

English 301: Forms of Fiction (The Neo-Victorian Novel)

Spring 2011

Dr. D'Amico

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Office Hours: MWF. 10:50-11:50, Tues/Thursday 10:45-11:50, and Wednesday 1:30-2:30, and by appointment. If you can not meet during my scheduled hours, contact me, and we will set up another time convenient for both of us.

Course Description: A somewhat new literary term is entering our language: the Neo-Victorian Novel. (While it has not yet made it into the *Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms*, there is a rather new scholarly e-journal dedicated to Neo-Victorian studies.) At present, the term is sometimes being used to refer to late 20th-century novels (and a few early 21st-century ones) that are set, at least in part, during the British Victorian (1837-1901) and Edwardian periods (1901-1910), and importantly, that also in some way comment on the Victorian period and its people (especially famous writers) and/or imitate actual Victorian novels or techniques. In this course, we will work towards our own definition of the term by reading a selection of what I see as examples of this evolving genre. In order to give you some basis for comparison, we shall also read two Victorian novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, along with a sampling of Victorian poetry. As we engage in this reading, we will not only consider characteristics of the Neo-Victorian form, but also explore possible reasons for such recent and current interest in the British Victorian Period.

Goals:

To construct a definition of the New-Victorian novel and in so doing increase your understanding of literary form.

To continue to develop the interpretive skills you practiced in English 200 or FSENG 201, especially close reading.

To learn, at least on the introductory level, something about the Victorian writers and their time, and thus increase your historical literacy.

To get some practice reading scholarly articles.

To identify possible reasons for the recent and current interest in the Victorian Period, and in so doing, learn a bit about the world from the 1960's to today.

Required Texts:

Bronte, *Jane Eyre* Bedford edition [JE first published 1847]

Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Norton edition) [JH first published 1886]

Martin, *Mary Reilly* (1990)

Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (Norton edition) [WSS first published 1966]

Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969)

Byatt, *Possession* (1990)

Toibin, *The Master* (2004)

James, *The Turn of the Screw and Other Short Fiction* (Bantam edition)

Murfin and Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (You most likely had to buy a copy of this for English 200 or FSENG 201; therefore you may already own it.)

Readings and Assignment Due Dates:

Jan. 20: The Victorian Period: A Few Facts and Impressions

Jan. 25: Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (This is a Victorian novel, not a Neo-Victorian one.)

- Jan 27: Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
- Feb. 1: Reception of JH: Norton edition, pp. 93-104.
Sociohistorical Contexts for *Jekyll and Hyde*: Norton, pp. 141-149
Martin, *Mary Reilly*, 3-100
- Feb. 3: Martin, *Mary Reilly*, pp. 100-155
- Feb. 8: Martin, *Mary Reilly*, pp. 155-263
- Feb. 10: Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (This is a Victorian novel.), pp. 19-62
Paper #1 Due
- Feb. 15: Bronte, *Jane Eyre* , pp. 62-207
- Feb. 17: Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, pp. 207-317
- Feb. 22: Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, pp. 317-441
- Feb. 24: Bronte *Jane Eyre*
Newman, "A Critical History of Jane Eyre" pp. 445-457 (Bedford edition)
Gilbert, "Plain Jane's Progress," pp. 475-501 (Bedford edition)
- March 1: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pp. 9-71
Rhys, selection of letters in Norton edition
- March 3: Rhys *Wide Sargasso Sea*, pp. 71-112
- March 8: Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
Thorpe, "'The Other Side:' Wide Sargasso Sea and Jane Eyre, pp. 173-181 in
Norton
Rody, "Burning Down the House: The Revisionary Paradigm", pp. 217-225 in
Norton edition
- March 10: Byatt, *Possession*
Paper #2 Due.
- March 15: Byatt, *Possession*
Tennyson, "The Lady of Shalott" (available on-line but handout provided)
- March 17: Byatt, *Possession*
- March 20-27 Spring Break**
- March 29: Byatt, *Possession*
- March 31: Byatt, *Possession*
Byatt writing as Maude Bailey, piece published in *Victorian Poetry* (available
through JSTOR)
- April 5: Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

- Hood, "Bridge of Sighs" (on-line or handout)
- April 7: Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
Paper #3 Due
- April 12: Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
Arnold, "To Marguerite" and "To Marguerite, Continued." (on-line or in handouts)
- April 14: Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
- April 19: Toibin, *The Master*
James, "The Turn of the Screw" (As you read, Toibin's novel, you should also be reading James's "Turn of the Screw," a long short story.)
- April 21: Toibin, *The Master*
James, "Turn of the Screw" Have this story finished by today.
- April 26: Toibin, *The Master*
- April 28: Toibin, *The Master*
James, "The Beast in the Jungle"
- May 3: Conclusion: so what is a Neo-Victorian novel and why would an author write one?
- May 6: Friday, Final Exam 7:00 p.m.**
(A portion of the exam will be take-home essays; they will be due May 6th at 7:00 p.m. Electronic submissions are **not accepted**; printed copies must be given to me.)

