

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
ENG 7340-01: "Neo-Victorian Novel"

Dr. Hope Jennings, Spring 2021
Online with set meet time: Wed 5:00–7:00 p.m.
Email: hope.jennings@wright.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

As a broad definition, Neo-Victorian fiction engages with the textual, cultural, historical, and social politics and conventions of the Victorian age. For the purposes of this class, we will be reading postmodern literary texts that convey a “knowing” or self-conscious engagement with the Victorian period and novel (rather than simply borrowing from or reiterating its conventions) in order to examine and challenge key configurations, legacies, and influences of Victorian culture and its relationship to contemporary discourses concerning gender and sexuality, empire, and the historical imagination. Our discussions of assigned texts will center on how and why postmodern authors revise and re-imagine Victorian fiction and include exploration of nineteenth-century socio-political preoccupations with race, class, gender, sexuality, childhood, imperialism, religion, science, and literary culture. We will investigate the following key questions prompted by Neo-Victorian trends:

- Why has the Neo-Victorian novel come to be such a popular genre for contemporary authors and readers? What does this tell us about the concerns of our own time period?
- How does the nation imagine and narrate itself through literary texts from both past and present eras? What are some of the tensions and alliances that exist between fiction and historiography? How do we transmit our knowledge of the past; how do we even know the ‘truth’ of the past? How does historical fiction both produce and interrogate the past?
- How do frameworks of nationalist rhetoric and ideology contribute to social constructions and literary representations of gendered bodies and identities?
- To what extent do Neo-Victorian novels critique nationalist and gendered myths of identity and what are the dangers of nationalist nostalgia, as articulated by Thatcherism and current social anxieties related to globalization and neo-imperialism?

Required Texts

Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*. Anchor, 1997. **ISBN:** 9780385490443
Julian Barnes, *Arthur and George*. Vintage, 2007. **ISBN:** 9781400097036
A.S. Byatt, *Possession*. Vintage, 1991. **ISBN:** 9780679735908
Michel Faber, *The Crimson Petal and the White*. Harvest, 2003. **ISBN:** 9780156028776
Alasdair Gray, *Poor Things*. Dalkey Archive Press, 2002. **ISBN:** 9781564783073

Recommended*

Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel*. Routledge, 2010. **ISBN:** 9780415426626
Kate Mitchell, *History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction* (available in Pilot)

*Additional readings in literary criticism and theory available in Pilot.

Course Evaluation: grades are based on the following points (1,000 total):

Participation	150
Presentation	100
Blogs/Resources	350
Seminar Proposal/Paper	400

The grading scale is as follows:	
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
0-59%	F

Participation (15%)

We will have a Zoom class discussion of the assigned readings and related critical approaches every Wednesday from 5:00—7:00 pm (classes will **not** be recorded). Students are expected to attend class fully prepared to contribute to discussion, which includes completing all reading assigned for that day, responding to questions, and engaging respectfully with peers. You will also need to prepare at least one question in response to the readings and post this question in the Zoom chatbox. If you meet all of these expectations then you will receive full credit (FC/fully present); if you log in to Zoom but are clearly unprepared or unwilling to participate, do not post a question, or are not present when called on to discuss your question, you will receive partial credit (PC/non-participatory); if you are absent or engage in any disruptive behaviors (see general conduct rules below), you will receive no credit (NC/absent). Simply showing up to class does not mean you are fully present, and absences are factored into your final participation grade, which is based on the average of points that you've earned. **NB: Missing more than 3 classes, including partially missed classes, will lead to at least a full letter grade deduction (100 points) from your overall final grade for the course.**

Blogs (25%) and Resources (10%)

You will create a personalized, individual website where you will post a series of blogs in response to the assigned novels. Think of your website as a professional portfolio that showcases the research and writing that you will be doing throughout the semester. You must do a total of 5 blog posts (50 pts. each) and these will be due every other Friday (starting Week 3). Blogs may be focused on any theme or topic related to the genre of Neo-Victorian literature—use these writing assignments as a space for exploring potential ideas that you may develop into the seminar paper. At the end of each blog, you should also include a resource section (20 pts each) where you provide links to historical/cultural research and intertexts and a few sentences explaining or annotating why they are relevant to the novel. Resources should be clearly formatted with active hyperlinks and ideally connected to the topics that you discuss in the corresponding blog. **See course website for detailed guidelines and rubrics.**

Presentation (10%)

Once during the semester, each of you are responsible for leading class discussion alongside a PPT presentation. Presentations will be scheduled during the last four weeks of the semester and focus on *The Crimson Petal and the White* as a case study of Neo-Victorian fiction. Your presentation need not cover the entire book, but specific passages or aspects of the assigned section for that week's discussion. Presentation and discussion facilitation will last about 30-45 minutes (depending on class size), and should do the following:

- facilitate rather than control discussion on the given reading
- draw out, through class discussion a clear sense of the reading's main themes and arguments, including clarification of key terms, before moving on to problems, questions, and connections raised by the reading.
- encourage informed, focused, and inclusive dialogue between members of the class.

