

Fall/Winter 2017-2018

AP/EN 3550 6.0A (Y)

The Victorians

Course Director:

John Bell
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Delivery Format:

Fully Online

Time:

NA

Description:

This course introduces students to Victorian literature and culture through a range of forms and genres. The texts engage with some of the cultural, political, scientific, and imperial issues dominating the period between the 1830s and 1901.

We shall consider Victorian developments in non-fiction, poetry, fiction, and drama. The tensions between humour (much valued by the Victorians) and Victorian earnestness will be examined in the development of Victorian literature. We shall examine Victorian literature's complex relationship with the previous, Romantic period; major achievement in the novel by the Brontës, Dickens, and Eliot, and the later development of the Victorian short story; the initial impact of the poets Tennyson, Barrett Browning, and Browning, followed by the development of the Pre-Raphaelite poets; the late Victorian development of the Aesthetic and Decadent movements; and the efflorescence of drama very late in the Victorian period with Wilde and Shaw. And we shall consider issues of the canon in Victorian literature. As well we shall consider how the Victorian belief in progress gave rise to the desire for literature to contain social criticism to lead to progressive reform and how this belief in progress was also a response to a fear of revolution. And we shall consider how by mid or late Victorian period mainstream culture grew more complacent and thus there was more of a cultural demand for quietism or even national boosterism in literature. Among the issues to be considered in relation to social progress and complacency in Victorian culture are urbanization, the ascension to political power of capitalism, industrialization, and class conflict.

We shall consider how the contested field of gender and women's position in Victorian society are reflected in literature of the period. Victorian representations of sexualities shall be considered, and—particularly in this respect—we shall consider the effects of commercial and governmental censorship on Victorian literature. As well, we shall consider how religious controversies of the period, and scientific advances such as Darwinism are reflected in Victorian literature.

Category:

C

Area:

4.3

Period:

2

Historical Requirement:

Period II (1700-1900)

Requirements:

2 1000-word essays (15% each); 2500-word essay (19%)--one of the three essays must be on a research topic; participation in discussion forums (best 10 out of 17 @ 3% each=30%); forum discussion question (3%); January exam (9%); final exam (9%)

Reading List:

(in approximate order of study):

selections from Joseph Black et al. eds. *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: Volume 5: The Victorian Era* 2nd edition (Broadview)

Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (NYU Press)

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Norton Critical)

Elizabeth Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (Oxford)

Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Oxford)

George Eliot, *Silas Marner* (Oxford)

Robert Smythe Hichens, *The Green Carnation* , pdf on course website

Oscar Wilde “*De Profundis*” from *De Profundis and Other Prison Writings* (Penguin)

George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* , pdf on course website

Also posted on the course website will be short works of prose and poetry by

Charles Dickens, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Rudyard Kipling, Amy Levy,

Michael Field, Ernest Dowson, Thomas Hardy, and A. E. Housman

Open To:

Yr3 & Yr4