

INTERTEXTUALITY : THE VICTORIANS AND AFTER

ENGL 620-901
Hibbs Hall 308
Mon. 7:00–9:40 pm
Spring 2019
adamabraham.info

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Although Queen Victoria died in 1901, the Victorian period may be alive and well. Each year brings films based on nineteenth-century fiction, television series such as *Penny Dreadful*, and graphic novels such as *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*. What explains the perpetual relevance of Victorian narrative? And what happens when artists reinvent the past?

This course will operate in two parts. Part I will be built around a pair of long, multivalent novels: Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Part II will consider the resonance of Victorian culture on twentieth- and twenty-first-century media landscapes—works that purposefully revive, reimagine, or subvert an earlier era.

Requirements include two in-class presentations and two essays. The first essay, a creative-writing assignment, will ask each student to compose an adaptation or a parody of a Victorian text. The second is more traditional: a research paper. Students who undertake this course can expect to read a lot and to think about historical change and the creative process.

REQUIRED READING:

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. 1865, 1871. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
 Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. 1849–1850. London: Penguin Books, 2004.
 Eliot, George. *Middlemarch*. 1871–1872. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
 Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford*. 1851–1853. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
 Waters, Sarah. *Fingersmith*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2002.
 Wolfe, Tom. *The Bonfire of the Vanities*. 1984–1987. New York: Picador, 1987.

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!)

Other readings will be made available in pdf form on my website, adamabraham.info.

ASSESSMENT:

- I. Preparation and participation: 20 points
- II. Presentation no. 1: 10 points
- III. Creative essay: 10 points
- IV. Presentation no. 2: 10 points
- V. Final essay: 50 points

TOTAL = 100 points

EXPECTATIONS:*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. 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 you want to discuss.

Participation

If is not enough to read the text in question; you should arrive in class prepared to discuss the material and engage with your fellow students. 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. Bring the relevant paperback to each class session. For all other readings, please bring a print or electronic copy. Each student will receive a preparation and participation score of 1 to 10 points at the midpoint and again at the end of the course.

Presentations

Part of the graduate-school experience is learning how to present academic material in front of an audience. To that end, there are two in-class presentations. For the first, each student will report on a secondary source on either *David Copperfield* or *Middlemarch*. Each student will be assigned one of the two novels but will be allowed to choose the source from a list provided. The second presentation will be a “pitch” in which each student presents ideas for a potential final essay. Expect that each presentation will last between five and ten minutes. Students absent on the assigned day may present during a subsequent class meeting if the schedule permits.

Essays

Over the semester, each student will write two essays that demonstrate different skills: creative thinking and critical analysis. The first essay, the creative-writing assignment (no more than 1,500 words), will be submitted in *hard copy only* by 7:00 pm on the due date. Any late submission will be graded without the benefit of comments. The final essay (no more than 4,000 words) will mount an original argument about the course materials. It will engage with one or two primary sources and some secondary sources, with citations and bibliography formatted according to *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The final essay will be submitted one week after the last class session. Further details for each essay will be provided when the dates draw closer.

Screenings

Whenever the syllabus says “SCREEN,” you are expected to watch that film or television show before the class date mentioned. In each case you have two options. One, you may borrow a DVD copy, which will be made available at the ground-floor information desk in the James Branch Cabell Library. Two, you may access the video through purchase, rental, or streaming.

Attendance

The course is a seminar, and each class meeting is a unique event that cannot be replicated or “made up” by borrowing someone else’s notes. Therefore, attendance is required. Nonetheless, life may intervene. So here is the policy: each student is permitted up to three *excused or unexcused* absences. There is no need to tell me your reasons: it’s three for free, no questions asked. If, however, you miss four classes (roughly 30 percent of the course), you will lose points in the category of preparation and participation. If you miss more, then you are at risk of receiving a failing grade.

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. 14 Prospective and Retrospective

- Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society* (prologue)
- Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (preface and chapter 1)
- Sutherland, *Victorian Fiction* (chapter 8)
- Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (chapter 1, annotated)

Mon. 21 NO CLASS (Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday Observed)

I. THE VICTORIANS

Mon. 28 • *David Copperfield*, nos. 1–14 (pp. 13–640)

FEBRUARY

Mon. 4 • *David Copperfield*, nos. 15–20 (pp. 640–882)

Mon. 11 • *Middlemarch*, nos. 1–2 (pp. 3–211)
 ••• **PRESENTATION No. 1** Group 1

Mon. 18 • *Middlemarch*, nos. 3–5 (pp. 212–499)

Mon. 25 • *Middlemarch*, nos. 6–8 (pp. 500–785)
 ••• **PRESENTATION No. 1** Group 2

II. AFTER

MARCH

Mon. 4 NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Mon. 11 Adaptation

- *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
- SCREEN: *Dreamchild* (Universal, 1985) Gavin Millar
- **CREATIVE ESSAY DUE** by 7:00 pm

Mon. 18 Rejection

- Gardiner, *The Victorians* (selection)
- Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (selection)
- Waugh, “The Man Who Liked Dickens”
- Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”

Mon. 25 Theatre

- Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Mikado*
- Hamilton, *Gaslight*
- SCREEN: *Gaslight* (M-G-M, 1944) George Cukor
- SCREEN: *Topsy-Turvy* (Goldwyn, 1999) Mike Leigh

APRIL

Mon. 1 Heritage

- *Cranford*
- SCREEN: *Cranford*, episode 1 (BBC, 2007) Simon Curtis, Steve Hudson
- John, *Dickens and Mass Culture* (selection)
- Lichter, *The Benevolence of Manners* (selection)

Mon. 8 Revivals

- *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, pp. 1–339

Mon. 15 • *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, pp. 340–685

Mon. 22 • *Fingersmith*, pp. 3–302
 ... **PRESENTATION No. 2** Group 1

Mon. 29 • *Fingersmith*, pp. 302–582
 • SCREEN: *Corpse Bride* (Warner Bros., 2005) Tim Burton, Mike Johnson
 ... **PRESENTATION No. 2** Group 2

MAY

... **FINAL ESSAY DUE** Monday 6 May by 4:30 pm



RECOMMENDED READING:

Overview

- Gardiner, John. *The Victorians: An Age in Retrospect*. London: Hambledon and London, 2002.
- Houghton, Walter E. *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830–1870*. New Haven: Published for Wellesley College by Yale University Press, 1957.
- Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1918.
- Young, G. M. *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age*. London: Oxford University Press, 1936.

Dickens

- Ackroyd, Peter. *Dickens*. 1990. New York: HarperPerennial, 1992.
- Butt, John, and Kathleen Tillotson. *Dickens at Work*. London: Methuen, 1957.
- Patten, Robert L. *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Eliot

- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*. 1994. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Haight, Gordon S. *George Eliot*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- Mead, Rebecca. *My Life in Middlemarch*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2014.

Publishing

- Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900*. 1957. 2d ed. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998.
- Cross, Nigel. *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street*. 1985. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- King, Andrew, and John Plunkett. *Victorian Print Media: A Reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Sutherland, John. *Victorian Fiction: Writers, Publishers, Readers*. 1995. Rev. ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

After

- Heilmann, Ann, and Mark Llewellyn. *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999–2009*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude. *The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
- John, Juliet. *Dickens and Mass Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Lichter, Linda S. *The Benevolence of Manners: Recapturing the Lost Art of Gracious Victorian Living*. 1998. New York: ReganBooks/HarperPerennial, 1999.

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."
- 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 22 March.