English 324: Victorian Prose and Poetry

Talia Schaffer Thurs 1:40-4:30, KY 248

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Required texts:

*Broadview Anthology of British Literature,* vol. 5. All readings come from this book unless indicated otherwise. ISBN 978-1551116136

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest,* ed. Samuel Gladden (Broadview). ISBN 978-1551116945

\* means this reading is on Blackboard

[means this will occur in class]

More online resources can be found on the website affiliated with our anthology:

• go to <http://sites.broadviewpress.com/bablonline>

• the passcode is 84G4W32L86

• click vol. 5 in the sidebar

About this course:

This course aims to introduce you to two very different modes of writing from the nineteenth century: poetry, the language of high art, and prose, the language of political agitation, everyday commentary, and satirical reform. The course is divided into sections: Industrialism, Religion and Science, The Woman Question, Race and Empire, and Art and Culture. In each section, we’ll read some works by the most important prose writers (Carlyle, Newman, Mill, Ruskin, Arnold, Pater), juxtaposed against the urgent utterances found in contemporary newspapers; important poems by Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Christina Rossetti; art by Pre-Raphaelite painters; and drama by Oscar Wilde. We will also examine Swinburne’s sexual lyrics, Kipling’s imperialist agenda, and Browning’s complicated monologues, among others. By the end of the course, you should have a clear sense of what the major political issues were in Victorian Britain, and of the imaginative and ingenious ways Victorian writers responded to them.

Learning goals:

1. To understand another culture

2. To learn to close-read literary texts

3. To practice critical and theoretical analysis of complex texts

4. To research and write essays appropriate to upper-level English study

5. To discover how ideas of class, race, and gender developed in this crucial period

Course Schedule

Jan 29 introduction

“Earnest” handout

*I. Industrialism and Daily Life*

Feb 5 Introduction, from “A Growing Power” up to “Realism” (pp.xxix-lxxi, ie 29-71)

\*Freeman

\*Beeton

[Image: Victorian genre paintings]

Feb 12 LINCOLN’S BIRTHDAY – NO CLASS

Feb 19 Carlyle, “Past and Present,” 14-39

Engels 61-64

Mayhew 73-75

“Work and Poverty” readings, 49-58

[Image: “Work”]

**Assign 1 given**

*II. Religion and Science*

Feb 26 \*Introduction: Religion and Society

Darwin, *Origin of Species* and *Descent of Man* 263-279

\*Newman, *Apologia*

[Image: Darwinian cartoons]

Mar 5 Arnold, “Dover Beach,” 465

Browning, “Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,” 304-305

D. G. Rossetti, “Blessed Damozel,” 516-518

[Image: “Blessed Damozel” and other Pre-Raphaelite art]

**Essay 1 due**

Mar 12 Tennyson, “In Memoriam” 197-242

[Images: Mourning culture]

**Essay 1 returned**

*III. The Woman Question*

Mar 19 “The Place of Women in Society” 96-118 (up to Thomas Hood)

\*Ruskin, “Of Queens’ Gardens”

\* Nightingale, “Cassandra”

[Images: Victorian Women]

Mar 26 Tennyson, “Lady of Shalott,” 179-181

Tennyson, “Mariana” 173-174

Rossetti, “Goblin Market,” 546-553

[Images of Goblin Market, Lady of Shalott}

**Assign 2 given**

Apr 2 Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* 143-168

Browning, “My Last Duchess” 305-306

Browning, “Porphyria’s Lover,” 303-304

April 3-April 12 SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

*IV. Race and Empire*

Apr 16 “Carlyle, Mill, and the Negro Question,” 853-859

Macaulay, “Minute on Indian Education” 849-851

Barrett Browning, “Runaway Slave,” 138-141

\*Seacole

[In class film: “A Regular Black”]

**Essay 2 due**

Apr 23 Conan Doyle, “Adventure of the Speckled Band,” 780-794

Kipling, “Gunga Din” 826-827

Kipling, “White Man’s Burden,” 828-829

\* Labouchère, “Brown Man’s Burden”

“In Context: White Man’s Burden in the Philippines,” 841-842

[Images: colonial illustrations]

**Essay 2 returned**

*V. Art and Culture*

Apr 30 Arnold, “Culture and Anarchy,” 487-490

Ruskin, *Stones of Venice,* “Nature of Gothic,” 443-450

Pater, “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance* 636-638

[Images: William Morris, Arts and Crafts]

