

ENGL 355
PATTERNS OF EMBODIMENT IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH FICTION
Fall 2011 MWF 12-12:50 Clough 300

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319 Palmer Hall
Office Hours:
2-3pm M, T, W, and by appt.

Overview

This course will explore major works of nineteenth-century fiction by focusing on how different authors read and write about the human body. Can we “read” facial expressions and telling gestures? What do we know about a character from their posture? We often make strong, indelible judgments about people from such small movements, but are these things that can be captured in words? This course will consider the ways in which these descriptions fit into or disrupt broader cultural and ideological frameworks of race, class, and gender, but also how they complicate our contemporary images of Romantic and Victorian living. Along the way, we will also ask what reading does to *us* while we turn page after page, alternately sympathizing with characters and recoiling from scenes, getting bored, or inventing new variations as we read.

Required Texts

Most modern editions of these texts will be fine—however, if you have your own copy or want to use a different edition, be aware that you will be responsible for keeping track of page numbers and references. I’ll expect you to be able to follow along in class when we discuss specific passages, and to be able to help your classmates locate the pages you will use for your in-class reading.

Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*
Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*
Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*
George Eliot, *Middlemarch*
Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*
Rudyard Kipling, “The Man Who Would Be King”
Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

Course Objectives

The two main goals of this course are, first, to gain a broader understanding of narrative fiction as an intellectually and socially significant activity, and, second, to learn how to effectively analyze and interpret the major narrative patterns and techniques developed by British writers in the nineteenth century.

The eight authors whose work will make up the bulk of our reading represent a wide range of (often conflicting) ideas about art, literature, national identity, modernity, and the business of

publishing. Although I will present key features and important backgrounds for these ideas in lectures, the core of this course is designed to be exciting—but also exacting—discussion. The classroom should be your rehearsal space for the ideas and interpretations you will work out in more detail in your writing.

As an upper-level seminar, this course will devote considerable attention to the relationship between the forms of these writers' works and their historical contexts. This means that I expect you to do some serious thinking about *how* and *why* these texts take the shapes that they do. Consequently, in addition to the substantial amount of reading (approximately 60-70 pages per day) assigned over the course of the semester, this course requires you to engage with some of the professional scholarship in the field and to formulate your own critical interpretations of the works under discussion.

Course Requirements

Attendance is mandatory. Your success in this course depends heavily on your actively engaging with the texts and ideas under discussion as well as reading the material. I understand that wonderful and awful things sometimes happen to make you miss class, so there is no penalty for up to three absences. I do not require an explanation, although it's always appreciated. Beyond those three absences, *each* additional absence will cost your final course average one full letter grade, i.e. C to D, A- to B-, etc. If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course. I will pass around an attendance sheet at the beginning of each class: if your signature is not there, you will be counted as absent. Chronic or unreasonable tardiness (i.e. more than once or twice, more than two or three minutes) will count as an absence.

1/ Three Essays: 5-6 pages for the first two essays, and 8-10 pages for the final essay. Each should analyze passages from the works we have read and concepts discussed in class. We will talk in detail in class about my expectations for these essays—if you have any questions, please email me or drop by my office hours. I will distribute suggested topics a week before papers are due, but you are also free to develop your own topics with my approval. The first two essays are worth 15% of the final grade, and the third is worth 20% (50% total).

We will have a draft workshop for the first essay to give you practice rehearsing your argument and clarifying your ideas with your classmates. These drafts can certainly be rough, but the more substantial you make them, the more productive my comments and your classmates' feedback will be. They must be typed. You should bring **2** copies of your rough draft to class: one to turn in and one to collect feedback. This is our only in-class workshop, but I am happy to discuss your writing at any stage (from caffeinated epiphanies to polished drafts) in my office hours or by appointment.

2/ Two Critical Summaries: Both of these 1-2 page reviews should summarize a work of literary criticism taken from an approved book or scholarly article that discusses a text the class has been assigned to read. You should give your reader a useful account of the critic's main arguments and what examples they used. I will pass around a sign-up sheet for summary assignments in class. Each précis is worth 5% of the final grade (10% total).

3/ A midterm and a final exam, each consisting of identifying passages from our readings, writing short explications of those passages, and connecting them to concepts discussed in class. These are variations of what you will be doing in class and in the essays: tracing conceptual trajectories and connecting text with context. Each exam is worth 10% of the final grade (20% total).

4/ Participation: I expect everyone to participate in class discussions, but there will also be various reading quizzes, and short in-class or online writing assignments. Some of these are meant to keep you reading, but many are designed to give you the opportunity to explore ideas and responses in ways that the to-and-fro of spoken conversation can sometimes make difficult. I consider quality as well as quantity of participation (15%).

5/ One in-class reading. You will have the chance to sign up for a reading in the second week of class. After selecting 2-3 pages of prose from a class text, you should familiarize yourself enough with the passage to feel comfortable reading it out loud at the beginning of a class. You should be able to point out problems (including whether it was easy or difficult to read) or aspects of the passage that struck you, but informally, as an opening for class discussion (5%).

Acknowledgment

Since you are being asked to read some critical essays, I assume you will, in some cases, make use of them in writing your essays. You are not required to do so. You can easily write the main essays for this class without using any outside sources—and that's just fine. But if you use outside sources, you must clearly indicate which of your ideas derive from those sources and give full bibliographical information (author, title, publisher, place of publication, date of publication, page numbers—or title, volume, year, and page numbers of journals—or web site urls) for every source on which you have relied, in current MLA style.

