

## HISTORY 229/229W

### Victorian England: Portrait of an Age

Spring 2021  
MW 11:50-1:05



*The land on which the University of Rochester River Campus sits is within the historic homeland of the Seneca Nation, a member of the Haudenosaunee Six Nations Confederacy. It is covered by the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua, between the United States Government and the Six Nations Confederacy, which affirmed Haudenosaunee land rights and sovereignty in the State of New York. Today, this region is still the home to the Haudenosaunee people, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and share ideas in this territory.*

This course is a thematic introduction to the political, social, intellectual, and cultural history of Victorian England (and, by extension, Victorian Britain and the nineteenth-century British empire). It has no pre-requisites and is open to anyone with a genuine interest in the subject. Our approach will be both topical and chronological: by way of selective moments and episodes in Victorian history, we will move roughly but not perfectly forward in time in order to bring the main themes of the period into focus. Our format is a mix of open lectures and discussions supplemented by the occasional documentary film. I expect all students to attend all lectures, discussions, and films. If you will not be in class for any reason, please let me know why in advance. Given the circumstances of the COVID pandemic, I am not holding regularly scheduled office hours this semester, but everyone should feel free to request an in-person or zoom appointment with me at any time. See my contact details below.

**Instructor:**

Professor Stewart Weaver, Department of History  
 Rush Rhees Library 368  
 275-9348/315-0825  
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 Office Hours: By Appointment

The following **books** are required and available for purchase at the College Town Barnes and Noble Bookstore. They are also available inexpensively on Amazon, etc. No doubt some could be read online also, but **I strongly encourage everyone to read these books the old fashioned way, i.e. on printed and bound paper.** Where assimilation and comprehension are concerned, I believe there is no substitute for this ancient (or at least medieval) practice. And for purposes of common discussion, it would be helpful if everyone had the same edition, as follows:

Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (ISBN 9780140183504)  
 Stephen Johnson, *The Ghost Map* (ISBN 9781594482694)  
 Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (ISBN 9780393310696)  
 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (ISBN 9780140439076)

Note that there will be additional reading along the way as the syllabus indicates.

Note also that I have not required the purchase of a British history textbook. But I have also placed two excellent surveys on reserve for those wanting to do additional background reading and/or research: Susan Kingsley Kent, *A New History of Britain Since 1688* and David Canadine, *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800-1906*.

**Course Requirements (299):**

1. Consistent attendance and participation in class (10%)
2. Six informal response papers (30%), two for each part of the syllabus--  
 i.e. two by March 3, two by April 7, and two by May 5.
3. Two formal 6-7 page papers (60%), due March 8 and May 7.

**Course Requirements (299W):**

1. Consistent attendance and participation in class (10%)
2. Six informal response papers (30%), two for each part of the syllabus--  
 i.e. two by March 3, two by April 7, and two by May.
3. 15 to 17 page primary research paper consisting of the following four elements:

1. 2 to 3 page proposal (5%), due week of March 8-12
2. Working bibliography (5%), due week of March 8-12
3. First draft of paper (5%), due week of April 5-9
4. Final draft (45%), due week of May 3-7

**Statement regarding academic honesty:** All students in this class will be expected to be familiar with and abide by the principles of academic honesty as laid down by the College of Arts and Science's academic honesty policy. For the full articulation of this policy (including the consequences of its violation), see <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty>.

**Statement regarding credit hours:** The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 3 periods of 50 minutes each week. Students enrolled in HIS 229/W are expected to devote at least one hour each week to reading and research outside of class time.

**Statement regarding disability services:** The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: [disability@rochester.edu](mailto:disability@rochester.edu); (585) 276-5075.

**Statements regarding virtual classroom etiquette/procedures:**

- \* As always, be **on time**, even in virtual space.
- \* keep your **microphone muted** when not speaking, please.
- \* **Cameras:** Given our current learning situation and the need for this class to be virtual we need to create a sense of a community in any way we can. One way to achieve it is to **turn our cameras on during class discussions**--a simple way to make us all feel like we are part of the group. I do not want, however, to require this as a policy for a number of reasons. I will simply ask you to keep your camera on whenever possible. If you need to turn it off occasionally or keep it off permanently, please let me know. And **please** do not turn your camera off and leave. Nothing is more discouraging to an instructor than to be speaking to an empty zoom chamber. I will remember it.

