

**ENGLISH 355.01**

T/Th 12:30-1:45 pm / Walsh 390

## The Other Victorians

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From doilies and ornate wallpaper to the stiff-necked curates and gossiping parlor ladies of *Masterpiece Theater*, the Victorian period (1837-1901) has long been stereotyped as a Great Age of Conformity. Criticism has replayed these popular images of Victorian orthodoxy by charting the powerful forces of normalization in this era: the rise of the middle class, the ascent of commodity capitalism, the establishment of modern gender hierarchies, and the consolidation of heteronormative “decency,” to name just a few.

But where canonical approaches to Victorian literature and culture have focused on literature’s ability to produce sameness, this class will focus on difference -- and on how literary thinking helped imagine it. Rather than attending to those modes of Victorian life most characteristic of the age, we will explore forms of being and thinking that were counternormative, antihegemonic, insurgent, queer, and strange. Our concern, in other words, will be on the possibility for otherness in an age of homogenization. When mass culture and social sameness threaten to subsume all difference, how might literature imagine the new?

Because these questions are simultaneously historical and theoretical, our readings will be organized along two axes, the balance shifting in the graduate and undergraduate sections. First, we will examine literary and critical writing from the Victorian era: canonical novels, key poetry, political theory, and items of erotica, ephemera, philosophy, and orientalism. Second we will sample modern thinking about difference by literary and cultural critics from a variety of traditions.

## Course Texts:

Please purchase the required texts online or at the GU bookstore. If you shop online, frugality will tempt you to buy different editions from the ones I list here: *DO NOT DO THIS*. **Be sure to search using the ISBN number I provide**, or you will end up with a possibly cheaper but certainly worse text. Recommended texts are just that: books you'll want to own if you're serious about studying the British nineteenth century.

### *Required texts:*

Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads* (Penguin): 9780140422504  
Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford World's Classics): 9780199541898  
Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford* (Penguin): 978-0141439884  
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Penguin): 978-0141439761  
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Penguin): 9780141439730  
HG Wells, *The Time Machine* (Hackett): 0743487737.

### *Optional texts:*

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*. (Vintage): 0679724699  
Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minnesota): (978-0816615155)  
Mill, *On Liberty and Other Writings* (Cambridge), 1989 (0521379172)

### *Additional Readings:*

A significant amount of our semester's reading will be posted on our "commonplace book" (i.e. the blog); these are marked on the syllabus with an asterisk (\*). You should plan to budget at least \$40 for printing these files in the required hard copy format. Please note that added together the texts for this class represent a significant savings over even the most horribly used science textbook. **I expect you to purchase all required books; print the PDFs in hard copy; read everything on printed paper; and bring all texts to class.** If this policy imposes a financial hardship on you, please see me and we can arrange confidentially to have the texts provided at no charge.

## Assignments:

### *Written Work:*

**Weekly posts to our online "Commonplace Book."** Once per week (i.e. once every two classes), each seminar participant will make a short contribution to the class "commonplace book," and all class members are encouraged to continue discussion outside of class by commenting on one another's posts. In keeping with the practice of commonplace book-keeping in the Victorian era, our posts can take any form at all: they might be an argument about the week's reading; a close reading of a single passage; a set of discussion questions in dialogue with other posts; or a more creative critical engagement of your own design. You might also find and electronically "clip" into the book a piece of Victorian writing, art, or mass culture that you see as relating to what

we've read. (In this case a word about the relation would be appropriate.) You are required to vary the form of your entries over the term. *Posts must be associated with one of the two class meetings, and are due by the relevant day, no later than 8 am. Thus a post for Tuesday's class is due by Tuesday, 8 am; for Thursday class, Thursday at 8.*

**Close reading assignment (primary).** (2 pages, single-spaced.) Details for this exercise in close reading will be provided, but essentially this is an assignment in the hyperbolically slow apprehension of a textual artifact. Your task will be to take time to appreciate this object in all its dynamic specificity: terms, tips, and helpful suggestions will be provided. You are not meant to argue but to *read*: your job is to notice everything. Details to be announced.

**Close reading assignment (secondary).** (2 pages, single-spaced.) Same as above, but engaging with a secondary source of your choosing. Focus is on microstylistic details and their conceptual consequences. Details to be announced.

**Annotated bibliography.** After devising a topic of inquiry for your final paper in consultation with me, you will prepare an annotated bibliography on your topic, consisting of no fewer than 10 sources (journal articles, books / book chapters, or archival sources), each with 3-5 sentences of explanation. Details to follow.