In the spirit of many of the writers we will be reading in this course, you will write a short “acknowledgements” section in class on the day each of your three essays is due. Intellectual honesty can be a matter of positive representation as well as negative consequences; it's at the core of genuine and creative thinking. I hope you will take the chance to acknowledge all the different sources of the thinking on display in your writing. It (almost) goes without saying that I assume that all the work you turn in is your own and produced exclusively for this course, that any borrowed ideas and language will be fully and properly documented, that cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, that convicted violations of the Honor Code will fail this course in addition to whatever penalty is assigned by the Council, and that, if you have any questions about whether or how to fully acknowledge a source, you should know that you can stop me to talk about it anytime.

Schedule

Reading: You should read the material assigned before coming to class on the date for which it is listed. Please note: the schedule is subject to change. I will announce any changes in class and make an updated schedule available online, but if you are absent you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate and keeping track of the assigned readings.

Writing: Essays are due at the start of class on the date listed below. If you are absent on the day a paper is due, please hand it to me or slide it under my office door not later than 3:00pm that day, otherwise it will be considered late. Unless an extension has been arranged in advance, late papers will lose one full letter grade per day late, starting after 3:00 on the day it's due, i.e. an "A" paper due 3:00 9/26 turned in 4:00 9/26 receives a "B," and a "B-" paper due 3:00 9/26 turned in 4:00 9/27 receives a "D-."

On the day where your group is listed, you should have your critical summary ready to turn in and, ideally, be prepared to discuss (briefly, informally) that critic's ideas in class.

Day	Date	Assignments
Wednesday	August 24	Introduction
Friday	26	Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , Vol. I
Monday	29	Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , Vol. II
Wednesday	31	Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , Vol. II
Friday	September 2	Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , Vol. III
Monday	5	Labor Day Holiday (no class)
Wednesday	7	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Ch. 1-15
Friday	9	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Ch. 16-24 [Group 1 Summaries]
Monday	12	Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Ch. 16-24
Wednesday	14	Writing Workshop, Review [ESSAY 1, 1 st DRAFT DUE]
Friday	16	Gaskell, <i>Cranford</i> , Ch. 1-8
Monday	19	Gaskell, <i>Cranford</i> , Ch. 9-16 [Group 2 Summaries]
Wednesday	21	Gaskell, <i>Cranford</i> , Ch. 9-16
Friday	23	Dickens, <i>Hard Times</i> , Bk. 1
Monday	26	Dickens, <i>Hard Times</i> , Bk. 1 [ESSAY 1, FINAL DRAFT DUE]
Wednesday	28	Dickens, <i>Hard Times</i> , Bk. 2
Friday	30	Dickens, <i>Hard Times</i> , Bk. 3
Monday	October 3	Sources and Discourses Workshop, Midterm Review
Wednesday	5	MIDTERM
Friday	7	Selected Readings: Science and Literature (online)
Monday	10	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. I
Wednesday	12	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. II
Friday	14	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. III
Monday	17	Fall break / Grades Due at 9:00 am
Wednesday	19	Selected Readings: Science and Literature (online)
Friday	21	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. IV
Monday	24	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. V [Group 3 Summaries]
Wednesday	26	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. VI
Friday	28	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. VII
Monday	31	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. VII [ESSAY 2 DUE]
Wednesday	November 2	Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> , Bk. VIII
Friday	4	Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , Ch. 1-4
Monday	7	Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , Ch. 5-19
Wednesday	9	Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , Ch. 20-31 [Group 4 Summaries]
Friday	11	Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , Ch. 32-38
Monday	14	Hardy, <i>The Mayor of Casterbridge</i> , Ch. 39-45; Review

Wednesday	16	Selected Readings: Empire (online)
Friday	18	Kipling, "The Man Who Would Be King"
Monday	21	Kipling, "The Man Who Would Be King"
W, F	23, 25	Thanksgiving Break begins Tuesday, Nov. 22 at 10 p.m.
Monday	28	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> , Part 1
Wednesday	30	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> , Part 2 [Group 5 summaries]
Friday	December 2	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i> , Part 2
Monday	5	Selected Readings: Criticism & Prefaces (online)
Wednesday	7	Review [ESSAY 3 DUE]
Fri-Wed	9-14	Final Exams

Important Dates

day	date	event
Tuesday	August 23	Enrollment Clearance/Registration
Wednesday	24	Classes begin Opening Convocation
Tuesday	30	Drop/add period ends
Wednesday	31	Extended drop period begins
Monday	September 6	Labor Day Recess
Wednesday	14	Extended Drop Period Ends Pass/Fail Option Ends
Thursday	15	Withdraw Period begins
Wednesday	21	Last day to remove conditional grades
Friday	October 14	Fall recess begins at 5:00 p.m.
Monday	17	Mid-term grades 9:00 a.m.
Wednesday	19	Classes resume
Friday	28	Withdraw Period Ends
Tuesday	November 23	Thanksgiving Recess begins at 10:00 p.m.
Monday	28	Classes resume
Wednesday	December 7	Last day of classes, 10:00 p.m.
Thursday	8	Reading day
Fri-Wed	9-14	Final Examinations
Friday	16	Final grades due 5:00 p.m.