

English 355, Fall 1998
TTH 1:00-2:30, Palmer 201
Office: Palmer 310, x3744
Office Hours: For this class: Th. 2:30-3:30 & by appt.
General: MW 3:00-5:00

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Nineteenth-Century British Novel

Because this course surveys the novels of a given period, I have tried to choose books that are representative of fiction from their time and place, rather than ones that are clearly linked in by some common topic or theme. However, as we work our way through the eight books, you will find that they are, many of them, in fact concerned with similar ideas, motifs, or problems. This is in part because of my own prejudices in choosing this list, but it is more clearly a matter of the way the literature of any period confronts, processes, and develops answers to the questions that are of greatest concern to its writers *and* its readers.

This course traces the development of the novel in Britain through the nineteenth century, noticing both innovations in the form of the novel--free indirect discourse, serial publication, retrospective narration-- as well as the social and psychological questions that major novels take up--wealth and poverty, industrialization, women's work, the meaning of history. We begin with a lesser-read work by Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (written around 1798; published 1818), using this text as a lense into the popular gothic novel of the early nineteenth century, a form which Austen shrewdly satirizes. From here we notice how novelists increasingly concerned with social conditions use the conventions of the gothic romance to tell stories about politics and ethics. We will explore this combination of ancient stories and modern problems, and the broader question of history and historical change, in works from Edgeworth to Eliot. The course finishes with George Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891), a book which takes as its own subject the literary world of late nineteenth-century London, and which rejects gothic or romance conventions to develop a different portrait of a society in motion.

Course Books - all at the campus bookstore, and all required

Jane Austen	<i>Northanger Abbey</i>
Maria Edgeworth	<i>Castle Rackrent and Ennui</i>
Walter Scott	<i>Waverly</i>
Charles Dickens	<i>Bleak House</i>
Elizabeth Gaskell	<i>North and South</i>
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>
George Eliot	<i>Middlemarch</i>
George Gissing	<i>New Grub Street</i>

Course Requirements

Readings: We appear to be a small group, judging from pre-enrollment. We may grow, but in either case I expect you to prepare the assigned readings by noting down questions and reactions to raise in class. Reactions can be hostile or friendly, and hostile is fine sometimes, but have *something* to say about the reading, even if it's as simple as "I didn't understand this passage on page 646; what did other people think?" If everyone comes prepared to contribute to our conversations, we'll be less likely to rely on only 2 or 3 regular speakers in every class, an unfair and generally very dull situation.

Papers: All written work must be typed or printed, double-spaced with standard margins, and carefully proofread. I will provide a range of topics for the major papers, but I will encourage you to write about the ideas that you care most about, if necessary at the expense of my suggested topics.

When grading your essays, I will be looking at a number of things. Most centrally, I will be concerned with your ability to provide detailed and thoughtful "close readings" of quoted passages--both long and short--from the book you're writing about. If the concept of "close reading" is unfamiliar to you, don't worry; we'll spend a good deal of time on this in class. Secondly, I'll want to see that you can link a number of individual quoted passages together, using your readings as evidence to support a single overall argument. As I move between individual points in your essay, I will want to see that you've provided connections between each piece of quoted evidence

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as you proceed, and helped your reader keep an eye all the time on your overall argument (i.e., your thesis). These are very general guidelines; if you have specific questions I urge you to raise them in class or in office hours. Although I have required only a minimal rough draft for the first major paper, I encourage you to bring rough drafts to office hours if that would be useful for you.

Presentations: For our last day scheduled on Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, I will ask you to work in small groups to make presentations on various ways of understanding and interpreting the novel. We'll go over guidelines for this project as the time approaches.

Exam: The final exam will be designed to take about 1 hour to complete, though you will have the entire 2 hours in which to work. It will consist of short answer and essay questions and will cover both your knowledge of the books and of concepts covered in class. There will be no mid-term exam.

Grades: will be figured as follows:

Mid-Term Paper	30%
Final Paper	40%
Final Exam	20%
Short papers and work in class	10%

Absences: You may miss up to 3 classes without excuse or penalty. More than three absences will be grounds for failing the course.

Revised Schedule of Assignments, as of October 1

Thursday 10/1 Dickens catch-up, including #VII;
Friday 10/2 by 3:00 PM on my door: **One Page draft of Mid-Term Paper (extendable to Monday if you're working on *Jane Eyre*).**

10/6 Brontë vol. 3 (293-441); Dickens #VIII
10/8 Presentations on criticism
Friday 10/9 by 3:00 PM: **Mid-Term Paper due at my office**

10/13 Elliot Part 1; Dickens #IX
10/15 Elliot Part 2

10/20 (no class)
10/22 Elliot Part 3; Dickens #'s X and XI

10/27 Elliot Part 4; Dickens # XII
10/29 Elliot Part 5

11/3 Elliot Part 6; Dickens #XIII
11/5 Elliot Part 7

11/10 Elliot Part 8 and Finale; Dickens #XIV
11/12 Begin Gissing

11/17 Gissing, vol. 1 entire (35-196); Dickens #'s XV and XVI
11/19 Gissing vol. 2 (199-369)

Week of 11/24 & 11/26: Thanksgiving Break (no class)

12/1 Finish Gissing
12/3 Dickens #'s XVII and XVIII

12/8 Finish Dickens (#XIV); Miller on *Bleak House* (Handout)
(optional: rough draft of Final Paper)

Monday, December 14 , 1:30-3:30 PM - **Final Exam**

Wednesday, December 16 by Noon - **Final Paper** due at my office, 310 Palmer