

Preliminary Web Course Description

*Please note: This is a preliminary web course description only. The department reserves the right to change without notice any information in this description. The final, binding course outline will be distributed in the first class of the semester.

School of English and Theatre Studies

Course Code: ENGL*4250	Course Title: 18th- & 19th-century Literatures	Date of Offering: W'21
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Course Instructor: S. Brown	Course Format: Hybrid
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Brief Course Synopsis:

Reading the Victorians is a challenge for several reasons: historical distance; lengthy texts; and the volume of texts available, which computational methods make it possible to “read” with machines through methods both seductive and controversial. This course asks how various approaches to reading can help us engage meaningfully with differences in Victorian writing: gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, and class, as well also subtler forms of difference related to social conflict, discursive shifts, stylistic innovations, and historical change. It will consider close, surface, symptomatic, suspicious, postcritical, social, reductive and algorithmic or distant reading. Students will be invited to develop an understanding of the complex ways in which we can read for difference in relation to texts and contexts.

The entire class will read a single novel together: George Eliot’s novel *Middlemarch*. Since *Middlemarch* was published in monthly parts, we will create a relatively “slow reading” experience by reading one “Book” (about 100 pages) of *Middlemarch* in each of the first 8 weeks, accompanied by readings about modes of reading. Alongside this shared reading, students will develop a corpus of texts that reflect their own interests and develop a case study to explore an aspect of difference in Victorian writing combined with the use of computational methods for exploration, analysis, and/or non-traditional presentation. The corpus may be small or large, depending on the nature of the case study and the tools chosen to pursue it, and may be composed of fictional or non-fictional prose, poetry, drama, criticism, biographical, and/or historical materials from nineteenth-century literature in English, including Canadian literature, depending on student interest and the focus of the case study.

Most case studies will be exploratory and provisional rather than exhaustive and will result in a heightened understand of critical and/or computational methods as well as insight into an aspect of Victorian writing or literary history. Case studies can address a wide array of topics, such as: What do geographical references within a text or groups of texts indicate about engagement with empire? Can computational tools provide insight into aspects of genre or characterization? What does reading texts for internal social networks, or groups of texts for networks of influence or discourse, reveal about social dynamics? How can we read for race, gender, class, or sexuality across a set of texts? Can stylistic differences or the critical history of a text or author be illuminated through computational methods?

Methods of Evaluation and Weight:

5%	Reading of a passage from <i>Middlemarch</i>
15%	Presentation and written summary (on reading mode or digital tool)
20%	Reading journal shared at least one day before class meetings (10x)
15%	Participation through online annotation; discussion online or in class
45%	Project (graded in multiple components)

Texts and/or Resources Required (e.g. Internet access, specific textbook title, lab kit, etc.)

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Oxford World Classics)
Readings about reading theories or tools, available through Courselink or the Library.

This course counts towards the following distribution requirement(s) for students who registered at the University prior to the Fall of 2018: **18th/19th-century**

Information about mode of delivery (synchronous/asynchronous/other details):

Class members will log weekly responses to the readings, including through a shared online annotation tool. There will be no lectures. I will post questions and comments in advance of meetings. The usual structure of our weekly class meetings will be:

- Discussion of readings and presentation on a reading approach or tool
- Break
- Experimentation together with a computational tool or approach to reading.

Later in the semester the emphasis will shift towards project-focused activities.

In addition to Reading Week in Week 5, in Week 10 we will have a “breathing” week in which we will take a break from synchronous meeting.

*Students who registered at the University of Guelph after Fall 2018 must fulfill the “new” major and minor requirements. Students who registered at the University of Guelph prior to Fall 2018 must fulfill the requirements of the Calendar in effect when they first enrolled unless they have filed a Schedule of Studies Change Request to change to the 2018-2019 calendar. For more information, please consult the major and minor checklists at <https://www.uoguelph.ca/arts/sets/undergraduate/english/current-student-information>.