

ENGLISH 206: BRITISH LITERATURE, 1800-PRESENT



Tuesday/Friday 12:00-1:50 p.m., CRAIG-LEE 204

Professor Russell A. Potter

<http://englishsurvey206.blogspot.com/>

Gold-rimmed mirror of imperial bravado, uncanny, twisted looking-glass of the melancholic artist, and preferred panacea for the restless masses, the panorama of British literature from 1800 to the present presents us with the construction, and later smashing, of many a marble idol. In today's ironic world of downloadable video and Bluetooth-enabled soundtracks to our lives, the world of pen and paper and print may seem antique and distant, an old heap of inky nonsense of no possible relevance. And yet, remarkably enough, the people who produced and consumed such nonsense were every bit as alive, as passionate, and as capable of extremes of idealism or cynicism as ourselves, and beneath their papery skin, their blood pulsed as vigorously as ours. And more than that: the texts of this period are very much still the texts of our moment, and if we do not read them are doomed to something even less than repeating them: we must live blindly within their confines, like blind squatters in some half-abandoned mansion of the mind.

In this class, we'll strive, as Ezra Pound once put it, to "resuscitate the dead art," to read this diverse collection of texts as though they – and we – still breathed such air. We'll begin with those wonderful folks who first alloyed conscience and desire, the "Romantics." We will curse

the bloodless schoolmaster with Blake, visit the humble cottager with Wordsworth, and sail into silent seas with Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Then it's time for the drugs: we'll chase after opium-fuelled carriages with De Quincey, and watch with Walpole as an immense, mail-clad hand clangs down upon our stairs. Next, it will be time to put away such vanities, and enjoy the furtive fruits of widespread social repression; it will be time for the tightening of corsets as we wander the fountains and crystal palaces (built just on top of open sewers) known as the Victorian Age. We will explore both the surface world of pre-Raphaelite pleasantries and patent processes, as well as the underworld of cheap lodging-houses, twelve-hour workdays for children, and a London in which more than 250 people a month died of typhus and water-borne diseases (including Prince Albert!). Among our guides here will be Carlyle, Dickens, George Eliot, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Having indulged, by then, in one too many rich pastries (or perhaps expired from drinking a glass of Thames water), we'll toss all we've studied once more into the rubbish bin of history, and try to shore a new modernism against these ruins. Our aides in this second sea-change will include Wyndham Lewis with his **BLAST!**, Eliot with his Waste Land, Woolf in her room of her own, and Joyce with his crafty epiphanies. Lastly, having ridden the roller-coaster of modernism, we'll watch it all crack up again, with the exploded generations of two world wars, the bitter reaction against Britain's colonial exploitation, the emergence of postcolonial poetry and art as empire's evening returns into sand, amidst which two vast and trunkless legs . . . and so it goes.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Each week, we'll have assigned readings from the *Norton Anthology of British Literature* (9th ed.) along with our *Blogger* site and links. The readings must be completed by the date listed. Starting in Week II, a brief (1-2 paragraph) response essay will be due to be posted on the course blog no later than Tuesday morning before class. There will also be a mid-term and a final essay of 4-6 pages, as well as a final examination. Any paper may, if you wish, be revised and re-submitted; if it earns a higher grade, that grade will take the place of the previous one. Revisions, however, must be accompanied by the original paper. Class attendance, and participation in discussion (online and in class), counts for 30% of your final grade, so these are absolutely vital parts of being a successful student in this class. The rest of the grade comes from the mid-term (25%), the final (35%), and the final exam (10%).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In accordance with College and departmental policy, I take instances of academic dishonesty very seriously. Any instance of plagiarism, which is the use of texts written by others without appropriate credit – and therefore claimed as one's own – will result in an automatic grade of "F" on a written paper. All instances of academic dishonesty are reported to the Chair of the department.