**Assign 3 given**

May 7 Morris, “The Beauty of Life” 579-593

Swinburne, “Triumph of Time,” 614-620

[Images: Aestheticism, Beardsley]

May 14 Wilde, “Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*” 698

final discussion

**final paper due**

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Grading:

Essay #1 (industrialism*)* 20%

Essay #2 (religion and science, women*)* 20%

Essay #3 (imperialism, art) 20%

Blogs 20%

Effort grade (see below) 20%

Essays:

There will be three essays of approximately 5-7 pages each, which must be typed and conform to MLA guidelines. I will hand out assignments and you can pick which topic you’d like to write about. I also encourage you to come up with your own topic, as long as you clear it with me first.

For Essay 1 (industrialism), you must find one article using the MLA Index. For Essay 2 (religion and science; the women question), you must find two articles in journals using approved databases, and put them in dialogue with each other. For Essay 3 (imperialism; art and culture*)*, you will find at least three articles, using books or journals.

Remember that a research paper is just like a regular essay, but bigger and with more sources. That means you must have an intro, conclusion, and an argument -- something you are trying to prove -- don't get bogged down in copying sources!

See the library subject guide to Victorian literature:

<http://qcpages.qc.cuny.edu/Library/research/guides/english/victorianlit.php>

Blog:

Every student must do a close reading of a sentence from that week’s reading 5 times during the semester. To do this, you must copy the sentence and then write a few sentences analyzing it. Every student must also comment 5 times over the course of the semester on someone else’s close reading. You will thus have a total of 10 posts and will receive 2 points for each post, for a total of 20% of your final grade.

The blog site is under “Discussion Board” in Blackboard. Log in through www.cuny.edu, with your QC id and password.

No laptops in class

I am instituting a no-electronics policy in class. That means no laptops, no Kindles, no e-readers, no iPads, no phones. This policy will help you stay focused. Research shows that students learn better and classroom discussion works better when everyone is liberated from the constant distractions of electronic media. See:

1. Tal Gross, “This Year, I Resolve to Ban Laptops From My Classroom,” *Washington Post* 12/30/2014:

“Since most students can type very quickly, laptops encourage them to copy down nearly everything said in the classroom. But when students stare at the screen of their laptops, something is lost. The students shift from being intellectuals, listening to one another, to being customer-service representatives, taking down orders. Class is supposed to be a *conversation*, not an exercise in dictation.   
  
This is not just vague worrying on my part. There’s now good research on the topic. Take, for instance, a recent study by two psychologists, Pam Mueller at Princeton University and Daniel Oppenheimer at UCLA. Mueller and Oppenheimer asked 67 undergraduates to watch videos of lectures. Half the students were randomly assigned to watch the lectures while taking notes on a laptop, while the other students were asked to watch the lectures while taking notes with paper and pen. Afterward, the students were all given an exam. The students who took notes longhand scored much higher on conceptual questions than did the students who used a laptop.”

http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/

2. Clay Shirkey, “Why I Just Asked My Students to Put Their Laptops Away,” Medium.com, September 8, 2014

“The final realization — the one that firmly tipped me over into the “No devices in class” camp — was this: screens generate distraction in a manner akin to second-hand smoke. A paper with the blunt title [Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers](http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254?np=y" \t "_blank) says it all: *We found that participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content.”*

https://medium.com/@cshirky/why-i-just-asked-my-students-to-put-their-laptops-away-7f5f7c50f368

Plagiarism

Plagiarism means the unacknowledged copying of someone else's ideas or words, no matter whether the original material is on the web or in print. It is theft. You are unjustly taking credit for something that you did not produce. This damages you; you're not learning anything if you're just copying someone else's stuff. It damages the other person, who's not getting any credit for her work. And it wastes my time, because I'm making comments that don't help you. If you plagiarize, you will automatically get an F on that paper and you may well fail the course. So if you are in doubt, cite! Put quotation marks around *anything* you copy word for word. Put the reference at the end of the sentence if you paraphrased someone's work or derived this idea from it. It's better to put in unnecessary references than to plagiarize inadvertently. It is perfectly okay to have friends help you with your essays as long as you acknowledge them at the end of your paper, ie, “thanks to my friend Pam Smith who helped me get rid of extra commas.”

