

English 111: Victorian Novel Seminar

- semester: Spring 2020
 - class meeting time: M 1:15-5 (occasionally ending at 4:30)
 - seminar outline meeting time: Monday, 10:30 am
 - location: LPAC 302
 - instructor: Rachel Sagner Buurma
 - email: rbuurma1@swarthmore.edu
 - office: LPAC 302 (English Department) + Parrish W201 (Aydelotte Foundation)
 - office hours: W 1-3 in LPAC 302 and by appointment
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This honors seminar focuses around the novel and (secondarily) the autobiography, two genres central to the second half of the nineteenth century. Intensive study of theories of the novel, narrative theory, fictionality, and ideas about life writing will help us ask what different models of representing the narrative of a life and the truth of subjectivity existing during this half century - and how much these models continue to influence and shape our present moment, in which the novel-autobiography nexus seems once again especially important. (In the middle of the semester we will flash forward to look at a contemporary novel and a contemporary autobiography in order to take some measure of the distance (or closeness) between the novelistic and autobiographical forms and themes of the nineteenth century and those of our own moment.) We will focus especially closely on ideas about writing's aesthetics and economics, the rules that govern self-narration, and the effects of different forms of surveillance on narrative and the representation or formation of subjectivity.

How the forms we use to represent ourselves and others not only partially determine what we can say, but also can leave accidental traces that may have unintended effects. We will pay some attention to the materiality of the texts through which these narratives are written, printed, published, and circulated, studying in particular the ways serialiation, circulating libraries, and print format work to shape - and are shaped by - literary meaning.

Incorporating the Harvard Law CopyrightX curriculum - focused on the theory and practice of contemporary American copyright law - alongside our study of primarily nineteenth-century British texts will help us uncover the distance between the nineteenth century's working assumptions about intellectual property, authorship, and the ownership of texts and ideas as well as prompt us to consider the historical specificity of nineteenth-century copyright law.

Part 1: surveillance, omniscience, self-making, realism

Week 1, January 27: Introduction

some topics: writing, property, precarity; novel theory; serialization, reviewing, print culture

- Anthony Trollope, *Last Chronicle*, first half
- Georg Lukacs, Part 1 of *The Theory of the Novel* (longish)
- Ian Watt, from *The Rise of the Novel* (short)
- CopyrightX Week 1 (video and reading): The Foundations of Copyright Law
- in class: seminar overview, survey of student interests, and sign-ups
- in class: close reading the novel; what is a novel?

Week 2, February 3: canonical realisms, surveillance, omniscience

some topics: novel theory; realism overview; social networks; surveillance and omniscience; print circulation; news and gossip; series and seriality; status and class; precarity; liberalism and neoliberalism; writing, copyright, intellectual property

- Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle*, second half
- Georg Lukacs, Part 1 of *The Theory of the Novel* (longish)
- Ian Watt, from *The Rise of the Novel* (short)
- Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect" (and handout explaining Saussure)
- Fredric Jameson, "The Realist Floor-plan"
- Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish*
- D.A. Miller, Chapter 1, *The Novel and the Police*
- Shoshanna Zuboff, from *Surveillance Capitalism*, Introduction
- Sareeta Amrut, [review of Surveillance Capitalism](#)
- complete before class: [Dennis Tenen and Grant Wythoff's plain-text authoring tutorial](#)
- create a [Github](#) account
- No Copyright X this week
- discussion and outline: Maya, Theo
- close reading:
- criticism summary: Nicole (Foucault, Miller)
- seminar paper/reflection: Maya
- break:

Feb 6- Shoshanna Zubach at Haverford, 7-8 pm (and optional student meeting 5:30-6:30)

Week 3, February 10: selfhood, autobiography, precarity, writing

some topics: publishing, precarity, autobiography; novel theory; realism overview; social networks; city and country; print circulation; news and gossip; series and seriality; status and class;

