

HIST 368W/468: spring 2021

Victorians and Their Families

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Spring 2021

Tuesdays 1400-1640

ALL CLASS MEETINGS ON ZOOM.

Office hours (on Zoom) by appointment



Readings and weekly discussion of modern histories and nineteenth-century fiction for graduate students and undergrads. The course takes a trans-Atlantic perspective and considers, among other questions, the comparative nature of American and British Victorian-era culture. In fiction, we start with Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Washington Irving, and end with Kate Chopin and Henry James; look at marriage (and the decision not to marry), child-rearing, and the changing nature of families. We address orphans and childless marriages, adultery and divorce. Weekly reading of about 500 pages; writing of two short (@ 5-10 page) analytical essays on the reading, and one capstone essay (@ 12-15 pages) at the end of the semester.

Assignments and class discussions are intended to achieve learning outcomes that reach a level of competency in written communication (expository writing), oral communication (discussion and civil debate), critical analysis and reasoning, critical observation of the physical environment, and information literacy. The class discussions will be organized to address specific reading assignments and topics within those readings. Students will be instructed through short essays in the development of a thesis, structure, and argument from evidence.

Students will also be guided to thoughtful criticism of texts and perspectives, their own, each other's, and those of the authors whose work we read. Finally, students will be introduced to historical methods and the specific vocabularies of family history.

The College's credit hour policy on undergraduate courses is to award 4 credit hours for courses that meet for the equivalent of 2 periods of 75 minutes each week. Students enrolled in HIST 368W are expected to devote at least eight hours each week to identifying the main lines of argument in course readings, working alone or in groups, and completing written assignments. Attendance and active participation in class in discussions are mandatory.

Students with disabilities: 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; (585) 276-5075.

Academic honesty: All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>. For a helpful discussion of plagiarism (including subtle instances), see the American Historical Association's, "[Defining Plagiarism.](#)"

Required reading: You can get electronic copies of the 19th-century books on the syllabus through the UR website, generally from The Hathitrust digital library. The assigned chapters and articles are in a folder on box.com (UR account) that is named "Victorians." I have asked the university bookstore to order three of the modern books that are in print: Nissenbaum, Rose, and Johnson. The books by Houghton and Kelley should be available in electronic copies from the library; at least they said they would be.

Undergraduates should not choke over the amount of assigned reading. They should work out a reading list as a subset of the full reading list with me.

Grades:

Attendance and active, informed participation in class discussions: 30%

First essay: 20%

Second essay: 20%

Third essay: 30%

(late essays penalized one full grade)

No classes on March 3 (Wednesday) and March 30 (Tuesday)

Week 1: Introduction

Discuss: *Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (London, 1818).

*Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven, 1957), Preface and chapter 1.

*Edward Said, "Jane Austen and Empire," in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1993), 80-97.

Week 2:

*Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York, 2005), chapters 8-12.

*Jane Austen, *Emma* (London, 1815).

*John Mullan, "How Jane Austen's *Emma* Changed the Face of Fiction," *The Guardian*, December 5, 2015.

*David Lodge, "Beginning," in Lodge, *The Art of Fiction* (New York, 1992), 3-8.

*Mary Jean Corbett, *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (Ithaca, 2008), chapter 2.

*Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 2.

Week 3:

*Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York, 1996).

*Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol* (London, 1843).

*Washington Irving, "Christmas," (Christmas, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Christmas Dinner) from *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (London, 1820).

*Gregory H. Singleton, "Protestant Voluntary Organizations and the Shaping of Victorian America," *American Quarterly* 27 (December 1975): 549-60.

*Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 3.

Week 4:

*Daniel Walker Howe, "American Victorianism as a Culture," *American Quarterly* 27 (December 1975): 507-532.

*David D. Hall, "The Victorian Connection," *American Quarterly* 27 (December 1975): 561-574.

*Virginia Woolf, "George Eliot," *The Times Literary Supplement*, November 20, 1919.

*George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London, 1872), books 1-4.

*Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 4.

Week 5:

*Eliot, *Middlemarch*, books 5-8 and *Finale*.

*David Lodge, "Weather," in Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 35-68.

*Rebecca Mead, "How George Eliot's 'Middlemarch' Resonates in the England of 2019," *The New Yorker*, November 21, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/how-george-eliot-s-middlemarch-resonates-in-the-england-of-2019>

*Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 5.

Week 6:

***First essay due: Were American and British Victorianism the same thing? (5-10 pages)**

Week 7:

- *Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1984), chapters 1-6.
- *Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Women's Home* (New York, 1869), Introduction and chapters 1-19.
- *James Shapiro, *Shakespeare in a Divided America* (New York, 2020), chapter one.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 6.

Week 8:

- *Beecher and Stowe, *American Women's Home*, chapters 20-38 and "An Appeal."
- *Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage*, chapters 7-12 and Epilogue.
- *Shapiro, *Shakespeare in a Divided America*, chapter 2.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 7.

No class on March 30

Week 9:

- *Phyllis Rose, *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (New York, 1983), pages 5-140.
- *Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (London, 1847), chapters 1-19.
- *David Lodge, "Defamiliarization," in Lodge, *The Art of Fiction*, 52-55.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 8.

Week 10:

- *Rose, *Parallel Lives*, pages 141-270.
- *Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, chapters 20-38.
- *Mary Jean Corbett, *Family Likeness: Sex, Marriage, and Incest from Jane Austen to Virginia Woolf* (Ithaca, 2008), chapter 4.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 9.

Week 11:

- *Second essay due: What changed, 1830-1880? So what? (5-10 pages)**

Week 12:

- *Michael Gorra, *Portrait of a Novel: Henry James and the Making of an American Masterpiece* (New York, 2012), Preface and Parts 1 & 2.
- *Henry James, *Washington Square* (New York, 1880), chapters 1-17.
- *David Lodge, "Point of View," in Lodge, *Art of Fiction*, 25-29.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 10 and 11.

Week 13:

- *Gorra, *Portrait of a Novel*, Parts 3-5.
- *Henry James, *Washington Square*, chapters 18-35.
- *Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 12 and 13.

Week 14:

*Diane Johnson, *The True History of the First Mrs. Meredith and Other Lesser Lives* (New York, 1972).

*Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (New York, 1899), chapters 1-20.

*Hermione Lee, "An Undisappearing Act," *The New York Review of Books*, December 3, 2020, 34-36.

*Houghton, *Victorian Frame of Mind*, chapter 14.

Week 15:

*Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*, chapters 21-39.

*Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper," *The New England Magazine* (1892).

Final Essay: answer one or the other. (12-15 pages)

--How can fiction be used to write the history of the Victorian era?

--Were women unhappier at the end of the 19th century than they were at the beginning? It sure looks that way from the characters in fiction.

Essay due at 9:00 AM one week after the last class meeting.