

Enlightenment to Modernism: British Literature, 1780-1914
Spring 2010

Prof. Stephanie Kuduk Weiner
Downey House #300; sweiner@wesleyan.edu

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to modern British literature and culture—in other words, the “big picture.” We begin with the emergence in the late 18th century of two new literary forms with substantial debts to the Enlightenment—the novel and Romantic poetry—and trace the development of these genres in the hands of later writers. Central themes include changing concepts of personhood; the relation between science, nature, and faith; the politics of class and gender; the tension between the language of everyday life and the language of literature; and the role of art in a rapidly changing, chaotic, and often exhilarating modern world.

Materials: Our books, available at the campus bookstore, are Jane Austen, *Emma*; George Eliot, *Middlemarch*; E. M. Forster, *Howards End*; and *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. A few additional materials are available in the Course Reader, posted to our Blackboard site.

Course Requirements: class participation; ten short, focused essays; final paper.

The short essays should be one page, single-spaced explorations of literary form and technique in one or more texts on the syllabus for that week. (You may choose which week you'd like to take a “bye”.) You may choose which text(s) to address, and you may address any aspect or topic you like. What is important is that you engage with the particular ways in which the text does what it does. Try to engage as carefully and minutely as you can with the text on the page rather than with the broad themes or issues it raises. You will illuminate those themes and issues by demonstrating *how* they are conveyed, word by word, in punctuation marks, line breaks, snippets of dialogue, and so on. I would suggest focusing your essay on a few lines, but it would also be a reasonable approach to trace a single dynamic over the course of a longer text or across multiple texts.

The final paper is a chance to synthesize and draw connections among the many works we will have read. The topic and approach are up to you. Papers should be 5-10 pages, double-spaced.

Course Outline:

Week One

“The New Realistic Novel”

- Fielding, Book I from *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (Course Reader [CR])
- Richardson, “Preface” and Letters I-III from *Clarissa* (CR)
- Johnson, “The New Realistic Novel” (CR)

The Romantic lyric

- Wordsworth, introduction (always read author headnotes!), “Tintern Abbey,” and *The Prelude* Book Twelfth, l. 204-335 and Book Fourteenth, l. 1-129
- Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight,” “The Eolian Harp”
- Keats, “Ode to a Nightingale”

Week Two

Reason, imagination, and emotion

- Blake, “There Is No Natural Religion [a]”, “There Is No Natural Religion [b]”
- Wordsworth, [“Emotion Recollected in Tranquility”] from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*
- Coleridge, “This Lime-Tree Bower, My Prison”
- Shelley, first excerpt from “A Defence of Poetry” (up to the * * * on p. 844)
- Keats, “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles,” “Ode on Melancholy,” “To Autumn,” letters to Bailey (Nov. 22, 1817), to George and Thomas Keats (Dec. 21, 27?, 1817), to Woodhouse (Oct. 27, 1818)
- *Emma*, vol. 1, ch. 1-11

Transparent and literary language

- Locke, “Of the Remedies of the foregoing Imperfections and Abuses [of words],” from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (CR)
- *Emma*, vol. 1, ch. 12-18
- Wordsworth, “We are Seven,” [The Subject and Language of Poetry] from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*
- Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner”

Week Three

The gentleman and the lady

- *Emma*, vol. 2 (ch. 19-36)
- Wordsworth, [“What Is a Poet?”] from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*
- Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Society

- *Emma*, vol. 3, ch. 1-9 (ch. 37-45)
- Wordsworth, “The Ruined Cottage,” “Michael”

Week Four

Narration, ethics, and aesthetics

- *Emma*, vol. 3, ch. 10-19 (ch. 45-55)

Eliot and Victorian realism

- Dickens, “A Visit to Newgate”
- Dickens, “The Streets: Night” from *Sketches by Boz* (CR)
- Introduction to “Industrialism: Progress or Decline?” section
- Introduction to The Children’s Employment Commission excerpts and from the “First Report of the Commissioners, Mines”
- Mayhew, from *London Labour and the London Poor*
- Chew, “A Living Wage for Factory Girls at Crewe”
- Eliot, excerpt from *Adam Bede* (CR)
- Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Prelude and book 1

Week Five

Women and/in print

- Eliot, “Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft” and from “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists”
- *Middlemarch*, book 2

The woman question

- Christina Rossetti, “In an Artist’s Studio”
- Mill, from Chapter 1 of *The Subjection of Women*
- Introduction to “The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate about Gender” section
- All selections from “The ‘Woman Question’” *except* “The Great Social Evil”
- *Middlemarch*, book 3

Week Six

Victorian science and religion

- *Middlemarch*, book 4-5
- Clare, [Mouse’s Nest], “The Nightingale’s Nest”
- Tennyson, *In Memoriam* introduction and poems 21, 34, 54-56, and 118-27
- Arnold, “Dover Beach”
- Gosse, from *Father and Son*
- Introduction to “Evolution” section
- selections from Darwin, *The Origin of Species*

Spring break—try to finish *Middlemarch*!

Week Seven

Reform, progress, and the novel of ideas

- *Middlemarch*, book 6

Individualism and individuality

- Mill, from *On Liberty*: “Of Individuality as One of the Elements of Well-Being”
- Arnold, from *Culture and Anarchy*
- Robert Browning, “My Last Duchess,” “The Bishop Orders His Tomb”
- *Middlemarch*, book 7

Week Eight

Narration, ethics, and aesthetics II

- *Middlemarch*, book 8 and Finale

The Language of Victorian Poetry: Soft, smooth

- Tennyson, “The Lady of Shallot”
- Swinburne, “Hymn to Prosperpine”

The Language of Victorian Poetry: Hard, rough

- Meredith, from *Modern Love*
- Browning, “Andrea del Sarto”
- Hopkins, “The Windhover”

Week Nine

Observation/Reverie

- Tennyson, "Mariana", "The Lotos-Eaters"
- Morris, "The Defence of Guenevere"
- Arnold, "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens"
- Browning, "Fra Lippo Lippi"
- Pater, "Conclusion" to *The Renaissance*

Observation and insight

- Hopkins, all the poems and journal entries in the *Norton*

Week Ten

The lyric self (the hidden self, the self in language)

- Arnold, "The Buried Life"
- Bronte, "I'm happiest when most away", "The Night-Wind"
- Clare, "I Am"
- Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 1-11, 95

Science, the city, and subjectivity in the late Victorian period

- Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

Week Eleven

Fin-de-siècle drama

- Shaw, *Mrs. Warren's Profession*
- Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Week Twelve

Plot and pattern

- Woolf, "Modern Fiction"
- Pound, "In a Station of the Metro"
- *Howards End*, ch. 1-22

Narration, ethics, aesthetics III

- *Howards End*, ch. 23-44

May 7: Final papers due to me by noon by email or hard copy in my box in Downey House. If you would like comments on your paper, please submit a hard copy in a self-addressed, stamped envelope or an envelope I can pin to my office door.