- Trollope, *An Autobiography*

- Rosemarie Bodenheimer, "Free Indirect Discourse"
- Trev Lynn Broughton, "Life Writing" in *The Routledge Companion to Victorian Literature*
- 19th c copyright reading
- CopyrightX Week 2: Fairness and Personality Theories
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Nicole
- criticism summary: Shaoni
- seminar paper/reflection: Maya
- break: Maya

Week 4, February 17

some topics: free indirect discourse; women's writing; Trollope and/vs Oliphant; comparison; gender and character; carrying over from week 2 especially series and seriality; status and class; precarity

- Margaret Oliphant, *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866), through chapter 26 (about half)
- D.A. Miller, from *Jane Austen and the Secret of Style* (except from chapter 3; chapter 1 optional)
- Dorrit Cohn, "Narrated Monologue" from *Transparent Minds* (read quickly, consult handout for summary)
- Margaret Oliphant, "Sensation Novels"
- CopyrightX, Week 3: The Subject Matter of Copyright (pay special attention to the Fictional Characters lecture)
- discussion and outline: Maya, Theo
- close reading: Maya
- criticism summary: Theo
- seminar paper/reflection:
- break: Theo

Week 5, February 24:

some topics: serials and series (what happens when we try to imagine all six Barsetshire novels or the Carlingford novels as part of a single world?); roman fleuve; marriage; travel; Trollope and/vs Oliphant; comparison; gender and character; carrying over from week 2 especially series and seriality; status and class; precarity

- *Miss Marjoribanks* (1865-6), second half
- Eric Hayot, from *On Literary Worlds*
- Pheng Cheah, Intro to "What is a World?"
- Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality"
- Review of "Miss Marjoriebanks"

- Copyright X, week 4: Welfare Theory
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Maya
- criticism summary: Nicole, Theo
- seminar paper/reflection: Shaoni, Theo
- break: Nicole

Feb 28: To Be Human conference at Haverford (of potential interest, not required)

Week 6, March 2: flash forward - contemporary novel, contemporary life writing

- Tommy Orange, *There There* (2018)
- Terese Marie Mailhot, *Heart Berries* (2018)
- CopyrightX Week 5: Authorship
- optional: autobiography and social media readings (in Dropbox)
- 4:30 pm: *There There* panel in McCabe
- reviews
- discussion and outline: Maya, Theo
- close reading: Maya, Theo
- criticism summary: Shaoni
- seminar paper/reflection: Nicole
- break: Shaoni

Week 7, March 9: spring break (read *An Autobiography* and "The Library Window"; begin *Villette*)

Week 8, March 16: *An Autobiography* and "The Library Window"

some topics:

- Margaret Oliphant, *An Autobiography*
- Margaret Oliphant, "The Library Window"
- Megan Ward, from *Seeming Human* (on *Miss Marchbanks*)
- Korte, "Narrating Poverty and Precarity in Britain"
- CopyrightX Week 7: The Rights to Reproduce and Modify
- discussion and outline: Maya, Theo
- close reading: Shaoni, Theo
- criticism summary: Theo
- seminar paper/reflection: Maya, Nicole
- break: Maya

SHS paper assigned

Tommy Orange visit, March 17, 4:30 pm

Week 9, March 23: *Villette*

some topics: surveillance; realism and the occult; precarity; technology; gender and sexuality; Catholicism; domesticity; pedagogy; precarity and superfluous women (again)

- Charlotte Bronte, *Villette*
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from "Discourse in the Novel," 259-331
- Mikhail Bakhtin, from "Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics," p 5-8 and skim for examples of polyphony
- Joseph Boone, "Depolicing Villette"
- Sharon Marcus, *Between Women*, Introduction and Chapter 2
- Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction"
- William Cohen, "Why Is There So Much French in *Villette*?"
- Ted Underwood, David Bamman, and Sabrina Lee, [The Transformation of Gender in English-Language Fiction](#) and
- take a look at the data and code for above article:
<https://github.com/tedunderwood/character>
- including this browsable interface that lets you explore the gendering of specific words:
<https://github.com/tedunderwood/character>
- CopyrightX Week 9: Fair Use
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Shaoni
- criticism summary: Maya, Nicole
- seminar paper/reflection: Theo
- break: Maya

