

Dr. D'Amico

English 455: (T/Th 9:30, Fall 2011)

Office: 231 Odd Fellows

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Office Hours: MWF 8:50-9:50 and Wed. 1:30-2:30 and Tues/Thurs 10:50-11:50, and by appointment. If my office hours and your available time do not coincide, simply see me or email me to make an appointment for a time convenient for both of us.

**Course Title: Topics in Victorian Literature: Religion and the Victorians**

**Main Texts:**

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (1843), Broadview [Dickens, 1812-1870]

Charlotte Bronte, *Villette* (1853), Broadview edition [Bronte, 1816-1855]

Emily Bronte, *Poems*

Christina Rossetti, *Poems and Prose* (Oxford edition) [Rossetti, 1830-1894]

Alfred Tennyson, *Selected Poems* (Penguin edition) [Tennyson, 1809-1892]

Eliot, *Silas Marner* (Oxford edition) [Eliot, 1819-1880]

Cox & Gilbert (eds.) *Victorian Ghost Stories*

**Supplemental Texts** worth being familiar with:

King James translation of the Bible: (I have not ordered copies for you; I am assuming you will be able to consult Bibles available in the library or on-line.)

*Book of Common Prayer*, prayer book of the Anglican Church (I have not ordered copies for you; however you may find that you may wish to consult this book. Copies are available in the library.)

Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one of the most widely read of religious texts. Available on line

**Course Description:** This class will examine specific Victorian literary texts within the context of a sampling of the religious controversies that characterize the Victorian Age (1837-1901). Such an approach will allow us to cover a wide range of issues. For example, when reading Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, we shall consider the influence science, especially the field of geology, had upon religious beliefs. In reading *Christmas Carol*, we shall consider Dickens's use of a religious feast day to arouse concern for the working poor of his own time. When reading the poetry of Rossetti, we will consider how interpretations of the biblical Eve, Mary Magdalene, and the historical Jesus shaped attitudes towards women's rights and constructions of femininity and masculinity. When reading Bronte's *Villette*, we shall examine the tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants. When reading *Silas Marner*, we shall consider Eliot's own religious mythmaking.

**Goals:**

- To increase your knowledge of the Victorian Age
- To give you the opportunity to develop your understanding of the cultural/historical approach to literature.
- To improve your research skills in the area of literary and historical research
- To challenge you to develop longer and more complex analytical essays, in other words, to build on what you learned and practiced in FS 102, FSEng 201 and English 200.

**Schedule of Readings:**

Sept 1: Introduction to the Victorian Age

Sept. 6: Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, pp. 39-116

- Sept 8: Dickens, "A Christmas Dinner (1836) pp. 138-141  
Dickens, "What Christmas Is, As We Grow Older" (1851) pp. 182-186
- Sept. 13: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (prologue to #50)
- Sept. 15: Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (# 51-epilogue)
- Sept. 20: Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, continued if needed
- Sept. 22: Tennyson, selection of other Tennyson poems
- Sept. 27: Bronte, *Villette*, pp. 5-150
- Sept. 29: Bronte, *Villette*, pp. 150-210
- Oct. 4: Bronte, *Villette* pp. 210--300  
**PAPER #1 DUE (on or before this date)**
- Oct. 6: Bronte, *Villette* pp. 300-400
- Oct. 11: Bronte, *Villette*, pp. 400-496
- Oct. 13: Emily Bronte, Poetry (Specific poems will be assigned.)
- Oct.18: **Fall Break**
- Oct. 20: Bronte, Poetry
- Oct. 25: Rossetti, "Apple-Gathering," "Goblin Market," "The World"
- Oct. 27: Rossetti, "Eve," "A Daughter of Eve," "Helpmeet for Him"
- Nov. 1: Rossetti, "A Royal Princess," "Prince's Progress," "Up-Hill," "Resurgam"
- Nov. 3: Rossetti, *Later Life* (sonnet sequence)
- Nov. 8: Rossetti, "A Christmas Carol" (1872), and a selection from Rossetti's devotional prose included in the Humphries edition
- Nov. 10: Eliot, *Silas Marner*, pp. 3-65
- Nov. 15: *Silas Marner*, pp. 65-146  
**PAPER # 2 DUE (long essay requiring research)**
- Nov. 17: *Silas Marner*, pp. 146-176
- Nov. 22: *Silas Marner*, discussion continued
- Nov. 29: Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 29: *Victorian Ghost Stories* (A selection will be assigned.)

- Dec. 1: *Victorian Ghost Stories*
- Dec. 6: *Ghost Stories*
- Dec. 8: *Ghost Stories*
- Dec. 13: Conclusions
- Dec. 17: **FINAL EXAM (Saturday): 7:00 p.m.** Please do not ask me to reschedule the exam for your convenience. For me to do so would be unfair to the other students.

Course Guidelines:

**Attendance: Attendance is required.** Your semester grade will be lowered a third of letter grade for every absence beyond three: For example, if your semester grade is a B and you have **four** unexcused absences, your semester grade will be a B-. If you have five absences, your grade will be a C+, and so on. (I accept excuses only for illness or a genuine family emergency. Be sure to have the dean of students' office contact me if a family emergency does arise.)

**Class Participation.** Class participation is very important, especially in a 400-level course. This class is kept small in order to encourage your participation. I expect you to come to class prepared and ready to answer questions and offer insights of your own. (I may call on you even if you do not have your hand raised.) Remember that seeming interested and coming to class is **not** enough for a good grade or even an average grade in class participation. You must speak. See my note below regarding the grading of class participation.

**Papers:** Two papers are required. I shall give more specific directions and advice later in the course. However, I would like to indicate now that although I will give some guidance to help you with these papers, I will be putting you more on your own in this class than I would in a lower-level course. You may, therefore, want to keep a list of ideas and/or questions you have about the readings as the course develops.  
Please do not email papers to me; I do not accept electronic copies. **I expect printed copies with your signature.**

**Paper Deadlines:** Please remember that your papers are due at the beginning of the class hour on the day specified. If you turn the paper in later during the day it is due, then your grade will be lowered a partial grade; in other words a B will become a B-. If the paper is a day late, it will be lowered a full letter grade, and so on. If you are having trouble with a paper, see me before the actual due date, so we can discuss your problems. I am certainly willing to help you with your papers and to talk with you if you are having difficulties. Sometimes extensions are possible, but you must show some responsibility and take some control by making the effort to come see me.

**Final Exam:** My plan is to assign take-home essays due on Dec. 17. Also, on that day, you will be taking a closed-book portion of the exam, consisting of short-answer questions.

**Honor Code:** Please read and reread the section in the *Compass* on the honor code. Pay special attention to the section regarding plagiarism. Do be very careful when doing paraphrases. Be absolutely certain that you are not relying on the original phrasing and sentence structure.

**Semester Grades:** Paper #1: 20%  
Paper #2: 30% (will require some research)  
Final Exam: 30% (Take home essays with in-class portion)  
Class Participation: 20%

Evaluation of class participation: I expect that you will come to class prepared and that you will act respectfully towards the other students in the class, towards me, and the material. This behavior is the minimum for earning a D for class participation. To move to the level of C, you must actually contribute to class discussion. In other words, if you prepare assigned study questions or short research assignments and are therefore ready when called on, then you can expect that behavior will earn you a C. To reach the B level you need also to volunteer responses during each class, perhaps at least once or twice a class. For the A level, you need to be a consistent contributor to class discussion and your comments need to be relevant and insightful.