

Assignments

These assignments are designed to give you practice in historical, archival and academic research, in academic, creative and online writing for multiple audiences, and in orally presenting your research.

ASSIGNMENT FORMAT:

Please prepare and submit the hard copies of your assignments (except the Exhibit assignment) as follows:

1. Single-sided pages, stapled in the left corner, with no duotangs or covers;
2. Double spacing, 1" margins, 12 point Cochin or Times New Roman font;
3. All pages numbered;
4. First page includes name, course, date top-left, and essay title centred above essay;
5. Use MLA citation style with a Works Cited section according to MLA guidelines;

Both the hard copy and e-copy are due at the beginning of class on the due date.

You cannot do your imitation assignment on the same novel on which you do your exhibit entry. You may write your research essay on the same novel as either your imitation or exhibit entry, but you MUST write on another novel as well.

1. THE DICKENS TO ELIOT DIGITAL EXHIBIT

Value: 12% for web entry, 3% for presentation.

Length: 500- to 700-word entry, 5-minute presentation.

Presentation and Entry Due: See below.

Optional Revision Due: One week following the return of my comments on your entry.

Sign up: Signup on Moodle opens Friday after class and will be first come, first served. You may not sign up for the same novel as your imitation/parody assignment.

As the Victorians well knew, when technology changes, so do methods of communicating ideas. Today, academics frequently share their research in a digital format: doing so not only encourages immediate scholarly conversation, but it also opens that conversation to non-academic readers. Victorianist scholars are among the greatest contributors to the growing online collection of open-access academic writing.

For this assignment, you too will participate in online Victorian scholarship by contributing entries to an online exhibit of primary sources taken from the journals, magazines and newspapers that provide the contexts for the novels our class is reading. You can find the online exhibit at <http://dickenstoeliot.wordpress.com/>.

Each of you will write an entry on a primary source—an article, story, illustration, poem, or advertisement—published within a three-year range of one of the class novels, for which you will have signed up on Moodle. Look through the non-electronic Victorian periodicals held in our library and choose a source that addresses one of the cultural events, movements, or themes that appear in your chosen novel. I have listed some possible topics below, as well as some Victorian periodicals, but you may pick your own of either or each if you wish. **You should read as much of your chosen novel as you can before you begin working on this assignment.** On the due date, you will email me your entry to be graded and you will give the class a **five-minute presentation**. Once you have received my feedback and your grade on the entry, you will have one week to correct any errors and email me the version you wish to be uploaded to the website.

For the entry, you will provide the following:

- a .jpg or .tiff file copy of one to three pages of the source to accompany your entry on the website (due to copyright laws, you must scan it yourself from the library's hard copy or a microfilm rather than use an online copy)
- a brief summary of the source (if it is an illustration or an advertisement, you still need to summarize what it looks like for the website's non-sighted readers).
- historical context for the theme, movement, or event the source discusses (citing any secondary sources consulted for the information).
- a short analysis of the piece's representation of the topic, comparing it to that of your assigned novel.
- the bibliographic information of the original source and an MLA works cited list.

Remember your audience! You are writing for other academic scholars and general readers, as well as for your classmates. Below the assignment description, you can find links to examples of online academic writing by Victorianists.

The presentation will include the following:

- information on the periodical in which you found your source (use the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* from the library database).
- a short description of how you found your source.
- a brief explanation about why the source interested you and how it addresses the topic.

I will grade the entry considering the following questions:

- Is the choice of source original and interesting?
- Is it relevant to the novel we are studying? Is this relevance made clear?
- Will the entry contribute to the class's and the general public's understanding of the novel and its contexts?
- Is the entry original, informative, clear, concise, and well organized?
- Was the historical and cultural context adequately researched?
- Does the entry properly cite sources according to MLA style?

- Is it written with correct grammar and punctuation?
- Is the analysis of the source and topic sophisticated?
- Is the writing sufficiently academic, but accessible for the average reader?
- Has the student chosen appropriate and helpful tags for their entry? Ones that will guide readers to related entries from other students?

I will grade the presentation considering the following questions:

- Were your points informative, clear, concise, and well organized?
- Was your presentation engaging and did it facilitate productive discussion?
- Did you maintain good eye contact with the class and speak clearly and audibly?
- Did you use appropriately formal language?
- Did you meet the time limit, not going too long or too short?

On the next page is the list of dates and possible topics. You may choose your own topic, but I must approve it first.

Tenant of Wildfell Hall — September 18
or 25

Domestic abuse
Alcohol and temperance
Women's employment
Theories of child raising
The middle-class vs. the aristocracy

North and South — October 23 or 28

Industrialization
Trade Unions/Labour
Movement/Chartism
Invalidism
Religious Dissent
Changes in class structure

Bleak House — October 8 or 15
“Condition of England”

The New Police in England
“The Fallen Woman”
“The Angel in The House”
Charity
Chancery and Law

The Woman in White — November 6 or
19

Women and Madness
Institutionalization of the Insane
Invalidism
The Risorgimento
Changes in class structure

The Princess and the Goblin — November 26

Fairy Tales
Darwinism
Degeneration
Spirituality
Childhood

Examples of Victorian Periodicals held by the UVic Library

All the Year Round
Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine
Chambers's Edinburgh Journal
Chatterbox (Children's Magazine)
Cornhill
Good Words
Harper's Weekly/Journal (American)
Household Words
Illustrated London News

Once A Week
Pall Mall Gazette
Punch
The Saturday Review
St. Nick (American Children's
Magazine)
Temple Bar
The Times

Examples of online, academic writing by scholars in Victorian history and literature

Victorian Poetry: Poetics and Context (includes entries by UVic undergraduate students) – <http://victorianpoetrypoeticsandcontext.wikispaces.com/>

The Victorian Web – <http://www.victorianweb.org/>

Journal of Victorian Culture Online – <http://myblogs.informa.com/jvc/>

Victorian Poetry Network – <http://web.uvic.ca/~vicpoet/>

BRANCH: Britain, Representation, and Nineteenth-Century History -
<http://www.branchcollective.org/>

Nineteenth Century Disability – <http://www.nineteenthcenturydisability.org/>

Nines: Nineteenth Century Scholarship Online - <http://www.nines.org/>

English 380/2013 Hingston

Songs of the Victorians – <http://www.songsofthevictorians.com/>

2. STYLE IMITATION/PARODY AND ANALYSIS:

One of the goals of this course is to help you develop skills for analysing and writing about Victorian fiction in historical and narratological context. By parodying a novel's formal style and considering the historical influences that inform that style, you will practice those skills.