Week 10, March 30: *Rajmohan's Wife*

some topics: marriage plots, sensation, empire, global print circulation

- SHS outline discussion
- Bankim Chandra Chatterjee / Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864) - 1935 edition pdf in Dropbox (first volume publication)
- Meenakshi Mukherjee, Introduction to the [Penguin edition of RW](#)
- Sukanya Banerjee, "Troubling Conjugal Loyalties: The First Indian Novel in English and the Transimperial Framework of Sensation"
- Supriya Chaudhuri, "Beginnings: Rajmohan's Wife and the Novel in India," Chapter 1 of "
*A History of the Indian Novel in English"

- Priya Joshi, *In Another Country*, Preface, chapter 2, chapter 4(optional)
- Anindita Ghosh, "Revisiting the 'Bengal Renaissance': Literary Bengali and Low-Life Print in Colonial Calcutta"
- optional: Satya P. Mohanty, "The Epistemic Work of Literary Realism: Two Novels from Colonial India," "Chapter 2 of " *A History of the Indian Novel in English"
- carry forward: Barthes, "Reality Effect" and *Preparation"
- question: canon, archive, corpus: how do we think about all the novels?
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Theo
- criticism summary: Nicole
- seminar paper/reflection: Shaoni
- break: Theo

week of March 30 tba: printing workshop

Week 11, April 6: search and research: *Lady Audley's Secret*

some topics: sensation novel, gender and sexuality, surveillance, search and research

- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*, first half
- cherry blossoms?
- Margaret Oliphant, "Sensation Novels"
- Pamela Gilbert, "M.E. Braddon: Sensation Realism" from *Disease, Desire, and the Body in Women's Popular Novels"
- Saverio Tomaiuolo, "Sensation fiction, empire and the Indian mutiny" in *The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction"
- Ted Underwood, "Theorizing Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago"
- Ted Underwood, "Intro: Historical Contrast and the Prestige of Literary Culture" and "Chapter 6: Digital Humanities and the Future of Literary History" in *Why Literary Periods Mattered : Historical Contrast and the Prestige of English Studies*
- discussion and outline: Maya, Theo
- close reading: Nicole
- criticism summary: Maya
- seminar paper/reflection: Theo
- break: Nicole

Week 12, April 13: SHS + LAS, continued

FULL SHS drafts due Saturday April 11

- Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), finish

- in-class SHS workshop
- Christina Sharpe, from *In the Wake*
- break: Shaoni

Christina Sharpe at Haverford, Thursday April 16th, 4:30 pm, VCAM

Week 13, April 20: reference and everyday life

- George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2), books 1, 2, 3
- Leah Price, from *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel*
- David Kurnick, "An Erotics of Detachment"
- SHS work
- discussion and outline: Shaoni, Nicole
- close reading: Shaoni, Theo
- criticism summary: Shaoni, Maya
- seminar paper/reflection: Nicole
- break: Rachel

Week 14, April 27: social totalities and literary values

- George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2), books 4, 5, 6
- Sarah Allison, "George Eliot's Discerning Syntax"
- Sarah Allison, from *Reductive Reading*
- examine [Quarry for Middlemarch](#)
- seminar paper: Theo
- discussion and outline: all
- break: Rachel

Wednesday, April 29, 4:30 pm: SHS papers due

April 30: seminar dinner, finish *Middlemarch*, seminar wrap-up

- George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2), books 7, 8
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Assignments

Outline and discussion facilitation

Every other week you will be responsible – in pairs - for facilitating discussion of the week's material, including (but not at all limited to) all readings, seminar papers, close readings, critical summaries, CopyrightX material, and anything else on the week's agenda. Please plan to read the week's materials, come up with a draft of the outline (in informal consultation with other seminar members if you like), and post your draft outline by Sunday at 7 pm. During this time the rest of the seminar members can access the outline and add any suggestions they may have. Then on Monday at 10:30 am the discussion leaders will meet with me briefly in order to strategize and finalize the outline. I will then provide copies for use in class. We can certainly diverge from this outline, but it is useful for us to have a general map of how you imagine the shape of the discussion might unfold. The outline is an interesting genre in and of itself; we'll talk about its limitations and possibilities, its uses as a preparation for class, as a map during class, and as an enduring artifact after class is over. I can provide examples from past seminars if you wish. The outline is also (unlike your seminar papers, close readings, and criticism summaries) a public document, which we will likely share in some form. We will format all outlines in Markdown and use Pandoc to convert them into PDF for to print for reference during seminar.

