

**Fall 2014 Research Assignment****Paper due by SafeAssign Upload in Courseweb: Tues. 11/25 by 11:59 PM****Topic Proposals By E-mail: Week of 11/10 – 11/14**

This assignment challenges you to research the cultural context and critical discussions of one or more of our readings. You'll have a chance to investigate a particular text of your choice and apply scholarly sources in nineteenth-century literature, history, and culture to broaden your perspective on one of the following topics:

**Options:**

- **Childhood Innocence and Experience:** How and why were ideas of childhood changing in the nineteenth century, and how are those changes reflected in the text you are researching? Or to what extent did your writer help to motivate changing views on children? What perspectives on children do we see in the texts of one of these writers, and how do they relate to or help contribute to a changing culture surrounding children, relating to labor issues and/or education in the nineteenth century?
- **Radical Edges, Social Change:** Choose a text and investigate its treatment of dangerous, taboo, uncivilized, sacrilegious, or some otherwise controversial subject. In what ways does this text push toward some form of social change or some reconsideration of conventional morality or society? You might consider issues of sexuality, injustice, class conflict, paganism, or "Satanic" elements.
- **Gender and Sexuality:** \* Consider how your text represents gender roles: masculinity, femininity, and homo- or hetero-sexual attraction or repulsion. To what extent did this text's representation of gender or sexuality reflect its time, or resist it?  
\* Or, focus on one or two texts that address women's issues in the nineteenth century, and research contexts for how they approach women's expression, or the roles of artistic women, writing women, foreign women, working women, and/or "fallen" women.
- **Literature and the Arts:** Music, Painting, Theater / Performance: How did artists or musicians of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century create adaptations of your text—retelling it in other forms, other media? Or research more about how people performed or adapted this text for recitation or theatre. Did artistic adaptations significantly transform the piece, or reflect people's interests in particular elements of it?
- **Dreams and Waking:** Investigate a text's approach to dream states and the workings of the mind and imagination.  
\* How was this related to changing understandings of the brain, the body, and mental processes around the time the text was written?  
\* Or, how are dreams associated with inspiration from external sources (such as the reading of texts, and/or the taking of substances like opium or laudanum)?  
\* How is the dream state potentially transformative of waking reality, and what kinds of transformations might the text be trying to induce? Can you put these transformations in context with issues in the time the text was written?
- **Xanadus, Greek Isles, New Worlds:** What sources of inspiration for nineteenth-century British writers came from exotic or remote/distant places—explorations of the Arctic Circle, or travel accounts from Greece, Turkey, Arabia, Africa, India, China, or the Americas, for example? Consider a text that makes reference to characters or places from foreign, exotic backgrounds, and investigate what was known to British readers about these places around the time when the text was published. How is this text working with exotic subject matter, foreign cultures or belief systems (like Islam), or Orientalism, and to what effect?
- **Literature, Nature, and Science:** Investigate how one of our course texts reflects or responds to new ideas, methods, or discoveries in the sciences, including studies of astronomy, electricity, geology, anatomy and physiology (as of nerve tissues for example). In what ways does the text reflect or respond to the science of the time, and at what points in the text is this scientific context most important? (For

researching *Frankenstein*, start with reading Marilyn Butler's, Jane Goodall's, and Christa Knellwolf's articles in your Norton edition.)

Draw upon **at least four (or more) scholarly resources**, and come up with your own carefully considered response to the different points of view these sources represent. **With my approval and guidance**, you may use a combination of **primary sources** (publications from the nineteenth-century such as newspaper reviews/articles which you can search by specific 19<sup>th</sup>-century dates) in conjunction with secondary scholarly articles (by researchers from the 1980s – 2014).

**Applying your research to the literary text:** Your paper should not simply report or summarize the information you learned from your sources. Instead, you should apply your research your own discussion of the literary text you've chosen to work with, and you should be referring to key passages from the text in your paper. **Weigh and evaluate** the perspectives of your sources to come up with your own educated perspective, which you support and defend in the paper. **Apply** your research by explaining and demonstrating how it helps us to understand some key issue, set of passages, imagery, or themes raised in the literary text. Support your points with **specific reference to the text you are discussing**.