Course Guidelines:

Attendance: Attendance is required. **Four** unexcused absences will lower your semester grade a partial letter grade: a C+ becomes a C. Five unexcused absences will lower your grade 2/3 of a grade; in other words, a B- becomes a C. Six unexcused absences will lower your grade a full letter grade. If you miss more than what amounts to three weeks of class (more than six absences), you must come see me to talk about your attendance problem or have the counseling center notify me. If I do not hear from you, I shall have to lower your final grade even more.

Here are examples of excused absences: missing class because of an illness (one verified by the health center or a doctor), missing class because of a family emergency (one verified by the Dean of Student's Office). Here are examples of unexcused absences: missing class to work on your senior project or some other assignment, missing class because of oversleeping, missing class to help a friend get to the airport.

Honor Code: Read and reread the section in the honor code regarding plagiarism. Be certain that you understand that paraphrases must be cited properly in the text of your paper (not just in the list of works cited.) and make certain that you understand that paraphrasing requires that you use your own words and sentence structures. Simply changing a word or two or varying the sentence structure will not do: that is still plagiarism.

Paper deadlines: Papers are due at the beginning of the class hour on the day specified.

Papers must be submitted in printed form; electronic submissions are not acceptable. If you turn your paper in later in the class hour or later that day, your grade will be lowered a 1/3 of a letter grade; in other words, a B- will become a C+. If the paper is turned in the next day, the grade will be lowered 2/3; in other words, a B- becomes a C. If the paper is two days late, then the grade will be lowered a full letter grade. Papers are not to be slipped under my office door. If you are turning in a paper late, you should ask the secretary to sign it and date it, and then you should put it in my department mailbox.

Please note that I do sometimes accept requests for extensions on papers; however, to be fair to the other students, I expect that you will act responsibly. That means I expect that you will see me before the paper is due to discuss the problem.

Graded Assignments: More details will be given out as you approach the due dates.

paper #1: 20 %

paper #2: 20%

paper #3: 20%

Final Exam 30% (There will be an in-class portion [closed book], and there will be take-home essays due at this time.

Oral participation during class discussions: 10%

Class Participation: Average to Excellent class participation **means more than** simply coming to class, behaving properly (not sleeping and not talking to your neighbor) and looking interested. To receive an average, above average or excellent grade in participation, you must actually speak and contribute in a meaningful way to the class discussion. I should also add that I do take into account the quality of your remarks. You should also feel free to ask questions in class. Sometimes a good question also helps facilitate discussion.

Here are some guidelines to help you understand how I evaluate class participation. These are general guidelines in terms of whole letter grades. If you come to class, look interested and stay awake and act respectfully towards remarks made by others, that behavior earns a D. If you come to class, look interested and have your prepared comments (I will sometimes assign questions for you to prepare) ready when I call on you or invite you to raise your hand, that behavior earns a C. If you come to class, look interested, have prepared comments ready and are willing to offer those comments in class, **and also volunteer on your own at least once or twice a class** that is a B. If you do all this but also volunteer more often than once or twice a class and have perceptive things to say, that is an A.

Note on the calculation of grades. I use the college system. In other words, an A is a 4.0, a B is a 3.0, and a C- is a 1.7. I change the letter grades into numbers by following this system, and then I calculate according to the percentages I have indicated above. If the calculation results in a split grade, that is a 2.5 for example, to be fair to those students earning a 2.7 –2.8, I feel I need a clear reason to assign the higher grade, the B- for example and not the C+. For example, if your second and third papers were truly excellent and superior to your earlier written work, I might be able to justify the higher grade.

Movie Adaptations: Movie adaptations have been made of Martin's *Mary Reilly*, Fowles's *FLW* and Byatt's *Possession*, and Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

Neo-Victorian Studies: As I mentioned in the course description above, there is a new e-journal available that I would like you to know about: *Neo-Victorian Studies*. Their web site gives the following description: "Neo-Victorian Studies is an inter-disciplinary, peer-reviewed e-journal dedicated to contemporary re-imaginings of the nineteenth century in Literature, the Arts and Humanities. This journal is "hosted" by Swansea University, Wales, UK.