

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVELS & NARRATIVES

ENGL 336-001
Hibbs Hall 262
Mon./Wed. 2:00–3:15 pm
Spring 2018
adamabraham.info

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More than a hundred years before the rise of the World Wide Web, the nineteenth-century novel tried to encompass the world within its pages. High life and low life, the country and the city, aristocrats and criminals, lovers and loners—so many people and places occupy the work of the major British novelists. In this course, we will read the nineteenth-century novel as a kind of technology—“a machine to think with,” in I. A. Richards’s memorable phrase. Authors to be studied include Jane Austen, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and more. For points of comparison, we may venture into Victorian theatre or the visual arts.

Expect a lot of reading (life is short; nineteenth-century novels are long). As much as possible, this course will be run as a seminar: classroom participation is required. Overall, the course is designed for any student who wants to gain a better understanding of literary history, the development of the novel, and the professionalization of authorship.



REQUIRED READING:

- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. 1816. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012.
Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret*. 1861–1862. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. 1852–1853. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
Gissing, George. *New Grub Street*. 1891. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair*. 1847–1848. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Please use recommended editions so that we are all on the same page (literally). New and/or used copies are available at the Virginia Book Company, 900 West Franklin Street. (Support local, independent vendors!)

ASSESSMENT:

- I. Attendance: 10 points
- II. Preparation and participation: 10 points
- III. Unannounced quizzes: 10 points
- IV. Midterm examination: 10 points
- V. Digital project: 10 points
- VI. Index: 20 points
- VII. Final examination: 30 points

TOTAL = 100 points

EXPECTATIONS:

Attendance

Woody Allen once said that 80 percent of success is showing up. In this course, attendance will count for 10 percent of your final grade. But attendance means more than just showing up. You must be fully *present*: awake, alert, attentive, engaged. Each student is permitted up to five *excused or unexcused* absences. There is no need to tell me your reasons: it's five for free, no questions asked. If, however, you miss six classes (roughly 25 percent of the course), you will earn zero points for attendance. If you miss a few more, then you are at risk of receiving a failing grade.

Preparation

This is a course for readers: there is no way around it. If your ideal afternoon would find you curled up with a very long book, then you are in the right place. If this sounds like a form of hell, then you need to find a different course. Your focus will be to read five nineteenth-century novels in a sustained and attentive manner. You should read each assignment in its entirety before the class session listed. Be an *active* reader: underline words, scribble in the margins, write down questions, and make note of passages that confused you. A book that has been read will look like a *used book*; its resale value should plummet. Bring the relevant book to each class session. Failure to do so may negatively impact your score for preparation and participation.

Participation

We learn by articulating ideas and refining those ideas in conversation with others. Try to be a lively participant in each class discussion. Raise points, ask questions. Listen carefully to what others are saying. If you are mournfully shy, then I recommend that you write out one comment or question in advance of each class discussion. Then you can read your prepared comment or question to the class.

Electronic Devices

Because paying attention is one of the goals of this course, I ask that all phones and electronic devices are turned off and placed out of sight. Students texting in class will be marked absent for the day. If there is a genuine life crisis, please pretend that it is 1977 and that you have to go out to use a payphone *before* texting or making that urgent call.

Quizzes

In order to assess that you are reading the assigned books, there will be four unannounced quizzes over the semester. These will be rather easy if you have completed the assignments. I will drop the lowest grade. Because the element of surprise is essential, you will *not* be able to make up these quizzes if you are absent or late.

Assignments

This is a course on reading literary fiction; thus, we will not emphasize expository writing. If writing is your strength, you will not be able to draw on that strength to raise your grade. In other words, there are no writing assignments for this course. Zero. Instead, I will ask each student to submit two assignments that interact with fictional works in different ways. The first, a digital project, will employ Twitter. Each student will be asked to select a character in *Bleak House* and tweet as that character for one week. The second assignment will be to produce an index for a few chapters in one of the novels that we study. Details for each assignment will be provided when the dates draw closer.

