

ENGL\*6811 Special Topics in English: Popular Culture Theories and Methods  
Prof. Jennifer Schacker Fall 2018

This grad seminar explores some of the theories and methods that can be mobilized when objects of study fall in the broad domain of "popular culture." We will start the semester with discussion of Karl Bell's *The Legend of Spring-Heeled Jack: Victorian Urban Folklore and Popular Cultures*, a study that moves between the domains of oral, print, and performance cultures. This initial case study points us towards some of the ways in which the academic disciplines of English, cultural studies, performance studies, folklore, and ethnography have overlapped and intersected (or can do so), especially in regards to key concepts such as representation, reception, narrative, materiality, embodiment, ideology, subjectivity, and identity.

As we move towards the design and execution of students' own projects, we will think critically and creatively about the theoretical underpinnings of those projects as well as the methods appropriate to particular research questions: these are likely to include forms of archival research, textual analysis and close reading, audience studies, oral history, and participant observation. In addition to a final paper, shorter exercises will offer opportunities to experiment with these varied research methods.