida students to neither give nor receive unauthorized aid in completing all assignments. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, bribery, and misrepresentation, all defined in detail at the above site.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the Student Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits and defines plagiarism as follows:

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

- 1. Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.**
- 2. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.**

(University of Florida, Student Honor Code, 8, October, 2013)

University of Florida students are responsible for reading, understanding, and abiding by the entire Student Honor Code. Instances of plagiarism constitute dishonesty and a failure to comply with the scholarly requirements of this course. You commit plagiarism when you present the ideas or words of someone else as your own. If you are unsure if what you are doing is considered academic dishonesty, ask your instructor before turning in an assignment. Each student's work may be tested for its originality against a wide variety of databases by anti-plagiarism sites to which the University subscribes, and negative reports from such sites may constitute proof of plagiarism. Some (but not all!) examples of plagiarism are copying-and-pasting anything from the Internet without proper quotations and attributive tags, using work you have turned in to other classes without permission from the instructor, and insufficient paraphrasing.

If you commit academic dishonesty, you will receive a zero for the assignment, and the instructor will submit the incident to the Dean of Students Office as an Honor Code violation. Punishments can vary, but the instructor will recommend failing the course.

Class Schedule

Students should note that the schedule is a guideline and is subject to change. It is the students' responsibility to review the Canvas schedule to keep up-to-date with course changes.

UNIT 1 – *Perspectives on Addiction: Personal, Medical, Political*

1/8-1/12

WEEK 1 *Introduction: The Victorian View of Addiction*

Monday: Introducing Syllabus & Class Expectations

Wednesday: Constructing our own definitions of obsession and addiction; *The Anatomy of Drunkenness*, Chapters: Preliminary Observations, Causes of Drunkenness, Phenomena of Drunkenness, Drunkenness Modified by Temperament (p.1-33)

Friday: *The Anatomy of Drunkenness*, Chapters: Physiology of Drunkenness, Method of Curing the Fit of Drunkenness (p. 85-102); Spontaneous Combustion of Drunkards, Drunkenness Judicially Considered, Method of Curing the Habit of Drunkenness, Temperance Societies, Advice to Inveterate Drunkards (p.139-198)

1/15-1/19

WEEK 2

Modern Medical View of Addiction

Monday: NO CLASS

Wednesday: Screening *Pleasure Unwoven*; Begin *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*

Friday: Screening *Pleasure Unwoven*

1/22-1/26

WEEK 3

A Personal Account- The First Addiction Memoir

Monday: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* P. 1-39; In-class: The Addiction Memoir as Genre and the impact of Thomas De Quincey

Wednesday: *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* p.40-88; In-class: Opium's role in Victorian life; **DISCUSSION BOARD POST ON EITHER CONFESSIONS OR ANATOMY OF DRUNKENNESS DUE 1/24**

Friday: *Danesbury House* – Front Matter & Ch. 1-4; In-class: Examples of other Temperance fiction

UNIT II – *Beginning with the Drunks: Alcoholism, Victorian Drinking, and The Temperance Movement*

1/29-2/2

WEEK 4

The Temperance Novel & The Temperance Movement

Monday: *Danesbury House* Ch. 5-8; In-class: Mrs. Henry (Ellen) Wood and The Women's Christian Temperance Union

Wednesday: *Danesbury House* Ch. 9-12

Friday: NO CLASS; Instructor Absence; Continue reading *Danesbury House*

2/5-2/9

WEEK 5

The Temperance Movement Continued

Monday: *Danesbury House* Ch. 13-17; In-Class: The Washingtonians

Wednesday: *Danesbury House* Ch. 18-21; In-Class: Alcoholics Anonymous vs. the Temperance Movement

Friday: *Danesbury House* Ch. 22-26; In-Class: Comparing modern & Victorian conceptions of alcoholism, addiction, and the disease model; **DANESBURY HOUSE DISCUSSION BOARD POST DUE 2/9**

UNIT III – Victorian Preoccupations with Obsession and Monomania

2/12-2/16

WEEK 6

Wuthering Heights- The Ambivalent Frame Tale

Monday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 1, Ch. 1-3; In-class: The Victorian Novel and the Victorian Reader

Wednesday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 1, Ch. 4-7;
Required Listening: *Obscure with Michael Ian Black* Season 3, Episode 5 "Michael tries to make it through a *Wuthering Heights* dream sequence" (28 minutes);
Obscure Season 3, Episode 7 "An Old Pot of Coffee" (25 minutes)

Friday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 1, Ch. 8-11

2/19-2/23

WEEK 7

Wuthering Heights

Monday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 1, Ch. 12-14; In-class: Introducing the Midterm Assignment

Wednesday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 2, Ch. 1-4

Friday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 2, Ch. 5-8

2/26-3/1

WEEK 8

Wuthering Heights

Monday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 2, Ch. 9-11; In-class: Midterm Work

Wednesday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 2, Ch. 13-16

Friday: *Wuthering Heights* Vol. 2, Ch. 17-20; **WUTHERING HEIGHTS DISCUSSION BOARD POST DUE 3/1**

3/4-3/8

WEEK 9

Student Choice & Midterms

Monday: Screening *Wuthering Heights*

Wednesday: Screening *Wuthering Heights*

Friday: Work on Midterms

MIDTERM ADAPTATION ASSIGNMENT DUE 3/10

SPRING BREAK 3/11-3/15; NO CLASS

3/18-3/22

WEEK 10

Picture of Dorian Gray- Obsessions upon Obsessions, Addictions upon Addictions

Monday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Preface-Ch.3

Wednesday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 4-6

Friday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 7-9

3/25-3/29

WEEK 11

Picture of Dorian Gray- Hedonism in the Victorian Eye

Monday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 10-12

Wednesday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 13-15

Friday: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 16-18

4/1-4/5
WEEK 12

Begin Janet's Repentance

Monday: *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Ch. 19-20; **DORIAN GRAY DISCUSSION BOARD POST DUE 4/1**

Wednesday: "Janet's Repentance," Ch. 1-4 (Begins p. 185 of *Scenes of Clerical Life*)

Friday: "Janet's Repentance," Ch. 5-9
LITERATURE REVIEW PAPER DUE 4/7

4/8-4/12
WEEK 13

Continue Janet's Repentance

Monday: "Janet's Repentance," Ch. 10-14

Wednesday: "Janet's Repentance," Ch. 15-21

Friday: "Janet's Repentance," Ch. 22-28; **JANET'S REPENTANCE DISCUSSION BOARD POST DUE 4/12**

4/15-4/19
WEEK 14

Final Paper Work & Research Methods

Monday: Final Paper Work

Wednesday: Final Paper Work

Friday: Final Paper Work

4/22-4/24

WEEK 15

Final Papers

Monday: Final Paper Work

Wednesday: Class Celebration

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, 4/26