**Seminar paper.** (10-12 pages, normal font.) This is a sustained academic argument that follows the format of a published scholarly article, if slightly shorter. Focused and drum-tight, this paper is intended to build upon the assignments you have produced up to this point -- but you are free, too, to move outward and upward, incorporating new texts and different ideas than you've worked with to this point. The bibliography for this project should derive substantially from the annotated one you've already created. You will turn in a draft version of the paper's argument in advance of the final due date.

#### *Presentations and Participation:*

**Curatorial Presentation.** (10 minutes) Each member of the seminar will be asked to discover and *curate* a Victorian object for the class: the root of "curate" is "care," so this project asks you to learn about your object, meditate on its significance to our class and your thinking, and to care. This assignment will involve techniques of close apprehension, fine-grained reading, and intimate appreciation -- and research. Details to follow.

**Ad-Hoc Critical Presentations.** (3-5 minutes) Individual members of the seminar will be made responsible, from time to time, for presenting one of our supplementary readings to the group; these short, informal presentations (c. 3-5 minutes) should summarize the argument's key points and critical assumptions, then offer one or two critical questions to incite discussion. This assignment is designed to exercise your ability to quickly synthesize and restate critical arguments. Part of in-class participation grade.

**Sharing of Your Research.** (5-8 minutes) At the end of the term we'll hold an informal mini-conference that will replicate the format of a professional academic conference: you

will prepare a short oral presentation of your research, which you'll present to your peers; discussion will follow. Part of in-class participation grade.

### **Policy on Late Work:**

Reliability is important, and respect for our shared academic endeavor means that lateness is strongly discouraged. Papers and other assignments will be penalized the equivalent of one letter grade for each day beyond their due date, with the first 24 hour period beginning immediately. Please see me in advance if extraordinary circumstances arise. Incompletes are offered only in genuinely exceptional moments of duress, as in *Jekyll and Hyde*, when Sir Danvers Carew is clubbed randomly in the street.

### **Course Grading Policy:**

Your final grade for this course will reflect the quality of written work you produce; it will also reflect the quality of your participation in the collaborative labor of the course. Thus, your thoughtful responses to the texts, your active participation in class discussions, and your level of commitment to our shared work will all contribute crucially to your final grade. Breakdown:

Commonplace book participation:	15%
Participation:	20%
Close reading assignment (primary):	10%
Close reading assignment (secondary):	10%
Curatorial Presentation:	8%
Annotated Bibliography:	12%
Seminar Paper:	25%

### **Absence and Tardy Policy:**

The seminar-style nature of this course makes your presence in class imperative. Two absences are allowed, for any reason. After that, and without exception, a 1% penalty from your final grade will be assessed for each absence. Six absences is an automatic failure of the course. Please don't come to class late; three late arrivals count as one absence.

### **Plagiarism:**

The absolute prohibition here should be understood, but it is here contractually made clear that academic dishonesty of any kind will result, at the very least, in immediate failure of the course. See the Georgetown Honor System website for guidelines: <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. In all matters I expect you to observe the Georgetown honor pledge: *To be honest in every academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community as we live and work together.*

### **Disabilities, Special Conditions, Etc.:**

I'm committed to providing whatever I can to help you be successful in this course. For details about medical and other dispensations, please see:

<http://guarc.georgetown.edu/disability/accommodations/>; and visit me early in the term to discuss how I can help.

### **Guides for Further Study and Research:**

Thinking conceptually about literature is difficult, since it entails showing how minute textual details reconfigure concrete historical dilemmas. For your research of matters Victorian, please consult the list of resources on our class Commonplace Book. Only after exhausting these options should you bother with Wikipedia. Please stay away from online summaries not mentioned here. And as always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions about this material. We're in this together. I'm here to help.

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## **COURSE SCHEDULE: THE OTHER VICTORIANS**

*[Please note that the calendar is subject to change; I reserve the right to alter readings as our progress dictates. Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are electronic resources on our class weblog]*

### ***Week 1: Models of Critique***

#### **Thursday, August 29: Introduction: Containment / Subversion / Other?**

Eliza Cook, "The Englishman" (Handout)

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### ***Week 2: On Ideology***

**Tuesday, September 3:** "Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "Ulysses" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade"\*; "The Victorian Era," from *The Norton Anthology of British Literature: The Victorian Era*\*; Asa Briggs, "Victorianism" from *The Age of Improvement*\*

