

LIT 4483.8SG2: Issues and Methods in Cultural Studies
Victorians' Secrets
Fall 2024

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Course Meets: T 5:10-6:00; R 5:10-7:05, 0009 Matherly Hall
Office Location: 4332 Turlington Hall
Office Hours: TR 1:00-2:30 (in person) and by appointment
Required Texts: *The Norton Anthology of British Literature, Volume E: The Victorian Age*
(11th edition)
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Penguin)
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Penguin)
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Penguin)

Course Overview

This course will introduce you to the major social, cultural, and literary events of the Victorian period in England and ask you to consider how the study of culture can overlap and inform the study of literature. As Dickens wrote in *A Tale of Two Cities*, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times”—a remark that really is true of British life 1837-1901, the long period during which Queen Victoria ruled. The Victorians gave us Dickens and Darwin, railroads and public schools, and key expansions of voting rights, personal freedoms, literacy, and social opportunity. They also lived at a time when rapid urbanization and industrialization were eroding England’s old agrarian society and driving the lower classes to poverty, crime, and despair. Literature is a window upon this complicated world, and we shall use our texts to see into Victorians’ secrets: the material, mental, sexual, and other truths that shaped the Victorian age.

To that end, we will read from several authors this semester: novelists Charles Dickens, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Oscar Wilde; poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Coventry Patmore, Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins; and a number of journalists and other social commentators, from Henry Mayhew and Matthew Arnold to Sarah Stickney Ellis and Olive Schreiner. We will also read from Daniel Pool’s *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* and orient some assignments around significant historical moments. By the end of the term, we shall arrive at an excellent understanding of Victorian literature and culture, and we may even discover that the Victorians’ world looks startlingly like our own.

Course Objectives and Assessment Methods

Students who complete this course successfully will: (1) demonstrate basic knowledge of required readings for the course, including Victorian fiction, poetry, non-fiction prose, and cultural/historical studies of Victorian England; (2) understand and be able to discuss the historical and cultural milieu of Victorian England and the way in which conditions shaped the literature of the age; (3) understand and be able to discuss Victorian fiction, poetry, and non-fiction prose, with a particular emphasis upon the way in which the literature and our work on Victorian history/culture might be woven into a coherent portrait of the age; (4) speak and write coherently, clearly, and intelligently about Victorian literature and culture, especially by showing an ability to interpret Victorian texts with particular attention to the historical/cultural contexts that helped to shape them.

Assessment methods for this course will include: (1) participation in cogent, intelligent classroom conversation about Victorian literature and culture; (2) two short presentations on Victorian historical/cultural events, selected from a premade list of appropriate topics; (3) an essay based upon one of these history presentations; and (4) a final essay connecting one or more of the literary works we have studied to a significant Victorian cultural issue.

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%); two short history presentations (15% each); an essay based upon one of those presentations (20%); and a final essay combining our study of literature and our study of culture (30%). 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.

Other policies related to grading are:

1. You must *complete* both presentations and both essays 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 cultural studies and Victorian England, 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 Victorian literature and culture, 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: culture, cultural studies, and the Victorians
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- 27 Hua Hsu, "Stuart Hall and the Rise of Cultural Studies," *New Yorker*, July 17, 2017; "Introduction" to the *Norton Anthology* (pp. 3-25); Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew*, "The Basics" (pp. 11-31), "The Public World" (pp. 50-56, 72-127), and "The Private World" (pp. 180-196) (ARES)
- 29 Thomas Carlyle, from *Signs of the Times* (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 88-97); Matthew Arnold, from *Culture and Anarchy* (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 585-592); Walter Pater, from *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 712-719)
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- Sep 3 Children's Employment Commission Report (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 314-316)
- 5 Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "The Cry of the Children" (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 169-172); **Discussion of the History Presentations**
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- 10 Sarah Stickney Ellis, from *The Women of England* (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 512-514); Coventry Patmore, from "The Angel in the House" (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 515-516)
- 12 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, Volume I, Chapters 1-7; **Discussion of the History Essay**
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- 17 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, Volume I, Chapters 8-19 and Volume II, Chapters 1-3
- 19 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, Volume II, Chapters 4-9
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- 24 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, Volume II, Chapters 10-13 and Volume III, Chapters 1-5
- 26 Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, Volume III, Chapters 6-end; Robert Browning, "Porphyria's Lover" and "My Last Duchess" (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 409-410, 413-414)
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- Oct 1 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Chapters 1-4
- 3 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Chapters 5-9
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- 8 Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Chapters 10-end
- 10 Lord Alfred Douglas, from "Two Loves" (*Norton Anthology*, p. 537); Oscar Wilde, from *De Profundis* (*Norton Anthology*, pp. 841-844); **Discussion of the Final Essay**
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- 15 "Slavery, Abolition, and the Plantation System" (including Mary Prince, Thomas Carlyle, and John Stuart Mill, *Norton Anthology*, pp. 39-50); "India: 'The Jewel in the Crown'" (including Thomas Babington Macauley, William Howard Russell, and T.N. Mukharji, *Norton Anthology*, pp. 57-64 and 66-69); "Settler

		Colonialism” (including Susanna Moodie, Anthony Trollope, and Olive Schreiner, <i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 69-77); “British Isles” (including Lady Jane Francesca Wilde, <i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 79-81)
17		Friedrich Engels, from <i>The Condition of the Working Class in England</i> (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 544-559); Henry Mayhew, from <i>London Labour and the London Poor</i> (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 331-342); Charles Darwin, from <i>On the Origin of Species</i> (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 285-292); Leonard Huxley, “The [Thomas] Huxley – Wilberforce Debate at Oxford” (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 304-308)
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	21	History Essay due
	22	Christina Rossetti, “Goblin Market” (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , pp. 641-653)
	24	Gerard Manley Hopkins, “As kingfishers catch fire” (<i>Norton Anthology</i> , p. 732); Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 1-3
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	29	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 4-10
	31	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 11-13
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Nov	5	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 14-22
	7	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 23-26
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	12	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 27-38
	14	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 39-44
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	19	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 45-55
	21	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 56-59
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	26	THANKSGIVING BREAK
	28	EAT TURKEY
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Dec	3	Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , Chapters 60-end

Final Essay due on Thursday, December 12 by 7:30 p.m.