

English 537 (E): Victorian Radical Politics

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Fall 2017: M 3:00-4:50, EB 113

Office Hours: Wed. 1:30-2:30, EB 264

The roots of many of today's political conflicts can be found in the nineteenth century. In Britain, these included the working-class Chartist movement for electoral reform; first-wave feminism, free love, and the rise of the suffrage movement; Irish nationalism, famine, terrorist violence, and the push for Home Rule; the rise of socialism, the Fabian Society, the Trades Union movement and the Labour Party; and anarchist radicals inspired by Bakunin and Kropotkin. Victorian Studies has tended to be a historicist discipline, but we will also be attentive to "presentist" echoes and approaches that this material has for us in an age of sharpened political struggle. Literary study has developed many sophisticated ways of analyzing the "political unconscious" (Fredric Jameson's term)—that is, material that is subtly political, micro-political, or shaped by a cultural argument—but we should not neglect ways in which literary authors engaged *explicitly* with political subject matter, even in ways we might find didactic. Our postmodern "cultural studies" has roots in the quest of British writers (like Carlyle and Arnold) to figure out ways of unifying a nation riven by industrial conflict.

In this class, we will be using Compass to post discussions online before class, and holding a mini-conference to present our research paper at the end of the semester. Your grades will be based on the following assignments:

- 1) At least eight one-paragraph-long contributions to the online Compass discussion forum, posted at least two hours before class (15%);
- 2) One class presentation to start off class discussion (10%);
- 3) One 500-word "conference abstract" (10%);
- 4) One 15-minute conference-style talk at the end of the semester to present the basic argument of your research paper (10%), and
- 5) One research paper of approximately 20 pages (50%).

General class participation will count for 10%.

The online discussion board is meant for you to circulate ideas before the class about what you think is most confusing or interesting in that week's reading. Your comments can be fairly spontaneous, and thoughtful but not too long. If you're registered for the class, you can click on the course page at <https://compass2g.illinois.edu>. Click on that week's "Discussion Board" link to access the discussion. Please post your comments at least two hours before class. If you can't get to the web, you can type out your comments and bring them to class.

Once this semester, I'd like you to come prepared to start the class with a brief (15-minute) class presentation. You can write this out if you wish, or use PowerPoint, but an outline or list of topics should be sufficient. Your presentation should include the

following elements 1) brief biographical or historical background; 2) important and surprising points in the text; and 3) critical controversies about the text, of which you can sometimes find summaries while investigating (1). Be sure you have identified several passages that you would like the class to pay attention to.

The mini-conference during the last week of classes is meant to help transform your ideas into presentations that could theoretically be given at a professional conference. “Calls for papers” for these conferences are announced in professional journals or via the CFP website at cfp.english.upenn.edu. To get into a conference, you send in an “abstract” of an argument, with the title of your proposed paper, that you think will appeal to the conference organizers. If your paper is accepted, you then write a paper that can be read in 20 minutes or less (about 10 pages). Neither the abstract nor the paper should be cluttered with jargon, and the paper should be presented in a lively manner with a clearly organized argument. Although we increasingly illustrate our talks with visual aids, we still usually write our papers out completely, using exquisitely-crafted sentences. However the risk of reading a boring or impenetrable paper to our audiences remains high, and should be actively combated using methods we will discuss later in the semester.

I would like the research paper to include at least some literary analysis. That is, you can either focus on a problem in one of our literary works, and use your critical background to illuminate or recast it; or focus on a theoretical question and illustrate your argument about it using some literary work (preferably but not necessarily one read in class). You should know something about the history of how and when that work was written. Look at recent journal articles to familiarize yourself with the possible shapes of scholarly argument and clever new vocabulary.

Required Reading

Please purchase the following books, which are available at the U of I Bookstore. Other readings denoted with an asterisk (*) will be accessible through links to Google Books or Hathi Trust on the Compass site, or made available in PDF form on the Compass website, or handed out in paper copy in class. Readings may change slightly at the discretion of the instructor.

Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, ed. Kate Flint (Penguin)

Friedrich Engels, *Condition of the Working Classes in England*, ed. Victor Kiernan (Penguin)

Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, ed. Shirley Foster (Oxford)

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. Patricia Ingham (Penguin)

George Bernard Shaw, *George Bernard Shaw's Plays*, ed. Sandie Byrne (Norton)

William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (Penguin)

Schedule of Readings

Week 1: The Political Unconscious and the Political Conscious

M Aug 28 *Alex Woloch, Introduction to *Or Orwell* (2016)
*Percy Bysshe Shelley, "The Masque of Anarchy" (1819, published 1832)

M Sept. 4 NO CLASS (Labor Day): *go fight or rest*

Week 2: The Crisis of Industrial Political Economy

M Sept 11 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1853), plus "Introduction"
*Walter Arnstein, from *Britain Yesterday and Today*, 3-58

Week 3: Engels and Carlyle: New Responses to Industrial Turmoil

M Sept 18 Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*
(German version 1845; English translation 1885): "Foreword" by Victor
Kiernan (9-25), "Introduction" (50-67), "The Great Towns" (68-110),
"Competition" (111-122), "Irish Immigration" (123-6); also see the map (32)
and English Preface (34-46).
*Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times" (1829)
*Friedrich Engels, Review of Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1844)

Week 4: Strikes and Chartism

M Sept. 25 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (1848): Chapters 1-23
*E. P. Thompson "The Irish," from *The Making of the English Working
Class* (1963) (429-44)
*Chris Vanden Bossche, "On Chartism" in *Branch* online

Week 5: The Emotional Labor of Factory Life

M Oct. 2 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*: Chapters 23-Conclusion
Shirley Foster, "Introduction" to *Mary Barton*
Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1854): Chapters 1-16

Week 6: The Middle Classes Seek A Solution

M Oct. 9 Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*: Chapters 17-Conclusion
Patricia Ingham, "Introduction" to *North and South*
*Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (1958), "The Industrial Novels"
(87-109)

Week 7: Ireland: O'Connell, Young Ireland, and the Famine

M Oct. 16 *Malcolm Brown, from *The Politics of Irish Literature: From Thomas
Davis to W. B. Yeats* (1972): Chapters 4-7 (58-115)
*Terry Eagleton, Chapter 1 of *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (1995)
(1-26)
*Lady Wilde ("Speranza"): "The Famine Year," "The Exodus" (1847)

Week 8: Ireland: Transatlantic Fenians, Terror, and Home Rule

M Oct. 23 *Malcolm Brown, *The Politics of Irish Literature*, Chapters 10-14, 18, 20
*Deaglán Ó Donghaile, "Imperialism and the Late Victorian Dynamite
Novel," from *Blasted Literature: Victorian Political Fiction and the Shock
of Modernism* (2011) (61-93)

Week 9: Shaw and Fabian Socialism

M Oct. 30 George Bernard Shaw, "Mrs. Warren's Profession" (1898), "Major Barbara" (1907); Preface; optional criticism (363-420)
Eleanor Courtemanche, "Fabian Essays" in *Branch* online

Week 10: The Violent Struggle for Women's Suffrage

M Nov. 6 * Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (1914)
* Olive Schreiner "Three Dreams in a Desert" (1890)

M Nov. 13 NO CLASS: *start researching your final paper*

Thanksgiving Break

Week 11: Morris from Socialism to Anarchism

M Nov. 27 William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1891) (41-228)
From "A Dream of John Ball" (1886-7) (25-39)
Conference Abstract Due (500 words)

Week 12: European Anarchism and Free Love

M Dec 4 Kristin Ross, from *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (2015): "Introduction" (1-10), Chapter 4 "The Seeds Beneath the Snow" (91-116)
Prince Peter Kropotkin, from *The Price of Bread* (1892): "Introduction" by David Priestland (vii-xxxii), Chapter 5 "Food," Chapter 9 "The Need for Luxury," Chapter 10 "Agreeable Work," pp. 129-34, 188, 208
* Edward Carpenter, "Homogenic Love, and Its Place in a Free Society" (1894) (Google Books)

Week 13: Mini-Conference

M Dec. 11 **20-minute conference-style talks**

Final Paper Due: Wednesday, December 20 at 5 pm