**Thursday, September 5:** Alfred, Lord Tennyson: "Maud, A Monodrama"\*; Raymond Williams: "Ideology," from *Marxism and Literature*\*

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### ***Week 3: The Ladies' Circle***

**Tuesday, September 11:** Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*.

**Thursday, September 12:** Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, cont'd; Michel Foucault, from *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*.\*

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### ***Week 4: The Ladies' Circle II***

**Tuesday, September 17:** Library orientation & collections tour with Melissa van Vuuren. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, cont'd; selected cookery and conduct books, TBD.\* **Class meets in Dubin Room, Lauinger Library, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor.**

**Thursday, September 19:** Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford*, concluded; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, “What is a Minor Literature?,” from *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*\*

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**Week 5: Underworlds, Other Worlds?**

**Tuesday, September 24:** Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* / **CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT (PRIMARY) DUE**

**Thursday, September 26:** Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, cont’d. Lewis Carroll, Selected Photography\*

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**Week 6: The Science of Difference, c. 1859**

**Tuesday, October 1:** Charles Darwin, From *The Origin of the Species* (1859)\*  
E. Grosz, “Biological Difference” and “Conclusion,” from *Nick of Time*\*

**Thursday, October 3:** John Stuart Mill, from *On Liberty* (1859)\*

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**Week 7: The Past is Another Country I**

**Tuesday, October 9:** Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*

**Thursday, October 10:** Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, cont’d.; Mikhail Bakhtin, from “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel”\*

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**Week 8: The Past is Another Country II**

**Tuesday, October 15:** Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, cont’d.

**Thursday, October 17:** Emily Bronte, *Wuthering Heights*, cont’d.; R. Williams, “Dominant, Residual, Emergent” from *Marxism and Literature*\*

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**Week 9: The Past is Another Country III**

**Tuesday, October 22:** Emily Bronte, Selected Poems\*; Elizabeth Gaskell, from *The Life of Charlotte Bronte*\*

**Thursday, October 24:** No class, reading day. Professor Hensley at NAVSA conference. / **CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENT (SECONDARY) DUE BY EMAIL BY FRIDAY, 12 PM**

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**Week 10: Pleasure and its Inversions**

**Tuesday, October 29:** A.C. Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*, selections; reviews of Poems and Ballads\*

**Thursday, October 31:** A.C. Swinburne, *Poems and Ballads*, selections, cont'd.; Sigmund Freud, from "The Economic Problem of Masochism"\*; G. Deleuze, "Psychoanalysis and the Problem of Masochism" and "The Death Instinct," from *Coldness and Cruelty*\*

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**Week 11: Queer Aristocracies**

**Tuesday, November 5:** Oscar Wilde, selected poems & short writing\*; *The Yellow Book*, excerpts\*; Michael Field, selected poems.\*

**Thursday, November 7:** *Note: Class meets at 3:30 pm, New North 311, for guest lecture via Skype, Professor Kristin Mahoney.* (Recorded version to be available online.) Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), *Stories Toto Told Me*, especially "Why the Rose is Red" and "About the Lilies of Sanluigi," "About Some Friends" and "About the Love Which is Desire and the Love Which is Divine"\*; Corvo, select photographs.\* Optional: Kristin Mahoney, "Camp Aesthetics and Inequality: Baron Corvo's Toto Stories."\*

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**Week 12: Countersecularisms**

**Tuesday, November 12:** Helena P. Blavatsky, from *The Voice of the Silence*\* and/or Sophia De Morgan, From *From Matter to Spirit: The Result of Ten Years' Experience in Spirit Manifestations*\*; Alex Owen, "Culture and the Occult at the Fin de Siecle"\* / **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE**

**Thursday, November 14:** Edward FitzGerald, "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam"\*; Edward Said, Video Interview on *Orientalism*\*

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**Week 13: Counterhumanisms**

**Tuesday, November 19:** Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

**Thursday, November 21:** Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, cont'd.; Barbara Herrnstein Smith, "Animal Relatives, Difficult Relations"\*

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**Week 14:** No class: Thanksgiving Holiday. **Make up class, Monday, November 25: Reception and informal research presentations.**

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*Week 15: The Future as Absolute Other?*

**Tuesday, December 3:** H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* / **DRAFT OF FINAL ARGUMENT DUE**

**Thursday, December 5:** H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*, cont'd; Fredric Jameson, "Progress vs. Utopia, or: Can We Imagine the Future?"; Conclusion. Is difference possible?

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*Final papers due in hard copy Monday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, 12 pm.*