Examinations

There will be an in-class midterm and a final examination (during the scheduled final-exam period). The aim of these examinations is to assess that you have read the five assigned novels in a thoughtful manner. You will be asked to recognize memorable passages and write with some fluency about the context and significance of those passages. There will be no multiple choice. These five nineteenth-century novels *are* the course content, and you are expected to demonstrate mastery over that content. If you neglect to read one or two or three of the assigned books, you will find it difficult to perform well in this course. If you need to reschedule one of these examinations for any reason, please contact me as soon as possible.

Extra Credit

Because I believe in fighting chances, each student will have the opportunity to submit one extra-credit assignment on or before the date of the final examination. Of course, this is optional. If you are interested, then write a critical assessment of one article or chapter that deals substantially (or exclusively) with one of the required novels. You must find this article or chapter on JSTOR or Project MUSE. If these resources are unfamiliar, please ask me for more information. The end result should be no more than 1,000 words in length. Type in double-space and submit as a Word document or a pdf

via email before midnight on 7 May. This assignment will earn one, three, or five extra points, depending on its quality. Hence a total score of 87 could be raised to 92.

Learning Needs

You are welcome to come to my scheduled office hours to discuss anything related to the course. Other meeting times can also be arranged. If you require accommodation for a diagnosed disability, please notify me privately at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity

It is the assumption that the work you present in this course will be your own. If you incorporate someone else's words or ideas, you must cite that person, text, or source. If you do not know how to cite sources, read chapter 14 of *The Chicago Manual of Style* or ask me for guidance. If you submit someone else's work as your own, in whole or in part, you will receive a failing grade for that assignment.

SCHEDULE:

JANUARY

Mon. 22 Prologue: Gaslight, Railways, Shillings, Pence

Wed. 24 Novels and Narrators

- *Emma*, pp. 5–77

Mon. 29 • *Emma*, pp. 77–260

Wed. 31 Modes of Publication

- *Emma*, pp. 260–333

FEBRUARY

Mon. 5 The Large, Loose, Baggy Monster

- *Vanity Fair*, monthly nos. 1–5 (pp. 1–223)

Wed. 7 • *Vanity Fair*, nos. 6–7 (pp. 224–315)

Mon. 12 • *Vanity Fair*, nos. 8–11 (pp. 315–498)

Wed. 14 NO CLASS (Reading Day)

Mon. 19 • *Vanity Fair*, nos. 12–18 (pp. 498–811)

Wed. 21 • *Vanity Fair*, nos. 19–20 (pp. 812–879)

Mon. 26 ••• **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Wed. 28 The Life and Adventures of Charles Dickens, Esq.

- *Bleak House*, monthly no. 1 (pp. 13–63)

MARCH

Mon. 5 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Wed. 7 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mon. 12 Victorian Networks

- *Bleak House*, nos. 2–8 (pp. 63–416)

Wed. 14 • *Bleak House*, no. 9 (pp. 416–469)

Mon. 19 • *Bleak House*, nos. 10–13 (pp. 469–669)

Wed. 21 • *Bleak House*, no. 14 (pp. 669–718)

Mon. 26 NO CLASS (Reading Day)

Wed. 28 • *Bleak House*, nos. 15–20 (pp. 719–989)

... **DIGITAL PROJECT DUE** Friday 30 March by 5:00 pm

APRIL

Mon. 2 Sensation

- *Lady Audley's Secret*, pp. 7–166

Wed. 4 • *Lady Audley's Secret*, pp. 167–223

Mon. 9 • *Lady Audley's Secret*, pp. 223–380

Wed. 11 Interregnum: The Visual Arts

Mon. 16 Writing Lives

- *New Grub Street*, pp. 35–221

Wed. 18 • *New Grub Street*, pp. 222–293

Mon. 23 • *New Grub Street*, pp. 294–478

Wed. 25 • *New Grub Street*, pp. 479–551

... **INDEX DUE** Friday 27 April by 5:00 pm

Mon. 30 Epilogue: The Long Nineteenth Century, 1801–?

