

ENGL 8140: VICTORIAN LITERATURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Spring 2014, M 5:00-7:45 p.m., Daniel 301

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Office Hours: Strode 613, M 12-1, F 2:30-3:30, and by appointment



Thomas Eakins, Motion Study 1885

First emerging in the 1830s, the technologies of image production that became collectively known as photography profoundly transformed visual experience in the nineteenth century. Victorian photographic technologies made it possible to produce (and reproduce) images in a fraction of the time necessary for sketching or painting. Unlike paintings, it was sometimes claimed, photographs could show an observer the world as it was, rather than the world as it had appeared to the eye of the artist. As the nineteenth-century drew to a close, photography had become a tool of scientific analysis; a form of evidence in courtrooms; a pervasive means of disseminating images of events, monuments, and artworks; an inexpensive and ubiquitous form of portraiture; and the foundation of cinema.

The development of photography exerted a powerful influence on literature and the arts. Photography posed difficult questions about what it meant for literature to be “realistic.” George Eliot, for example, referred with contempt to what she called “literary photographs,” suggesting that without the careful interpretation and organization of experience neither literature nor photography could accurately represent the world. At the same time, photography helped to usher in radical changes in the modern understanding of how literature is experienced by readers. Segmenting the stream of visual experience into split-second still images, photography changed the nature of perception and memory. Looking back on these changes, Walter Benjamin remarked that after the nineteenth century, all art had become a form of photography.

In this class, we will explore the Victorian literary responses to the development of photography. We will ask how photography changes or challenges the understanding (our

own and in the nineteenth-century) of realism, naturalism, aesthetics, memory, and objectivity. Reading theoretical accounts of photography and its history along with Victorian literary texts and photographs, we will likewise seek to grasp how new technologies like photography transform what it means to read literary works in both the past and present.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Texts should always be brought to class when they are under discussion. No other editions are allowed. All other reading assignments will either be provided as hypertext links on the syllabus or available on Blackboard.)

Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (Hill and Wang, ISBN: 9780374532338)

Canales, *A Tenth of a Second: A History* (Chicago, ISBN: 9780226093192)

Hardy, *A Laodicean* (Penguin, ISBN: 9780140435061)

Levy, *Romance of a Shop* (Broadview, ISBN: 9781551115665)

Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Picador, ISBN: 978-0312422196)

Thomson, *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs* (Dover ISBN:978-0486281216)

Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* (Norton, ISBN: 9780393927542)

Zola, *The Masterpiece* (Oxford, ISBN: 9780199536917)

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

I allow you one absence for the entire semester, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. For each additional absence, I will subtract three points from your final grade. If you are less than 10 minutes late to class, please check with me at the end of class to ensure that you are marked present. You may leave if I am more than 10 minutes late myself.

You should participate several times in every class discussion. “Participating” means making thoughtful, informed comments. It means asking questions, responding to your classmates, and generally being an inquisitive, involved, contributing member of the class.

Good participation requires good preparation. As you read, annotate the text: jot down questions, make notes, and begin to formulate a response. Look up unfamiliar words and author bios. Use Internet and library resources to inform yourself about the reading. Make connections to what we have read previously. And bring what you have learned and observed to class for discussion.

MEETING WITH ME

You are welcome to come by during my office hours as many times as you would like, but you are **required to meet with me during my office hours at least once during the semester**. The choice of topics is yours but plan on checking in with me at least once.

ASSIGNMENTS

Discussion Leading: You will be responsible for leading class discussion during the first half of one of our meetings. You should formulate discussion topics and specific questions to help us engage with the reading.

Article Review: In this assignment, you will review at least three scholarly articles with some bearing on the texts and questions of our seminar and address the way they together form the outlines of a critical conversation. Ideally, you will use this assignment to get started on the research for your term paper.

Term Paper: At the end of the semester, you will hand in a 20-25 page paper on a text or a central question from the course. The paper should include significant research with secondary materials and present a cogent argument in the context of a broader critical discussion.

GRADES

Your final grades will be calculated as follows:

Discussion leading	15%
Participation	15%
Article Review	20%
Term Paper	50%

POLICY ON LATE WORK

I will not accept late work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The following is Clemson's statement on academic integrity:

"As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form."

Besides being easier to detect and document than you think, plagiarism (copying in part or whole someone else's work, or borrowing from another's work without proper attribution) is a good way to make both my life and yours considerably more difficult. If I catch you, I will mark the essay with a zero (which means you will most likely fail the class) and report you to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies. If you are confused about what constitutes plagiarism, please either ask me or consult the plagiarism guidelines provided by Clemson at <http://www.clemson.edu/academics/academic-integrity/plagiarismfromcu.html>

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Within the first month of classes, students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Arlene Stewart, Director of Student Disability Services, to discuss specific needs. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disabilities Services when they meet with instructors. Student Disability Services is located in G-20 Redfern (telephone number: 656-6848; e-mail: sds-l@clemson.edu). Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester.