Your PPT does not need to be too long or detailed; think of it as a teaching tool that helps guide and shape participation and discussion. You will be assessed according to the above criteria and the clarity of your presentation.

Proposal for Seminar Paper (10%)

As part of your final paper, you need to submit a proposal (400-500 words), due Friday of Week 12. The proposal should lay out a working thesis for the final paper, any theoretical frameworks you will use for the paper, and the kind of evidence you will present in the paper based on the research you have done so far. Please be as specific as you can; the proposal should include few if any quotations. The proposal should indicate how your critical essay can help us to understand the literary work you will write about. Basically, tell us why this topic is worth writing about in relation to this text, and what readers will learn after reading your essay. All the above material will anticipate the paper's introduction, though you will likely end up revising this material after you receive feedback on your proposal. The proposal needs to be accompanied by an annotated bibliography that consists of 7-10 secondary sources on which you will draw for your argument. The annotation should give us a high-level summary of the source (you may not need to read the entire book or essay to develop this; introductions are your friends). The annotation should also indicate how this source will contribute to your anticipated argument.

Seminar Paper (30%)

For this essay, you should write on any of the assigned novels. You are expected to provide an arguable thesis supported by textual analysis and scholarly and/or theoretical sources. Your thesis should in some way connect your analysis of the text to any relevant themes, issues and/or contexts explored throughout this class. For example, you might explore one, or a combination, of any of the following: gender, class, race, sexuality, childhood, religion, science, nation, imperialism. Some key themes could include: spectrality/ghosts; memory/trauma (historical, national and/or individual); sight/vision; truth vs. fiction, borders/boundaries (temporal, spatial, or literary); empire and nostalgia; evidence/knowledge of the past; language and identity. Or you might focus on or relate any of these issues/themes to questions of genre and/or literary theory, such as: Neo-Victorianism, postmodernism, historicity, historiographic metafiction, authentic fallacy, intertextuality. Essays should be 3,000-3500 words (12-15 pages) with at least 7-10 secondary sources. Essays must follow MLA Style guidelines and all secondary sources should be scholarly and critical in nature; you are more than welcome to use any of the articles provided in Pilot but must also demonstrate independent research. **Due:** Friday of exam week by midnight (11:59 pm); late submissions will not be accepted, no exceptions.

ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES & POLICY

Penalties for academic dishonesty and student procedure in academic dishonesty prosecution are clarified in the *Wright State University Student Handbook* and on the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct website at: <http://www.wright.edu/students/judicial/integrity.html>. Plagiarism is using other people’s ideas and/or words without crediting them and is considered intellectual theft; paraphrasing also requires citations and page numbers. For further information about plagiarism, refer to: <http://www.wright.edu/academics/writingctr/resources/plagiarism.html>.

INSTRUCTOR POLICY ON PLAGIARISM: If any portion of submitted work is plagiarized, you will receive a “0” on that assignment; if you commit a second offense, regardless of circumstances, you will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to disciplinary action.

Course Schedule

NOTE: Subject to changes.

WEEK	DATE	READING & WRITING ASSIGNMENTS
ONE	1/13	Introduction: Neo-Victorianism—Critical Debates and Historical Contexts Jerome de Groot, “Postmodernism and the Historical Novel” Kate Mitchell, <i>History and Cultural Memory in Neo-Victorian Fiction</i> (Ch. 1-2) Grace Moore, “Twentieth-Century Re-Workings of the Victorian Novel”
TWO	1/20	A.S. Byatt, <i>Possession</i> , Ch. 1-14 (pp. 3-296)
THREE	1/27	<i>Possession</i> , Ch. 15-28/Postscript (pp.297-555)
	1/29	Blog/Resources #1
FOUR	2/3	Margaret Atwood, <i>Alias Grace</i> , Parts I-VII (pp. 3-231)
FIVE	2/10	<i>Alias Grace</i> , Parts VIII-XV (pp. 235-460)
	2/12	Blog/Resources #2
SIX	2/17	Julian Barnes, <i>Arthur & George</i> , Parts 1-2 (pp. 3-254)
SEVEN	2/24	<i>Arthur & George</i> , Parts 3-4 (pp. 257-441)
	2/26	Blog/Resources #3
EIGHT	3/3	Spring Break
NINE	3/10	Alasdair Gray, <i>Poor Things</i> , Introduction and Ch. 1-15 (pp. 9-151)
TEN	3/17	<i>Poor Things</i> , Ch. 16-Notes (pp. 152-317)
	3/19	Blog/Resources #4
ELEVEN	3/24	Michel Faber, <i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i> , Part 1 (pp. 3-124)*
TWELVE	3/31	<i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i> , Part 2 (pp. 127-274)—Presentations
	4/2	Seminar Paper Proposal Due: Friday 11:59 pm
THIRTEEN	4/7	<i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i> , Part 3 (pp. 277-494)—Presentations
FOURTEEN	4/14	<i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i> , Part 4 (pp. 497-667)—Presentations
FIFTEEN	4/21	<i>The Crimson Petal and the White</i> , Part 5 (pp. 671-835)—Presentations
	4/23	Blog/Resources #5
EXAM WK	4/30	Seminar Paper Due: Friday 11:59 pm