... **FINAL EXAMINATION**

Monday 7 May

1:00–3:00 pm

UNIVERSITY BOILERPLATE:

E-mail Policy

Electronic mail or "e-mail" is considered an official method for communication at VCU because it delivers information in a convenient, timely, cost effective and environmentally aware manner. Students are expected to check their official VCU e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to remain informed of university-related communications. The university recommends checking e-mail daily. Students are responsible for the consequences of not reading, in a timely fashion, university-related communications sent to their official VCU student e-mail account. This policy ensures that all students have access to this important form of communication. It ensures students can be reached through a standardized channel by faculty and other staff of the university as needed. Mail sent to the VCU e-mail address may include notification of university-related actions, including disciplinary action. Please read the policy in its entirety: <http://www.ts.vcu.edu/askit/policies-and-publications/information-technology-policies-standards-baselines--guidelines/student-e-mail-policy/>.

VCU Honor System: Upholding Academic Integrity

The VCU Honor System policy describes the responsibilities of students, faculty and administration in upholding academic integrity, while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to the due process offered by administrative hearings and appeals. According to this policy, "Members of the academic community are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity." In addition, "All members of the VCU community are presumed to have an understanding of the VCU Honor System and are required to:

- Agree to be bound by the Honor System policy and its procedures;
- Report suspicion or knowledge of possible violations of the Honor System;
- Support an environment that reflects a commitment to academic integrity;
- Answer truthfully when called upon to do so regarding Honor System cases, and,
- Maintain confidentiality regarding specific information in Honor System cases."
- [http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy Library/VCU Honor System.pdf](http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy%20Library/VCU%20Honor%20System.pdf). **View the Honor System** in its entirety: (<https://policy.vcu.edu/sites/default/files/Honor%20System.pdf>)

More information can also be found on the **Division of Student Affairs** website: http://www.students.vcu.edu/studentconduct/students/student_honor_system.html.

Student Conduct in the Classroom

According to the **Faculty Guide to Student Conduct in Instructional Settings**

(<http://www.assurance.vcu.edu/Policy%20Library/Faculty%20Guide%20to%20Student%20Conduct%20in%20Instructional%20Settings.pdf>), "The university is a community of learners. Students, as well as faculty, have a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that supports effective instruction. In order for faculty members (including graduate teaching assistants) to provide and students to receive effective instruction in classrooms, laboratories, studios, online courses, and other learning areas, the university expects students to conduct themselves in an orderly and cooperative manner." Among other things, cell phones and beepers should be turned off while in the classroom. Also, the university Rules and Procedures prohibit anyone from having "in his possession any firearm, other weapon, or explosive, regardless of whether a license to possess the same has been issued, without the written authorization of the President of the university..."

Students with Disabilities

SECTION 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as amended require that VCU provides "academic adjustments" or "reasonable accommodations" to any student who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. To receive accommodations, students must request them by contacting the Disability Support Services Office on the Monroe Park Campus (828-2253) or the Division for Academic Success on the MCV campus (828-9782). More information is available at **Disability Support Services** or the **Division for Academic Success**.

Any student who has a disability that requires an academic accommodation should schedule a meeting with the instructor at the student's earliest convenience. Additionally, if coursework requires the student to work in a lab environment, the student should advise the instructor or a department chair of any concerns that the student may have regarding safety issues related to a disability. Students should follow this procedure for all courses in the academic semester.

Campus Emergency information

What to Know and Do to Be Prepared for Emergencies at VCU

- Sign up to receive **VCU text messaging alerts**. Keep your information up-to-date. Within the classroom, the professor will keep his or her phone on to receive any emergency transmissions.
- Know the safe evacuation route from each of your classrooms. Emergency evacuation routes are posted in on-campus classrooms.
- Listen for and follow instructions from VCU or other designated authorities. Within the classroom, follow your professor's instructions.
- Know where to go for **additional emergency information**: <http://alert.vcu.edu/>.
- Know the emergency phone number for the VCU Police (828-1234). Report suspicious activities and objects.
- Keep your permanent address and emergency contact information current in eServices.

Withdrawal from Classes

Before withdrawing from classes, students should consult their instructor as well as other appropriate university offices. Withdrawing from classes may negatively impact a student's financial aid award and his or her semester charges. To discuss financial aid and the student bill, visit the Student Services Center at 1015 Harris Hall or contact a financial aid counselor at <http://www.enrollment.vcu.edu/finaid/contact.html>. The last day to withdraw from classes is 23 March.