SCHEDULE

1. Lucid Objects



"In teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe. They are a grammar and, even more importantly, an ethics of seeing."

Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Week 1
1/13

Course Introduction

Week 2
1/20

NO CLASS MLK DAY

Week 3
1/27

Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

Week 4
2/3

Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

2. Mementos Mori



"In Photography, the presence of the thing (at a certain past moment) is never metaphoric; and in the case of animated beings, their life as well, except in the case of photographing corpses; and even so: if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing."

Week 5
2/10

Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (*Obit*—sonnet 69)
Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia”

Week 6
2/17

Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (sonnet 70—epilogue)
Benjamin, “A Short History of Photography”
[Victorian Mourning Photographs](#)

3. Social Portraiture



"[Composite photography] enables us to obtain with mechanical precision a generalised picture; one that represents no man in particular, but portrays an imaginary figure, possessing the average features of any given group of men. These ideal faces have a surprising air of reality. Nobody who glanced at one of them for the first time would doubt its being the likeness of a living person. Yet...it is no such thing; it is the portrait of a type, and not of an individual."

Francis Galton, "Composite Portraits"

Week 7
2/24

Hardy, *A Laodicean* (Books 1-3, pp. 1-229)
“Memories of Church Restoration”

Week 8
3/3

Hardy, *A Laodicean* (Books 4-6, pp. 231-381)
[Portraits by Julia Margaret Cameron](#)

Week 9
3/10

Levy, *Romance of a Shop*
“Portrait Photography: the Victorians to the present day”

Week 10

SPRING BREAK

Week 11
3/24

Thomson, *Street Life in London*; Pater, Preface and Conclusion to *The Renaissance*; Daston and Galison, “Mechanical Objectivity”: Armstrong, Selections from *Fiction in the Age of Photography*

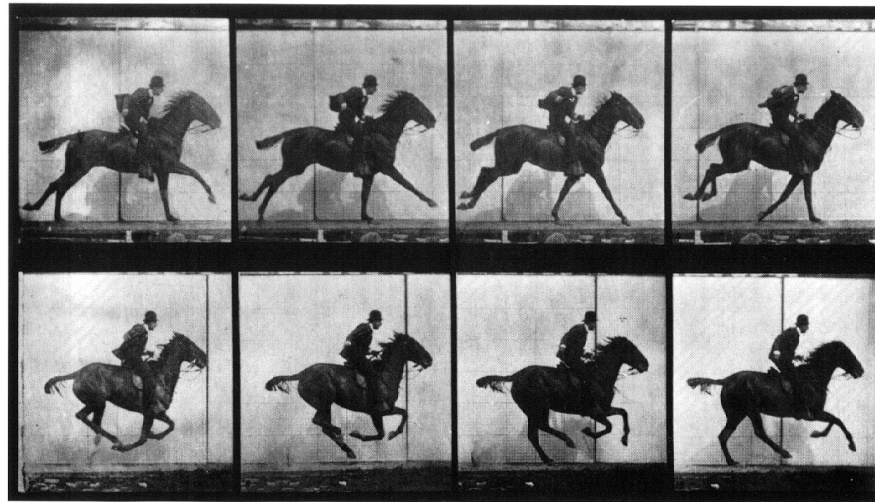
Week 12

3/31

Article Review Due

Canales, *A Tenth of a Second: A History*

4. Seeing Time in Motion



"It is the instinctive education furnished by visual persistence that makes the postures of passersby in instant photographs seem so bizarre. In our sensorium, every moment is tied to that which precedes it and that which will follow. We do not see the galloping horse as it is, but as it was and as it will be in a fraction of a second. So it is this continuous, unconscious synthesis that takes away the possibility of accepting as real the truth itself of things, as when it is shown to us by a photograph."

A. M. Bloch, "Psychologie: La Vitesse comparative des sensations"

Week 13

4/7

Zola, *The Masterpiece* (Ch. 1-7, pp. 1-196)

Marey's chronophotographs in *Picturing Time*

Week 14

4/14

Zola, *The Masterpiece* (Ch. 8-11, pp. 196-363)

Information on Eadweard Muybridge's [motion studies](#)

6. Photographic Subjects



Week 15
4/21

Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*
Novak, "Sexuality in the Age of Technological
Reproducibility"