

Enlightenment to Modernism: British Literature, 1780-1914
Spring 2012

Prof. Stephanie Kuduk Weiner
Downey House #300; sweiner@wesleyan.edu
Office hours by appointment

Course Description: This course offers an introduction to modern British literature and culture—in other words, the “big picture”—with an emphasis on the ways in which literary form responds to and shapes the movements of history. 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 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 on our moodle site (moodle.wesleyan.edu).

Course Requirements: class participation; ten short critical or creative responses; final paper.

Your short responses are an opportunity to understand, clarify, and examine something in the texts we are reading for that week. (You may choose which weeks you’d like to take a “bye”.) They may take any form you’d like—a critical essay of about one page single-spaced, a poem, an imitation, a drawing or photograph—but whatever their form they should be exploratory, thoughtful, and engaged. I would suggest focusing carefully and minutely on the details of a short passage or two rather than thinking broadly on themes or issues raised in a text as a whole. A meditation on a single sentence, even a single word, can easily carry you for a page and cast light on larger thematic concerns in a way that will be more effective than trying to address those themes as such.

The final paper is a chance to synthesize and draw connections among multiple works. The topic and approach are up to you, but you should address at least two pieces from the syllabus. Papers should be 5-10 pages, double-spaced.

Foundational course option:

Students taking the course with this option will receive more extensive and detailed feedback on their work through individually-designed assignments and meetings with the instructor. Foundational courses are intended to provide an additional level of guidance, support, and feedback to ensure that students cultivate the tools and skills necessary for graduate level research and writing.

Course Outline:

Week One—Feb. 2:

“The New Realistic Novel”

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

The Romantic lyric

- Wordsworth, introduction (always read author headnotes!), “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,”* and *The Prelude* Book Twelfth, l. 204-335*
- Coleridge, “Frost at Midnight”*
- Recommended
 - Wordsworth, *The Prelude* Book Fourteenth, l. 1-129
 - Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp”
 - Keats, “To Autumn”

Week Two—Feb. 9:

Reason, imagination, and emotion

- Blake, “There Is No Natural Religion [a]”*, “There Is No Natural Religion [b]”*
- Wordsworth, [“Emotion Recollected in Tranquility”] from 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, “Ode to a Nightingale,”* letters to Bailey (Nov. 22, 1817), to George and Thomas Keats (Dec. 21, 27?, 1817), to Woodhouse (Oct. 27, 1818)
- *Emma*, vol. 1, ch. 1-8 (focus on ch. 1*)
- Recommended:
 - Keats, “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles,” “Ode on Melancholy”

Transparent and literary language

- Locke, “Of the Remedies of the foregoing Imperfections and Abuses [of words],” from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (moodle)
- *Emma*, vol. 1, ch. 9-18 (focus on ch. 9*)
- Wordsworth, “We are Seven,”* [The Subject and Language of Poetry] from the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads**
- Coleridge, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (focus on first three stanzas*)

Week Three—Feb. 16:

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—Feb. 23:

Narration, ethics, and aesthetics

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

Victorian realism

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

Week Five—March 1:

Women and/in print

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

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—March 8:

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 120-25
- 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—March 29:

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”*
- *Middlemarch*, book 7
- Recommended: Browning, “The Bishop Orders His Tomb”

Week Eight—April 5:

Narration, ethics, and aesthetics II

- *Middlemarch*, book 8 and Finale*

The Language of Victorian Poetry: Soft, smooth

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

The Language of Victorian Poetry: Hard, rough

- Meredith, from *Modern Love* (focus on poem 17*)
- Browning, “Andrea del Sarto”*
- Hopkins, “The Windhover”

Week Nine—April 12:

Observation, reverie, and insight

- 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**
- Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,”* “The Starlight Night,” “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” “Spring,” “The Windhover”* (again), “Pied Beauty,”* “Hurrahing in Harvest,” and excerpts from Hopkins’ journal

Week Ten—April 19:

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

- Arnold, “The Buried Life”*
- Clare, “I Am”*
- Tennyson, *In Memoriam* 1-11 (especially 1-3* and 7*), 95*
- Recommended: Bronte, “I’m happiest when most away”, “The Night-Wind”

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

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

Week Eleven—April 25:

Fin-de-siècle drama

- Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest**

Impressionism

- Wilde, “Impression du Matin”
- Conrad, Preface to *The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’**
- *Howards End*, ch. 1-9*

Week Twelve—May 3:

Plot and pattern

- Woolf, “Modern Fiction”*
- Pound, “In a Station of the Metro”*
- *Howards End*, ch. 10-22*

Narration, ethics, aesthetics III

- *Howards End*, ch. 23-44*

May 11: 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.