*Pagination for *The Crimson Petal and the White* may not match, since I am using an UK edition.

GENERAL CONDUCT & COURSE POLICIES

- You are expected to compose yourself as if in a professional environment. This includes attending class regularly and on time, being prepared for each class session, and contributing to course requirements as if you were in a workplace. Unprofessional behavior will imperil your ability to get a good grade, but also your ability to receive a letter of recommendation from me should the need arise. I request that you address me as Dr. Jennings and not by first name.
 - Electronic devices may only be used for taking notes and/or referring to assigned readings. Cell phones must be on silent and video/audio recording of class discussions are not permitted.
 - Respect toward peers and the instructor includes active listening, even if your views differ, and refraining from bigotry and intolerance toward others. Although your individual opinions about the texts and issues explored in this class are encouraged, you must be able to present your interpretations or stance through an informed lens, using critical thinking and/or verifiable evidence beyond personal beliefs or anecdotal experiences (such as reference to textual examples, reliable secondary sources, or socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts).
 - You are expected to follow the class calendar and assignment guidelines. If you are confused about any of these it is your responsibility to ask for clarification, and NOT the night before something is due. I do not accept late submissions and any missing assignment will receive a zero. All submission deadlines are posted in the class calendar below as well as in Pilot.
 - Extensions are granted ONLY in extreme cases of illness or emergency, which must be documented and, if possible, communicated to me *before* the due date and not after the missed deadline. Regardless of circumstances, I reserve the right to deny any requests for extensions and will only grant incompletes to students who have consistently attended class and are missing no more than 1-2 assignments. I do not offer individual extra credit opportunities; extra credit assignments are rarely provided and only as an option available to the entire class.
 - Raider Mail is the best way to communicate with me. You can expect to receive a reply within a 24-hour period on weekdays; I normally do not respond to e-mail on weekends. Check the newsfeed on the course homepage in Pilot for any class updates or info. If I make changes to the syllabus or class calendar, I explain these in class and post them in Pilot.
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USEFUL CAMPUS & ONLINE RESOURCES

University Libraries: The University Libraries are the scholarly information center for the University. In support of the University's mission of educational excellence, the Libraries collect, organize, preserve, and facilitate access to scholarly resources in all formats; support teaching, learning, and research in an intellectually open environment; and provide instruction in the use of traditional and new information resources and technologies. The libraries' online catalog, databases, and interlibrary loan service is essential for conducting research. Web page: <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/>

CATS: Faculty are not experts in trouble shooting Pilot or computer programs of any type. The quickest way to resolve technical issues is by using the resources at the HELP Desk: 937-775-4827 or 1-888-775-4827.

The Student Technology Assistance Center (STAC): Located in the Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, the STAC provides Wright State students with the tools to make productive use of multimedia. Students can create original academic and creative works using either Windows or Macintosh computers. The STAC employs trained student mentors who share a wealth of experience, skills, and backgrounds. In a unique peer-to-peer learning environment, knowledgeable mentors are available to assist students with their projects several hours each week. At other times, the STAC is open and available as a DIY space with access to the latest software applications. The library has technology to borrow such as cameras, tripods, green screens and more for your multimedia projects. Students can also schedule individual appointments with STAC staff for individual help on projects.

<https://libraries.wright.edu/stac/>

Counseling and Wellness Services: If you are suffering from depression or have any other mental health concerns, please be aware that counseling services are available on campus. Counseling and Wellness offers a wide range of services to the Wright State University community, including the following: group, individual, couples, and family counseling, crisis intervention, and outreach. They offer specialized services on a variety of mental health, multicultural, diversity, and wellness issues. Location: the bottom level of the Student Union off the Atrium and below the Admissions Office in suite 053. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 775-3407 or stop by to set an appointment. Web page: <http://www.wright-counseling.com/>

Disability Services: If you require course accommodations due to a disability, please inform me so we can make arrangements early in the quarter. For more information about support services offered by Disability Services (E186 Student Union), call 775-5680; TTY: 775-5844. Or visit their Web page: http://www.wright.edu/students/dis_services/