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ENGL 351-01, Victorian Poetry and Prose, Spring 2003

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English 351, Spring 2003
MW 3:00-4:30 Palmer 208
Off. Hrs. TTH 11:20-12-50 & by appt.
Off: Palmer 310, x3744

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Victorian Poetry and Prose

Every period in European history or the history of the Americas can be said in some way to be a direct ancestor of our own. But while every period can make some claim of this kind, the nineteenth century can in a more powerful and far-reaching way be seen as the creator of the present. The pervasive influence of the industrial system of production and relatively rapid global transport, the economy of commodities and consumers it created, the instability of social systems based on such an economy – all these elements of life in the twenty-first century were new in the period 1837-1901, Victoria's reign and the period we consider in this course.

In response to and alongside huge changes in the shape of human life, nineteenth century people invented ways of coping, ways of thinking about themselves and other people, that helped things make a tiny bit of sense. These strategies for coping with modernity (a good word for summing up the weirdness of what was new in the nineteenth century) include a different sense of "the self," of human subjectivity; a changing set of ideas about gender and sexuality; a set of positions – for and against – the new industrial economy; a set of positions about global relations, about England's "identity" as a nation and the meaning of its conquest of a worldwide chain of colonies. These concepts and strategies, in many ways, still form the foundation of the dominant cultures in Europe and the U.S. I don't mean that everyone believes now the same things people believed 150 years ago. There's rarely any one unified "Victorian" belief on a given issue anyway. Rather, we inherited assumptions, concepts, norms, which are the tools of contemporary action and analysis.

Concepts and strategies like these aren't created overnight; they emerge with a kind of geologic slowness, layer on layer, out of all manner of cultural discourse: journalism, professional and academic writing, political reportage, and literature. To highlight particularly sensitive ideas in British cultures in this era, I've grouped prose texts into four clusters, each considering a particular topic. Around these clusters, we will survey the work of 5 poets. Not every issue in the prose clusters will illuminate every poem we read, but the context of these prose readings will help us see how poems speak to, respond to, create, or theorize common, everyday questions in different form.

Course Texts:

William E. Buckler, ed. - *The Major Victorian Poets: Tennyson, Browning, Arnold*

John Stuart Mill - *Autobiography*

A rather large course reader, available at the bookstore

Course Requirements:

Readings: To prepare readings for class, whether prose selections or poetry, make some note of passages or ideas or formal features that you're interested in or have questions about. It's your responsibility to raise questions you're interested in, and to direct our discussion to issues you feel are important.

Papers: All written work must be typed or printed, double-spaced with standard margins, grammatically correct and carefully proofread. I will provide a range of topics for 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 most centrally for your ability to provide detailed and thoughtful *close readings* of quoted passages--both long and short--from the texts 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 paragraphs in your essay, I'll look for connections between each piece of quoted evidence and a developing emphasis on your overall argument. These are very general guidelines; I will provide a handout on standards for excellent critical essays, and a specific handout on standards for the research paper you will write in the second half of the course. If you have specific questions I urge you to raise them in class or in office hours. I encourage you to bring ideas or drafts to office hours if that would be useful for you.

Late Papers will be marked down one third of a grade per day; e.g. an A paper would receive an A- if one day late, a B+ if two days late, etc.

Presentations: I'll be asking each of you to choose one reading and make a 5-10 minute presentation on it in class. I will discuss the guidelines for these presentations in the next few weeks.

Grades will be figured as follows:

Essay I	10%
Essay II	20%
Essay III	35%
Essay IV	25%
Presentation and other work in class	10%

Absences: You may miss up to 3 classes without excuse or penalty. More than three absences will affect your overall grade, and further absences will be considered grounds for failing the course.

Final Note: I reserve the right to schedule reading quizzes and/or a final exam for this course if it seems like people aren't doing the reading.

Schedule of Assignments*

Cluster I: The Romantic Artist and the Concept of the Individual

- 1/20 (No Class)
 1/22 Wordsworth selections (handout) (Guest Presentation by Dr. Melynda Nuss)
 Williams (R) *Culture and Society*, "Introduction" and "The Romantic Artist"
 1/27 Carlyle (R) *Sartor Resartus*, Book First (33-97) and Book Second, Chs. 7-9 (159-188)
 1/29 Mill *Autobiography*, 3-79
 2/3 Mill *Autobiography*, 80-131
 Carlyle (R) "Signs of the Times" (1-29)
 2/5 Tennyson "Ode to Memory," "Mariana," "Lady of Shallot"

- 2/10 " "Ulysses," "Locksley Hall," "The Epic," "Morte D'Arthur"
 2/12 " Begin *In Memoriam*

Friday 2/14: Essay I – close reading, 2 pages. Due at Palmer 305 by 3 PM

- 2/17 Tennyson Finish *In Memoriam*
 2/19 E. Barrett Browning (R) Everything up to *Aurora Leigh*
 2/24 E. Barrett Browning (R) *Aurora Leigh*
 2/26 " " " poems following *Aurora Leigh*
Friday 2/28: Essay II, 5 pages. Due at Palmer 305 by 3 PM

Cluster II: Domesticity, and "The Woman Question"

- 3/3 Patmore (R) selections
 Nightingale (R) "Cassandra"
 3/5 Mill [and Mill] (R) "On the Subjection of Woman"
 optional: Cobbe (R) "What Shall we Do with our Old Maids"

3/10 & 3/12 – spring break

Cluster III: The Critique of Industrial Capitalism

- 3/17 Ruskin (R) "The Nature of Gothic"
 " (R) "The Roots of Honour"
 3/19 Marx (R) "The Fetishism of Commodities" from *Capital I*
 " (R) from *German Ideology*

* Expect some changes and some rearranging.

3/24 C. Rossetti (R) Everything up to "Goblin Market"
 3/26 " " (R) "Goblin Market" and all that follow

3/31 R. Browning "My Last Duchess," "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister,"
 "Home Thoughts from Abroad"
 4/2 " " "A Grammarian's Funeral," "Andrea Del Sarto"
Friday, 4/4: Essay III, 12-15 pages. Due at Palmer 305 by 3 PM

4/7 R. Browning "Caliban Upon Setebos" (handout)

Cluster IV: "Culture," Nation, Empire

4/9 Arnold (R) "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time"

4/14 Macaulay "Minute on Indian Education"

Eliot (Marianne Evans) (R) "The Natural History of German Life"

4/16 Arnold (R) from "On the Study of Celtic Literature"

Fanon (R) from *The Wretched of the Earth*, ch. 1 "Concerning Violence,"

4/21 Arnold "The Forsaken Mermaid," "Memorial Verses" "The Scholar Gypsy,"
 "Dover Beach"

4/23 " "Empedocles on Etna"

4/28 Yeats selections (handout)

4/30 Pater (R) from *The Renaissance*

Wednesday, May 7: Essay IV, 5 pages. Due at Palmer 305 by noon.