Effort grade (attendance, participation):

This grade rewards those who come to class regularly, participate, and put in the extra work needed to make their writing and reading improve. Your effort grade will drop disastrously if you a) miss many classes without a valid excuse, b) do not participate, or act uninterested or apathetic in class, c) frequently come in late or leave early, d) show no signs of taking writing advice seriously, e) do not complete writing assignments (including blogs). The effort grade is worth 20% in itself, and I will also use it to adjust your overall course grade up or down.

*Attendence*: When you sign up for this course you commit to being here unless some unforeseen emergency arises. Respect the class times. Arrive on time and leave only when the class ends, and if you have to be absent or leave early, tell me about it first. That shows a sense of responsibility and some respect for me. But remember that telling me about it does not mean it is an excused absence. Legitimate excuses do *not* include: taking a relative to/from the airport, meeting another professor, doing an extra shift at work, forgetting something and going home to get it, oversleeping, doing work for another class.

*Participation*: This seminar really depends on your willingness to participate and share your ideas! I know that some people feel uncomfortable speaking in public, but if you do not like to talk, I expect you to demonstrate participation in some other way -- by looking interested, coming to office hours, blogging, attending all classes, etc. I can tell when someone is involved in the class or not.

*Acting appropriately*: When you are in class, you must look as if you are paying attention (even if you’re not) and you must permit others to pay attention. This means you may not read, pass notes, whisper, do homework, check email, etc. See above for no-electronics policy.

*Quizzes*: This is a 3-hour class, and if you are not doing the reading, it will be a very, very long 3 hours. If I find that you are falling behind on the reading, I WILL institute weekly reading quizzes. Fair warning. If you want to deter the quizzes, then keep up and participate.

*Accommodations:* Located in Kiely Hall 171, the Office for Special Services for Students with Disabilities was established to make sure that students with disabilities have access to resources that will allow them to succeed at Queens College. If you have questions about services you might qualify for, visit their website at <http://sl.qc.cuny.edu/oss/index.php>. I’ll also be happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have.

Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to develop strategies for adapting assignments to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Late papers:

Now, this is something I’m strict about. I will not have papers dribbling in for weeks and weeks. If you have a legitimate reason for needing an extension, contact me and set up a new deadline. I expect the paper to come in by that new date. If you do not get in touch with me, or if you do not meet the new deadline, your paper will drop by *one grade* for every day that it is late. Thus a paper which would normally get a B but is three days late drops three grades (B-, C+, C) and ends up a C.

*Writing Guide:*

Quotes:

I. Picking quotations:

Pick only the words that work best for the purpose; don’t quote huge swaths of prose when only a sentence or two is necessary. You need to give a quotation in the following cases:

A. To back up a controversial point (you don’t have to ‘prove’ basic facts about the book, but you do have to prove arguments)

B. To do a close reading

C. To use the author’s marvelous language instead of your own workaday prose

II. Formatting in-line quotations:

A. In the MLA style, you use parenthetical documentation in the body of your paper, with author’s name and page number *only*. Please note that the period goes *after* the parenthetical reference:

“My metaphor was horticultural,” one character explains (Wilde, 10). OR:

He claimed, “my metaphor was horticultural” (Wilde, 10).

B. Put a list of Works Cited at the end of your paper, with the full references:

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest.* London: Penguin Books, 1966.

III. Formatting block quotes: use this style if you are citing something more than four lines long. Indent it ten spaces on the left (without changing the right-hand margin), single-space it, do not use quotation marks, and you may also make it a smaller font size. In a block quote, for some reason you *do* put the parenthetical reference after the final period, unlike a regular quote.

Since Wilde was a remarkably charismatic and popular individual, he had many friends, but when the great crash came in 1895, few of those friends defended him. He became perhaps the most infamous man in England. His very name was unspeakable. His erstwhile friends vied with each other to pillory him in the public press, and each critique was more cruel than the last. (Smith, 90)

Other writing issues (ie, Things I Hate and You Shouldn’t Do):

I. Word choice: ‘Demise’ does not mean doom; it means death. ‘Blatant’ means offensively, in-your-face obvious – don’t use it if you intend to praise someone. It’s better to say what you mean rather than look for fancy words whose meaning you’re not clear about. Do not trust your on-line thesaurus or grammar checker.