CLASSROOM COURTESY

Out of consideration for your fellow students, and in order to create an environment conducive to learning and discussion, all cell phones must be turned off, and all laptop computers must be closed and put away for the duration of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK I (Sept. 2). Tuesday: Introduction to class. NO CLASS FRIDAY

WEEK II (Sept. 9, 12). Tuesday: *William Blake*, from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*: “The Echoing Green,” “The Shepherd,” “The Lamb,” “The Little Black Boy,” “The Chimney Sweeper” (*Innocence*) “The Clod and the Pebble,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” “Nurse’s Song,” “The Sick Rose,” “The Tyger,” “The Garden of Love,” “London” (*Experience*). Friday: *William Blake*, excerpts from “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell” especially “Proverbs of Hell”; “And did those Feet?” -- Jerusalem” – and its adaptations (blog).

WEEK III (Sept. 16, 19). Tuesday: *Lyrical Ballads*. 1798 “Advertisement” (blog); Wordsworth: “We Are Seven,” “The Tables Turned,” “Lucy Gray,” “Strange fits of passion I have known,” “My heart leaps up,” “I wandered lonely as a cloud” (with Bullwinkle adaptation on blog). Friday: Coleridge, “Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner,” “Kublai Khan.”

WEEK IV (Sept. 23, 26). *Ruins* Tuesday: Shelley, “Ozymandius”; Keats, “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles” (429); Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” (with illustrations by Girtin and Dayes). Friday: *Frankenstein*, Book I.

WEEK IV (Sept. 30, Oct. 3). *Hideous progeny* Tuesday: *Frankenstein*, Book II. Friday: Finish *Frankenstein*.

WEEK V (Oct. 7, 10). *Meet the Victorians* Tuesday: Introduction to the Victorian era (pp. 1051-1073); Mayhew, selections from *London Labour and the London Poor* (blog). Friday: *Inventing the Police*: W.H. Wills and Charles Dickens, “The Metropolitan Protectives,” Dickens, “On Duty With Inspector Field” (blog links).

WEEK VI (Oct. 14, 17). *Panoramas and Palaces* Tuesday: Panoramas – the All-Encompassing View: Introduction to the Panorama, moving panoramas, the Garibaldi Panorama, “Panorama of the Great Exhibition” (blog links). Friday: The Crystal Palace. Photographs of the Great Exhibition, “Have you gone to the Crystal Palace?” *Punch*: What should be done with the Crystal Palace; Morley, “What is not clear about the Crystal Palace”; Mr. Punch’s Dark Exhibition. (blog links).

WEEK VIII (Oct. 21, 14) *Divisions of the Late Victorian Self* Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Norton).

WEEK IX (Oct. 28, 31). Tuesday: *Irish Revivals*. Tuesday: Yeats, “Song of the Wandering Aengus,” “When you are old,” “A Dialogue of Self and Soul,” “The Second Coming,” “Easter 1916,” “Crazy Jane and the Bishop,” “Sailing to Byzantium,” “Lapis Lazuli.” Friday: *To War!* Owen, “Dulce et Decorum Est”; Rosenberg, “Break of Day in the Trenches,” “Dead Man’s Dump”; Gurney, “To His Love,” setting of Yeats’s “Down by the Salley Gardens”; The Accrington Pals (blog).

WEEK X (Nov. 7). *Waste Lands*. NO CLASS TUESDAY Friday: Eliot, “The Hollow Men,” “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

WEEK XI (Nov. 11, 14). *Modernism’s Streams of Consciousness* Tuesday: May Sinclair on Dorothy Richardson; excerpt from *Pointed Roofs* (blog); Mansfield, “The Daughters of the

Late Colonel.” Friday: Joyce, “Araby,” excerpt from *Finnegans Wake* (Anna Livia), with audio (*blog*).

WEEK XII (Nov. 18) *And whither then?* Virginia Woolf, “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown.” NO CLASS FRIDAY

WEEK XIII (Nov. 25) *The Postcolonial Turn* Tuesday: Louise Bennett: “Jamaica Language,” “Colonization in Reverse”; John Agard, “Listen Mr. Oxford Don” (with audio version); Philip, “Discourse on the Logic of Language.”

WEEK XIV (Dec. 2, 5) *But he’s not there* Tuesday and Friday: Beckett, “Waiting for Godot.”

WEEK XV (Dec. 9, 12). *Postmodernism and its discontents*. Tuesday: J.M. Coetzee, from *Waiting for the Barbarians*; “He and His Man.” Friday: Review for exam.