

Victorian Literature and Culture (1837-1901)
❁ Poetry, Fiction, Drama and Non-Fiction ❁

Time: Spring 2026. Tuesdays 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. (Feb. 3 – April 14.)

Location: Maryland Pkwy campus, 4350 S. Maryland Pkwy. MAB2. Room 139.

Instructor: Alfred J. Drake, Ph.D.

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Required Text (*Editions can sometimes be bought used at lower cost.)

The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume E, the Victorian Age. 11th edition. ISBN-13: 978-0-393-54332-2. (*Suggestion: Norton’s “Package 2” consists of vols. D, E, and F and doesn’t cost much more than the single Victorian volume, so it may be a better value.)

Course Description: The British Victorian Period (1837-1901) follows the overlapping Romantic and Regency Eras, and offers students of literature, society, and politics an almost inexhaustible amount of material from which to learn. The Victorian Period was a time of vertiginous changes in the United Kingdom, a time in which faith in progress was high, and yet the old problems—poverty, suffering, violence at home and abroad—continued to take their toll. We will study texts by excellent authors in key genres: poetry, fiction, drama, and non-fiction.

Schedule (Subject to change)

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| Week 1 | Feb. 03 | Course Introduction and Introduction to the Victorian Age. |
| Week 2 | Feb. 10 | <u>Thomas Carlyle</u> . From <i>Signs of the Times</i> (88-97), from <i>Past and Present</i> (97-106), from “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” (42-45). |
| Week 3 | Feb. 17 | <u>J. S. Mill</u> . From <i>What Is Poetry?</i> (138-45), from <i>On Liberty</i> (145-57), from <i>The Subjection of Women</i> (157-67), from <i>The Negro Question</i> (46-50). |
| Week 4 | Feb. 24 | <u>Elizabeth B. Browning</u> . “The Runaway Slave ...” (175-82), from <i>Aurora Leigh</i> , Bk. 5 (195-97). <u>Emily Brontë</u> . “I’m happiest when most away” (457), “The Night-Wind” (457-58), “Stars” (459-60), “No coward soul is mine” (462-63). <u>Alfred Tennyson</u> . “Mariana” (206-08), “Lady of Shalott” (208-13), “Lotos-Eaters” (213-17), “Ulysses” (217-19), “Tithonus” (219-21), from <i>In Memoriam A. H. H.</i> (231-80; 2, 5, 7, 27, 39, 54-56). |

- Week 5** **Mar. 03** Henry Mayhew. From *London Labor* (332-46). John Ruskin. From *Modern Painters* (465-69), from *The Stones of Venice* (469-79), from “The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century” (326-29).
- Week 6** **Mar. 10** Robert Browning. “The Bishop Orders His Tomb” (416-19), “Caliban upon Setebos” (443-50). Matthew Arnold. “The Buried Life” (564-66), “Dover Beach” (574-75), Preface to *Poems* (575-85), from *Culture and Anarchy* (585-92), from *Literature and Science* (592-605).
- Week 7** **Mar. 24** Robert Louis Stevenson. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (741-83).
- Week 8** **Mar. 31** Section on Pre-Raphaelitism: Dickens, Ruskin, W. M. Rossetti, Buchanan (606-16), Dante Gabriel Rossetti. “The Blessed Damozel” (617-21), from *The House of Life* (632-34). Christina Rossetti. “Song 1” and “Song 2” (635-36), “In an Artist’s Studio” (638), “Winter: My Secret” (639-40), “Up-Hill” (640-41), “No, Thank-You, John” (654).
- Week 9** **Apr. 07** Gerard Manley Hopkins. “God’s Grandeur” (722), “As Kingfishers Catch Fire” (723), “The Windhover” (724), “Pied Beauty” (725), “Binsey Poplars” (726), “I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day” (729), “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire ...” (730), “Thou art indeed just, Lord” (730-31). Walter Pater. From *Studies in the Histories of the Renaissance* (712-19). Oscar Wilde. From “The Critic as Artist” (787-96).
- Week 10** **Apr. 14** Oscar Wilde. “Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (796-97), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (797-841).

Early Victorian Age. Pulling back from Romanticism in culture.

Post-Napoleonic search for new authoritative voices. Sage writers. Science and Industry. Darwin, Huxley.

Middle class. Economic Ascendancy and Industrialism, though land still matters in the class system.

Queen Victoria as model of propriety, “earnestness.”

Empire. later C19, scramble for Africa, etc.

Fin de Siècle. Decadence, end of the Victorian Era, modernity looms.

Among our prospective authors are Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Elizabeth B. Browning, John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Charles Darwin, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, Thomas Carlyle, John Henry Newman, William Morris, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde.

