



ENGL435: Advanced Literary
Studies
Winter term, 2011

Victorian Secrets

Dramas of Sex,
Race, & Class
in the British
Fin-de-siècle

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Winter Office Hours:
Monday 1 – 3 p.m.
Tuesday/Thursday: 10 – 12 p.m.

(when our seminar does not meet)

About the Course

This course is an advanced seminar in literary studies that will look closely at the culture of the final fifteen years of the 19th century in Britain, a time of tremendous cultural anxiety in which the shadow side of the Victorian era made itself particularly apparent. We'll use as lenses three pivotal cultural "events" of this era: The first is the so-called "Jack the Ripper" murders of 1888—the most famous unsolved crimes in history, precipitating a furious discussion of poverty, ethnicity, and sexuality in urban life. The second is the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, representing the emergence of "homosexuality" in Western legal, psycho-scientific, and social discourses. And the third is the 1897 publication of *Dracula*—the grand entrance of the vampire on the Western cultural stage. Through these sensational events and the literature surrounding them, we will study the intersections of class, race, gender, and sexuality in the waning years of the period, always tracing the long-term imprint of our unholy trinity of events on modern and post-modern culture.

Required Texts

- Bram Stoker, Dracula (Norton Critical Edition required)
- R. L. Stevenson, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde (Broadview critical edition required)
- Oscar Wilde, The Major Works (Oxford U. Press edition suggested; alternate editions of individual works acceptable)
- Elaine Showalter, Sexual Anarchy: Gender & Culture at the Fin de Siècle
- Coursepack, available in the bookstore

In addition, there will be assignments from the following websites:

- <http://www.casebook.org/index.html><http://www.casebook.org/index.html> -- a very comprehensive site on the Ripper murders
- <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/frivals/wilde/wilde.htm> -- a scholarly site on the trials of Oscar Wilde
- <http://www.attackingthediabol.co.uk/pmg/tribute/index.php> -- a site devoted to the work of pioneering Victorian journalist W. T. Stead

Requirements

% of grade

At least one TYPED reading/discussion question on at least ONE of the required readings for each class period, not including guest lecture, library session, or film viewings. These are graded P/F, with a plus next to the P for particularly thoughtful or provocative questions. Questions are due at the start of class and are not accepted late. Questions that bridge readings and/or films are especially encouraged!

Attendance at seven Sunday-evening film viewings throughout the term. Friends are welcome! This attendance is graded P/F.

Short essays, 2-3 pp. (2 @ 15%) 30%

Research Project on some aspect of the course “territory.” 50%
 Topics will be developed at midterm and the research process highly structured so that you will receive advice, feedback, and points for each step along the way. The products will be a 10-20-page research essay and a presentation to the seminar, graded separately. PLEASE NOTE: Research presentations are scheduled during our official exam period on Tuesday, March 15. Please make your spring-break travel plans accordingly.

Seminar participation: 20%
 This grade will cover attendance, punctuality, discussion leadership as assigned, and contribution to our discussions and other activities. You’ll receive a non-binding midterm participation grade for information purposes. (See rubrics, p. 4)

Course Goals

- to turn the classroom into an interdependent, mutually respectful and mutually encouraging working community as quickly as possible
- to gain a much deeper sense of the relationship between literature and cultural history
- to gain a clearer view of the roots of our own contemporary culture
- to become more proficient in analyzing cultural texts (literary and otherwise) through the lenses of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity.
- to gain proficiency in doing independent and collaborative research resulting in a smoothly written, engaging research essay, using MLA citation form correctly
- to improve skills of critical reading, writing, and discussion
- to wallow happily together in the muck on the seamy side of Victorian England!

Policies

Practically all of my course policies derive from the immortal words (or rather, letters) of Aretha Franklin: R-E-S-P-E-C-T. Respect for oneself, for course material and the learning process, for other human beings, and for the physical environment.

- Cell phones are not permitted to be operated in class. Period.
- Punctuality: Repeated lateness is an insult to everybody who's on time and will count as an absence.
- Unannounced Departures: On Mondays and Wednesdays we will have a break. No other breaks or departures from class are permitted except in cases of dire physical emergency.
- Academic Honesty: This course operates under the college Honor Code, and plagiarism will be prosecuted. It is your obligation to know what sources are acceptable and how to use them; it is my obligation to clarify any confusion or misunderstandings you bring to me.
- Disabilities: It's my obligation and my desire to make my courses accessible and manageable for all students. If you have a physical or learning disability that may affect your performance in or enjoyment of the course, I should be notified by the Dean of Students' office. I'm happy to make arrangements to help you do your best.
- Deadlines: Short papers will be downgraded by 1/3 for each day they are late, INCLUDING the first day. So if they come in after class, they lose 1/3 of a grade. Extensions are not possible for these papers, except for official emergency where I am notified by the college. Discussion questions and the final research paper are NOT accepted late. All preliminary submissions in the research process will count in the final grade, so if they are late, the final grade will suffer.

Seminar Participation: A Grading Rubric

A = You attend each class, arriving on time and fully prepared. You contribute regularly, intelligently, and helpfully to the discussion, including encouraging other students and responding to their comments. You often move the discussion or class activity forward with your energy, and you actively work to create community.

One of the following will lower this grade to a B. In combination, they will lower it further:

- Late arrivals, more than once.
- Absences (from class or film screenings)
- Sporadic or minimal participation
- Non-participation, passivity
- Destructive participation (disrespect for the other members of the seminar, for the process, or for the texts)
- Obvious lack of preparedness
- Departure from class for any reason other than severe illness
- Cell phone use in class

Essays: A Grading Rubric

An essay that receives an A grade has the following components:

- It directly addresses the assignment and meets its requirements
- Writing is clear and fluent: it is readable without a lot of struggle.
- Essay is tightly organized: paragraphs are unified by topic sentences; transitions are smooth, larger and smaller topic units within the paper are clearly identified and easily followed.
- Diction is formal but natural: it sounds like a human voice, but “on its best behavior,” as A. Mozina puts it. It avoids Latinate words, abstraction, passive voice, and convoluted syntax, which are hallmarks of bad academic writing.
- Clear thesis unifies the essay and defines its argument.
- Essay demonstrates original thinking, synthesis of ideas or texts, and/or imaginative readings. It goes beyond the obvious, the minimal, and the safe.
- There are no major or repeated grammar errors
- There is no pattern of mechanical errors (quotation format, titles punctuation, etc.)
- Quotations from primary or secondary sources are used appropriately and integrated smoothly.
- If secondary sources are used, they pertain and contribute to the argument of the paper, and they are correctly cited
- Essay mechanical requirements are met: margins, font size, title, pagination

If one of these is missing, the essay is likely to get a B. There is a lot of room in my B category, but some deficiencies, like lack of a comprehensive thesis or failure to meet the terms of the assignment, are more serious than others and may move an essay into the C range. Essays that don't meet several of these criteria are likely to get C's or D's.

Fill Me In

Your Name: _____ Phone Number (optional): _____

Your major: _____ Minor/concentration, if any: _____

Literature courses you've taken at K or another college (in English or another language):

In what college courses have you written a research paper?

What do you want most from this course?

What worries or anxieties, if any, do you have about it?

What else would you like me to know about you? (Use the reverse)