*I will not be recording the class and ask you to please not to record anything without the explicit permissions of all students.*

- \* **Setting:** Please find the best setting for our class meetings (e.g., quiet, private, preferably NOT in your bed, etc.), one that will help you stay focused and engaged. Once again, I encourage you to give some thought to where you want to be and identify the best available options. But this said, I understand and fully accept the limitations many of you/us will be facing. If you need to discuss the issue of setting with me, feel free to do so.

\* **Participation:** This course depends on interactive lectures, presentations, class discussions, and written assignments that feed off our weekly readings. For you to learn, you need to participate consistently and stay current on all meetings and readings. **Class attendance, therefore, is mandatory to your best capacity.** That said, I recognize that we live in an unpredictable world right now - and you (or I) might need to miss one or more classes for any number of good reasons. Let me know if you need to miss a class so that we could make alternative arrangements for you to keep up with the class material.

And while I usually prefer and have better success with free-flowing discussions, last semester showed that such format does not lend itself well to Zoom conversations. Therefore, *use the “raised hand” symbol to indicate you would like to talk.*

### Class Schedule

**NB: This is a tentative schedule of class meetings and reading assignments as of the start of the semester. I reserve the right to make adjustments and changes as needed as we go along**

#### Prologue

Feb. 1 Introduction to the Course

Feb. 3 Before the Victorians

\* Thomas Carlyle, [“Signs of the Times”](#) (1829)

#### Part I: Early Victorian England

Feb. 8 The Age of Reform

\* T. B. Macaulay, [Speech on the Reform Bill of 1832](#) (March 1831)

\* Carolyn Vallenga Berman, [“On the Reform Act of 1832”](#) (2013)

Feb. 10 The Condition of England

- \* [The People's Charter](#) (1838)
- \* from Friederich Engels, [The Condition of the Working Class in England](#) (1844)

Feb. 15 Young England and the Return to Camelot

- \* John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic* (Blackboard)

Feb. 17 Exploration and Empire

- \* Antoinette Burton, ["On the First Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-1842"](#) (2012)

Feb. 22 The Irish Question

Feb. 24 Famine and Fenianism

- \* Extracts from [Times coverage of the Irish Famine](#) (1846-47), selections TBA

March 1 The Great Exhibition

- \* Audrey Jaffee, ["On the Great Exhibition"](#) (2012)

**March 3 College Study Break: No Class.  
Deadline for first two response papers (229 and 229W)**

## Part II: Mid Victorian England

March 8 The Lady of the Lamp

- \* Lytton Strachey, "Florence Nightingale," from *Eminent Victorians* (bookstore)

- \* **FIRST FORMAL PAPER DUE (229 only)**

March 10 John Snow, Cholera, and the Broad Street Pump

- \* Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map* (bookstore)

March 15 Charles Darwin and

March 17 The Darwinian Revolution

- \* Charles Darwin, *The Autobiography of Charles Darwin* (bookstore)

- March 22      The Rising: India
- March 24      The Morant Bay Rebellion and the Governor Eyre Controversy
- \* Sarah Winter, [“On the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica and the Governor Eyre-George William Gordon Controversy, 1865-70”](#) (2012)
- March 29      The Leap in the Dark
- March 31      **No Class**
- April 5        The Woman Question, 1860-1873
- \* Rachel Ablow, [“‘One Flesh,’ One Person, and the 1870 Married Women’s Property Act”](#) (2012)
- April 7        The Bitter Cry of Outcast London
- \* Andrew Mearns, [\*The Bitter Cry of Outcast London\*](#) (1883)
- \* **Deadline for second two response papers (229 and 229W)**

### **Part III: Late Victorian England**

- April 12      The New Imperialism and the Death of General Gordon
- \* Lytton Strachey, “The End of General Gordon,” from *Eminent Victorians*
- April 14      Gladstone and the Irish Nation
- April 19      The Great Detective and His Times
- April 21      The Sign of Four
- \* Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (bookstore)
- April 26      Late Victorian Sex and Sexuality
- April 28      The Trial of Oscar Wilde
- May 3        Jubilee and Recession
- May 5        Edwardian Epilogue
- \* **Deadline for last two response papers (229 and 229W)**

**May 7      SECOND FORMAL PAPER DUE (229 only)**  
**RESEARCH PAPER DUE (229W only)**