Value: 15%

Length: 1000 words (roughly 500 for each part of the assignment)

Due dates: See below.

Signup: Sign up on Moodle opens Friday after class and will be first come, first served. You may not sign up for the same novel as your digital exhibit assignment.

For this assignment, you will write a 500-word parody or imitation of the style and voice of one of the novels, and then a 500-word short essay analyzing the author's style and voice. You have a **choice between two options** of imitation, *The Modern Instance* or *Modern Media Parody*.

The Modern Instance

Choose a passage of about 500 words from the novel of your choice (for which you must sign up on Moodle) and, in a creative text of your own with modern setting and characters, imitate **the style of this passage** (its sentence length and types, diction, use of dialogue, richness or paucity of description, techniques of characterization, narrative point of view and focalization, use of particular parts of speech, free indirect discourse, tagged or untagged speech, figurative language or lack of it, tone, etc.). Try to choose a subject that parallels the Victorian content in what the Victorians termed a "modern instance." For example, descriptions of street people in Victorian London might be paralleled by descriptions of the homeless in Vancouver's downtown East side.

Modern Media Parody

On reading the second volume of George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, the publisher John Blackwood, wrote to Eliot about one of her characters, "I had quite forgotten Mr Brooke, but I knew his voice the moment he came into the room." The novelists we are studying in this course likewise provide each of their characters with a distinct voice of his or her own.

Take the voices of characters and/or narrators from the novel of your choice (for which you must sign up on Moodle), imagining that voice broadcasted through the modern media of texting, facebook, twitter, or even youtube. The key to this option is caricaturizing or exaggerating **the style of their voices** (sentence length and types, diction, use of dialogue, richness or paucity of description, techniques of characterization, use of particular parts of speech, catch phrases or characteristics, figurative language or lack of it, tone, etc.).

As modern media are usually used to report the banal and trivial, consider what the banality or triviality of everyday life in the mid-Victorian era would be, keeping in mind the social and economic class of the character whose voice you are imitating.

Remember that it is not the content or plot that you are parodying, but rather **the style of voice**. Because the length of tweets, texts, and facebook statuses is short, you might choose to parody a number of your chosen novel's voices to meet the 500 words.

The Analysis

After you write your own imitation of the voices of the narrators and/or characters, reflect on what you learned about the author's style. Write a 500-word essay (with a thesis statement and concluding statement) on the style of the original, discussing what formal aspects you chose to imitate or exaggerate. What is the author's literary thumbprint? What marks his/her typical characterization, dialogue, punctuation, narratological techniques, sentence structure, and narrative point of view? How do these choices reinforce the passage's and the work's theme(s)? Please use a dictionary of literary terms to make sure that you use correct terminology. Come to class ready to discuss your findings.

Submission Guidelines and Due Dates: I require two copies of your assignment, one electronic and one hard copy, both due at the beginning of class. The parodies and analysis are due on the following days:

September 20 — Anne Brontë, *Tenant of Wildfell Hall*

October 9 — Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*

October 25 — Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*

November 8 — Wilkie Collins, *Woman in White*

November 25 — George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin*

3. RESEARCH ESSAY:

Value: 35%

Length: 2000 words

Due Date for Proposal: November 15, **AT THE LATEST!**

Due Date for Essay: November 29

Your assignment is to write an essay on one or more texts on the course syllabus. Your essay should analyse a particular theme or other aspect of a text or texts on the course list. The topic for this assignment is deliberately left open to enable you to suit your interests and knowledge.

Restrictions: Please note that you should not work solely on the text on which you did your parody and analysis or exhibit entry. If you wish to write on more than one text, you may include one of the texts you previously used.

Historical Context: Any good literary analysis should consider the text in relation to its cultural and political contexts, publication history, and readership insofar as these are relevant to your discussion.

Secondary Sources: I strongly encourage the use of scholarly secondary sources; you should situate yours as one voice in a community of scholars. Your essay, then, should frame its argument in relation to other scholars working on your topic and/or your text. You should learn to use the MLA International Bibliography and ArticleFirst databases to search for relevant literary criticism. These are found on the Uvic Libraries Gateway as follows: go to <http://library.uvic.ca/>, click the “Databases” tab, click on “Databases by subject,” and then choose “Literature” as your subject. You will find MLA International Bibliography and ArticleFirst among them.

Proposal: At least two weeks before the paper due date, you must email me (kyh@uvic.ca) a brief proposal (1 line to 1 paragraph in length) outlining your proposed essay topic. A few sentences are all that I ask—just an indication of the direction of your thoughts. If you need help with designing an essay topic, I will be happy to discuss this process with you. **I will not accept the essay if I have not approved your proposal in advance.**

Handing in the Paper: At the beginning of class on the due date, hand in a paper copy of your essay. Upload an electronic copy to Moodle as well.

Grading: The essay will be graded according to 1) contribution to Victorian studies; 2) quality and originality; and 3) style and clarity.