II. Generalizations: The only time anything is ‘truly human’ is if it’s not possible for an animal to do it (ie using opposable thumbs); the only thing that happened at ‘the beginning of time’ is the Big Bang. Don’t use lazy formulations like ‘in those times’ or ‘there’ when you can specify date and place: ‘in the 1850s, in England.’ It sounds much better. Don’t resort to vague, huge assertions to make your argument sound more important. Instead, try to figure out why your argument really does matter and explain that.

III. Conclusions: In your conclusion you do not need to summarize, unless the paper is exceptionally long or complex. Instead, you should show why your argument is interesting or important. That means really thinking about why what you have written is valuable, why it was worth the reader’s attention.

IV. Organization: Do take a few minutes to jot down the main points of your argument on a scrap of paper before you begin writing. This will save you from going off on tangents, changing your thesis halfway through, getting bogged down, forgetting to mention key points, and a huge number of other problems.

VI. Thesis: Try to pick something that really interests you and explore it. An essay is a chance to work something out, to delve deeper into the reading. Do not simply pick something that is obviously true and go through the motions of proving it, which will bore both me and you.

Final advice:

I. Remember that fundamentally, an essay is you telling me what you think about something. Don’t fixate on rules; instead, try to think of the most interesting thing you can say to me, and say it the best way you can. I want original, complicated, ambitious arguments. I want to see you thinking.

II. Buy and use a writing handbook, if you don't already have one. I recommend the MLA Guide or Diana Hacker’s handbook. Or use the very useful website, the OWL at Purdue: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Questions will come up that I can't answer, and you'll be glad to have someplace to look them up.

Grading standards:

These will vary slightly depending on the class’s level, but here is a good general guide.

*Blogs*

• If you do 9 or 10 required posts (or more), and if they are interesting, substantive comments, you’ll get some form of an A for your blog grade.

• If you miss 2 or 3 posts but the rest are still acceptably solid posts, you’ll get some form of a B.

• If you miss 4 or 5 posts, or if the blog posts are rudimentary, disengaged, or minimal, you’ll get some form of a C.

• If you miss more than 5 posts you fail the blog grade.

You are welcome to post more than 10 comments but there is no extra credit grade-wise if you do.

*A level papers: especially great ideas, and no major writing problems*

A+ = this paper is extraordinary – ambitious, original, and beautifully written -- and it has taught me something new. Thank you.

A = this paper is virtually perfect, or so outstandingly original its tiny flaws don’t matter.

A- = this paper has made the leap into something special; it is outstandingly original or insightful; but it has some minor writing flaws (ie, occasional word choice problems, a misunderstanding of one aspect of the text).

*B level papers: good ideas, but some writing problems*

B+ = a very good, well-written paper, but doesn’t have the spark of originality necessary to put it in the A range; or a brilliantly original paper that would normally be an A- but the writing flaws are too great (frequent word choice problems, a lot of passive voice, a poor conclusion).

B = a good paper, solid, well-organized and well-supported. Flaws are usually sentence-level, but they run throughout the paper (passive voice, word choice, tense problems, comma problems, simple declarative sentences, unsatisfying intro or concl.).

B- = good ideas, but writing problems are apparent. Flaws are starting to appear at the level of structure (organization and paragraphing may be shaky), or the problems I’ve listed for a B paper are here but in a more serious form.

*C level papers: acceptable but problematic ideas, and real writing problems*

C+ = ideas are acceptable, and you’ve done some work, but there are real writing problems at the level of thesis, organization, etc. A major self-contradiction, an entire lack of documentation, no thesis, systematic sentence fragments, or problems with comprehensibility can put you in the C range.

C = ideas are acceptable, but it needs a lot more work. This paper may have any of the problems of the C+ range but the problems are worse, and there may be substantial misreadings of the text.

C- = barely acceptable, and I take it only because there’s some glimmer of some effort in it. These tend to be hastily dashed off, badly misunderstand the text, and have serious writing problems.

*D, F level papers: unacceptable ideas and writing*

D = not really acceptable -- very serious writing problems and inadequate ideas. Basically: you handed in something that more or less looks like the assignment, so it’s not an F. I don’t give D+ and D-, on the grounds that a D is already so low it’s ludicrous to make distinctions.

F = not acceptable at all.