Seminar papers

You will write three 1500-2500 word (3-4 page single-spaced) seminar papers over the course of the semester; they are due to our seminar Dropbox (more on which in class) by 7 pm the Saturday before seminar. The seminar paper should usually (although this is a guideline not a requirement) engage with at least one novel or other work of literature – making sure to include at least some close reading of the novel - and one piece of criticism. I also encourage you to bring in outside reading that seems relevant (though make sure that you do this in a way that is attentive to the fact that the rest of us will likely not have read your additional text(s)).

Close readings

You will write three 1-2-page single-spaced close readings of a few sentences or a paragraph of one of our fictional texts over the course of the semester; they are due to our seminar Dropbox (more on which in class) by 7 pm the Saturday before seminar.

Criticism summaries

You will write three 1-2 page (single-spaced) summaries of critical readings; like the seminar papers and close readings, they are due as PDFs or Word attachments by 7 pm the Saturday

before seminar. These should usually include a brief paragraph on the main claim and stakes of the reading, a more detailed overview of the argument, a note if relevant on the writer's style, feeling, and tone, and particular mention (with page numbers) of points/passages you think are especially important for our purposes and/or require our critique. See handout on "reading criticism" for guidance if you like.

Seminar archive and site

Our seminar's public site will feature at minimum our seminar's syllabus and our discussion outlines. Together we will think about any additional elements of our work we may want to make public.

Open classes

Occasionally if relevant we will open our class to interested outside parties. Feel free to invite friends, family, teammates, labmates, housecats, that guy who is always hanging out in the periodicals reading room. More on this in class.

Long/Senior Honors Study paper

I want us to think about the long paper as a piece that draws together some of the various shorter writing pieces, research skills, and projects you will work on over the course of the semester. The long paper may draw on any aspect of the work you have done in the seminar; it should include an original argument about one of our novels, respond to the existing criticism of that novel, and incorporate original research. A substantial proposal, including a research organization plan, and perhaps the beginning of the paper, is due before March break, with a rough draft due soon after in early April. If you are in Honors, this will become your SHS paper. I would like – but will not require because different students' interests and needs will vary – for this paper to incorporate some significant original research.

Final written and oral exam

During finals period you will take a three-hour written exam; you may use your notes and books. You will then take an oral exam during finals period based on this exam, your long paper, and the entire semester's readings. We will schedule these individually. This is separate from and in addition to Honors examinations.

Seminar break

Each of you will bring part of break a few times during the semester. Consult with one another, and be creative! If this will be a financial hardship, please consult me.

Reading and note-taking, technology

We will use various technologies we will use to facilitate various forms of individual and collective note-taking, writing, archiving, and computational text analysis. In addition, we will use laptops intentionally and strategically during some parts of class but not others; more on this during our first meeting. Group leaders will be responsible for thinking about if, how, and when to use technologies like this in class. (If you do not own a laptop, no worries; we can work around this, but do let me know.)

Extra meetings and other specific seminar-related times

Please reserve Monday at 10:30 am to meet with me during the weeks you are in charge of discussion and outline. There will also be a few additional meetings of the seminar for workshops, exhibits viewing, etc at other times tba.

This double-credit Honors seminar is a major commitment, and requires a lot of work. I realize this, and look forward to working with you all so that we can mutually make sure that we have the time and space we need to do a good job while also fulfilling our other semester commitments and attempting to be relatively happy people (or as happy as we're disposed to be).