**Length:** Your complete paper should be about 5-7 double-spaced, word-processed and printed pages, using a font no larger than 12-point Arial or Times New Roman.



### DOING THE RESEARCH:

Locate your sources using the **Pitt Digital Library**, where you can find very useful articles and historical context. (You may work with articles in the back of your Norton critical edition of *Frankenstein* as well, for half of your sources.) Note well: Part of the challenge of this assignment is locating **authoritative, peer-reviewed scholarly materials**!

Note well: **Totally unacceptable sources to cite** for this assignment include Wikipedia and other encyclopedia sources, blogs, newspaper articles, and simple fan sites found through Google or Yahoo searches. **Good sources for your paper should ALL be located within the Pitt Digital Library**. When in doubt about whether it's OK to use a particular source, ask me.

- Pitt Digital Library: <http://www.library.pitt.edu/>  
When off campus, use the same link, and you'll be prompted to log in (usually when trying to open an article) using your Pitt userid and password (the same that you use for your e-mail.)

### Do Your Research in Stages:

**1. Start with the Search Window in PittCAT+.** Start a list of keywords and keyword combinations connected with your topic ideas. Experiment for a while:

- Notice the different kinds of results you get from changing a word subtly: (Lord Byron and Islam, Lord Byron and Muslim, Lord Byron and Gulnare, Lord Byron and Orientalism, Lord Byron and caliph, etc.).
- Notice what happens when you enter character names as well as authors and titles, for example. Try "Justine Moritz and Frankenstein" or "Little Black Boy and William Blake."
- Also try broadening your search beyond a particular writer: (Romanticism and Orientalism). Notice when you start turning up good results, what new keyword possibilities emerge. Jot these down to keep a record for yourself! Keywords matter.

**2. Refine your search:** Use the delimiters on the left-hand side of the search screen to narrow your search:

- Select “Limit to articles from scholarly publications, including peer-review”: to locate good scholarly articles.
- Now, try delimiting by date, to turn up the most recent material in the last 10 or 20 years.
- Try looking for books, specifically: Click on **"Items in Library Catalog"** and **"Book/ebook"** delimiters. Some books will turn up in our campus library. If they are at other Pitt campus libraries, request them by “Get-It” and they’ll usually be sent to our library within a couple of days.

**3. Work with specific databases** when attempting to track down something specific—such as to read reviews at the time a text was published, or to see how a writer or a scandal was represented in 19<sup>th</sup>-century British Newspapers. **Please feel free to check in with me at my office, or our Reference Librarian, Amanda Folk, for help with this.**

- See the specific databases recommended on our Libguide (via Courseweb).
- Check the Tabs on the Libguide for “Finding British Literature Books” and “Finding British Literature Articles.”
- To track down 19<sup>th</sup>-century reviews of a particular text, or to see how people responded to a text or a writer in the nineteenth century, try the **“19th century UK Periodicals”** database and the **“British Periodicals”** Database.
- In some cases PittCAT+ may lead to a bad link to an article, and you may want to look it up in another database (like JSTOR or Project Muse) to see if you can access it after all.)

**Citing your sources: Use MLA style**, with parenthetical documentation in the text of your paper. Use the “How to Cite” Tab on our Libguide, which contains some helpful links and models (including to the Purdue OWL for MLA style.) Libguide “How to Cite” Tab:

<http://pitt.libguides.com/content.php?pid=132606&sid=1137179>

**\*\*\*Confused? Need Help? Ask me!** I can help if you are having trouble understanding something in your source materials, if you aren’t quite sure how to focus your paper, if you would like some personalized guidance with researching, or if you would like me to read a draft. Stop by my office in **FOB 204** or arrange a meeting with me.