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 that 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 English Literature* (8th 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. Only after an individual meeting in which such plagiarism is discussed in detail will I consider the possibility of writing a substitute assignment. Any further violations of this policy will result in an “F” for the course as a whole. 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 II** – (Sept. 7, 10) – **Tuesday:** Blake, from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (pp. 111-126) “And did those feet”; Monty Python skit and audio recording of Blake’s “Jerusalem” (Blog links). **Friday:** *Lyrical Ballads*. 1798 “Advertisement” (Blog link); 1800 preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*; Wordsworth: “We Are Seven,” “Lucy Gray,” “The Tables Turned,” “Strange fits of passion I have known,” “Three years she grew,” “She dwelt among untrodden ways.”


WEEK VII – (Oct. 15) – The Elegiac Mode. Friday: Algernon Charles Swinburne, “Elegy for Sir John Franklin”; Sir Edwin Landseer, “Man Proposes, God Disposes” (Blog links); Matthew Arnold, “Dover Beach,” Hopkins, “No worst, there is none” (NAEL). (No Tuesday Class this Week)

WEEK VIII – (Oct. 19, 22) – Late Victorians and the Divided Self. Tuesday and Friday: “Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” with Blog links to films & dramatic treatments. Essay #1 due Tuesday


WEEK XIII – (Nov. 23) Postmodern Permutations. Tuesday: J.M. Coetzee, from Waiting for the Barbarians (NAEL); “He and His Man” (Nobel lecture 2003; Blog link).

WEEK XIV – (December 7, 10) Tuesday: Review. Essay #2 due Friday.