Policies and Advice

Books

The main books you will need to buy are:

Anthony Trollope, *The Last Chronicle of Barset*. Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0140437522

Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*

Margaret Oliphant, *Miss Marjoribanks*

Margaret Oliphant, *The Autobiography of Margaret Oliphant*

Tommy Orange, *There There*

Terese Mailhot, *Heart Berries*

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret*. Oxford World's Classics.
978-0199577033

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*. Penguin ISBN-13: 978-0141439549

The books are available at the bookstore. You are also welcome to buy the books online or at a different store. Be aware that you need to have your own copy of the specific edition of each of the books listed above. All other texts will be available on Dropbox unless otherwise specified. Please print out, read, mark up, and bring to class ALL of the texts assigned as required reading for each week (this subject to modification in class).

Grading

- 30% class participation, discussion direction, completion of short informal writing and research projects
- 20% seminar papers (10% each)
- 10% close reading papers
- 10% criticism summaries
- 20% long paper (for Honors students, this will be your SHS paper)
- 10% written and oral exam

Accommodations

I want to work to make sure that everyone in this class has the access to the materials, resources, and support they need in order to learn most effectively. You are always free to talk to me about your own situation. A key Swarthmore resource in this area is the Office of Student Disability Services. Their accommodations policy is here:

If you believe you need accommodations for a disability or a chronic medical condition, please contact Student Disability Services (Parrish 113W, 123W) via e-mail at studentdisabilityservices@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, the office will issue students with documented disabilities or medical conditions a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the [Student Disability Services website](#). You are also welcome to contact me [the faculty member] privately to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged, in advance, through Student Disability Services.

Dean's Discretionary Fund and Dean's Office resources for basic needs

If purchasing your textbooks or other materials for this or any other class present a serious financial difficulty for you, you should be aware of the [Dean's Discretionary Fund](#) and other resources such as the Course Book Collection in Underhill Library in Lang Music.

The Dean's Office describes the fund this way:

The spirit of this funding is primarily to support emergency circumstances and priority is given to students in the highest financial need tiers. Funding is usually limited to under \$500 and most grants are under \$300. Please note the Dean's Office may not be able to fulfill all requests.

Examples of eligible non-academic requests include, but are not limited to, expenses associated with emergency medical, dental, vision procedures, unanticipated trips

home due to a family emergency, and various fees related to postgraduate opportunities.

The Student Life office at Swarthmore is very committed to making sure that all students having living situations that support their ability to work and live here successfully. If you find that you are having sustained difficulties with your food or housing situation and believe that this may affect your course performance, you should contact your class dean; you are also free to contact me if you wish so that I can help you find the support you need.

If you have trouble accessing the Discretionary Fund or other resources in the Dean's Office, please feel free to come speak with me so that I can help.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offense. It includes both the direct copying of the words of another person without crediting him or her and paraphrasing the ideas of another person without giving credit. If you have any questions about how to properly cite another person's work, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Attendance and due dates

Because this is a seminar, attendance is essential. Missing seminar (except for cases of illness or true emergencies) is inadvisable. However, if you are really ill, try to contact me ahead of time, but do plan to miss class! *Again, because this is a seminar, deadlines for seminar papers, critical summaries, and outlines are (again, outside of serious emergency situations) firm, firm, firm.* Plan ahead.

Acknowledgements

Here is a partial, in-progress list of writing I drew on to create this syllabus, including Nathan Hensley's [Victorian Literature and Globalization](<https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/engl-161-spring2013/>), Georgetown Spring 2013; Laura Heffernan's [Victorian Literature and Objectivity](#) (English 4251, University of North Florida, Spring 2012); Leah Price's [Victorian Novel class](<http://isites.harvard.edu/icb/icb.do?keyword=k105983&pageid=icb.page689455>), Kornbluth's [Novel Worlds](<http://www.kornbluh.com/teaching/novel-worlds-realism-structuralism-aesthetics/>)
Laura McGrane's 18th Century Media class

This syllabus is necessarily an incomplete document; we will revise and

save versions of it as the class progresses. The most up-to-date copy will be available in our Github repository:

<https://github.com/rbuurma/vic-sem-2019/blob/master/VicSemSyllabus2019.md>

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