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**English 254: The English Novel from the Victorians to the Moderns**  
Fall 2007, 12:30-1:50pm

**Course Description**

In this course, we will examine the rise of the British Victorian novel as a genre. Placing these novels in their historical and critical contexts, we will explore such concepts as gender and sexuality, the marriage plot and its variations, class relations, “Englishness” and colonialism, religion, technology, and psychology and subjectivity, among others. We will also consider such aesthetic and cultural topics such as split narration, serial publication, and shared readership.

To pull these texts together, this semester we will specifically explore what has been called the “Victorian Gothic.” The rise of realism generally coincides with the rise of the Victorian novel, and yet gothic elements (such as the supernatural and the melodramatic) appear again and again, in everything from fairly realistic texts like *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House* to the distinctively Victorian “sensation novels” of Wilkie Collins and Mary Elizabeth Braddon. The century ends with a proliferation of classic horror novels, among them one of the most famous monster tales of all time, *Dracula*. What does the gothic offer that realism doesn’t? Why did Victorian novels use the gothic so extensively? These are questions we will consider, even as we will keep the very definition of “gothic” open for discussion.

**Required Texts**

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (pub. 1847)  
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (serialized 1852-3)  
Wilkie Collins, *The Moonstone* (serialized 1868)  
Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret* (serialized 1861-2)  
Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (pub. 1897)

**Course Requirements and Grade Percentages**

Attendance (required)  
Midterm Exam: 20%  
Final Exam: 40%  
Weekly reading quizzes: 15% (total)  
Weekly in-class writing: 15% (total)  
Participation, including one presentation: 10%

**About the Course Requirements**

**Midterm Exam:** This exam will consist of two parts: a brief identification/short answer section, and an essay question, both to be completed in a class period. The exam will focus on the first two novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Bleak House*.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will also consist of two parts: a comprehensive identification/short answer section to be completed during the scheduled exam time, and a take-home writing assignment due on the exam date. The final exam will be comprehensive and draw on your ability to synthesize information from the entire semester.

**Reading Quizzes:** Each Tuesday, you will take a five-question quiz on the reading due that day. If you are caught up on the reading, these should not be difficult; I will not try to trick you. Quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

**In-Class Writing:** Because the reading load is considerable, outside response papers will not be assigned. Instead, you will be asked to respond to a writing prompt at the beginning of each Thursday class for 5-10 minutes. These responses will be evaluated on their level of engagement (including but not limited to accuracy, attention to detail, questions and interests, and risk-taking) with both the text and the prompt. I will, of course, take into consideration the serious limitations of time when reading the responses. It is your responsibility to contact me about making up this writing if you are unavoidably absent; I allow only two make-up writing assignments.

**Participation:** This is a discussion class; therefore, I expect everyone to make a concerted effort to contribute verbally and to listen and respond to your classmates with respect. Obviously, you must keep up with the reading in order to participate in conversation. If you never speak in class, it will be hard for me not to assume you haven't done the reading. I understand that speaking in class is more difficult for some students than for others, but I hope everyone will make a sincere effort to contribute. Likewise, in order to help create a comfortable environment where opinions can be expressed, those of you who have no problem speaking in class should make an effort not to dominate, but to allow others the space to speak as well.

Simply showing up will not earn you an above-average grade. Here are some general grading guidelines for participation:

A: Student contributes enthusiastically and frequently (but without dominating) in both full class and small group discussions, offers opinions, raises questions, etc.

B: Student contributes often to both full class and group discussions, or supplements a quiet demeanor in general discussions with a leadership role in smaller groups.

C: Student rarely speaks either in full class or group situations but appears attentive.

D: Student never speaks in full class and rarely in groups.

F: Student is disruptive, unconscious, or otherwise blatantly inattentive.

**Presentation:** Each student is responsible for one five-minute long presentation on a historical or literary topic related to one of the texts. You will sign up for presentations in the first week of classes, and must submit your resources to me. If you must use the internet, established literary websites such as the Victorian Web ([victorianweb.org](http://victorianweb.org)) or The Charles Dickens Page ([charlesdickenspage.com](http://charlesdickenspage.com)) are acceptable, but Wikipedia is expressly forbidden.

**Attendance and Tardiness:** Be sure to arrive on time—if for no other reason than the fact that quizzes and writing assignments will take place at the beginning of class. You are allowed **two** absences for this class. Please reserve them for illness and emergencies. After two absences, your participation grade will be lowered by half a grade for each subsequent absence (i.e., a B becomes a B-). Five absences will result in a failing grade.

### **Formatting Your Papers**

All papers must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, and printed in black ink, with one-inch margins. Please staple your papers, number each page, and include the following information in the top left-hand corner of the first page: your name, the class name and number, my name, the date, and the paper number (i.e. Response #1). Always title your papers (including responses) and proofread carefully.

### **Office Hours**

I am always willing to meet with students outside class to discuss any aspect of the class. I will regularly be in my office during my office hours, but I am also available by appointment. Please email me or speak with me in class to set up a time. If you are trying to contact me on a Tues or Thurs about a meeting that day, you may also call my cell phone, 617-909-3161, as I will probably be at Simmons or on my way, even if I'm not in my office. Please use this number sparingly.

## Fall 2007 Schedule

*Note: The schedule is subject to change.. Though it is not required, I recommend reading ahead when possible.*

Sept 6 Introduction to the Victorian Novel and the Gothic Tradition

Sept 11 Brontë, *Jane Eyre*: Chapters 1-15 (all of Volume 1)

Sept 13 *Jane Eyre*: Chapters 16-22 (through Volume 2, chapter 7)

Sept 18 *Jane Eyre* Chapters 23-36 (through Volume 3, chapter 10)

Sept 20 *Jane Eyre* through end

Sept 25 Dickens, *Bleak House*: Chapters 1-13

Sept 27 *Bleak House*: Chapters 14-16

Oct 2 *Bleak House*: Chapters 17-25

Oct 4 *Bleak House*: Chapters 26-29

Oct 9 Academic Holiday, no classes

Oct 11 *Bleak House*: Chapters 30-38

Oct 16 *Bleak House*: Chapters 39-49

Oct 18 *Bleak House*: Chapters 50-56

Oct 23 *Bleak House*: Chapters 57-end

Oct 25 In-Class Midterm

Oct 30 Collins, *The Moonstone*: Prologue (“The Storming of the Seringapatam”) and First Period (“The Loss of the Diamond”)

Nov 1 *The Moonstone*: “First Narrative” of the Second Period (Contributed by Miss Clack)

Nov 6 *The Moonstone*: Second Period (“Second Narrative” though “Eighth Narrative”)

Nov 8 *The Moonstone*: Epilogue (“The Finding of the Diamond”)

Nov 13 Braddon, *Lady Audley’s Secret*: Volume 1

Nov 15 *Lady Audley’s Secret*: Volume 2

Nov 20 *Lady Audley’s Secret*: Volume 3

Nov 22 Thanksgiving

Nov 27 Stoker, *Dracula*: Chapters I-XIII

Nov 29 *Dracula*: Chapters XIV-XVI

Dec 4 *Dracula*: Chapters XVII-XXV

Dec 6 *Dracula* through end; class wrap-up

Final Exam Date TBA