

# HS Literature & Culture of the Fin de Siècle

## Syllabus

**Let's get this out of the way:** Like the preceding terms, winter term 2021/22 will be yet another experiment in pandemic pedagogics – albeit one where you will get to be on campus again (fingers crossed!). It is also my first term at the University of Passau, so please bear with me! I look forward to experimenting with different forms of (online) teaching, but I will need your help. Please keep in touch, take part in the Zoom classes, and use the forum and Perusall for asynchronous coursework (see schedule). Most importantly, please let me (and the other course members) know if something does not work for you or if you have different ideas about how to do things. Let's do this together!

### class:

- **Wednesday, 10:15-11:45** [online]

As Zoom is not the perfect medium for everyone (and some of you might struggle with technical issues) the seminar will combine synchronous Zoom classes with a number of asynchronous sessions (see schedule & tasks below).

### contact:

- [office: PHIL 270, Innstraße 25]
- **e-mail:**
- **office hours:** Wednesday, 14:00-15:00 (and on appointment) on Zoom – please send me an e-mail for the Zoom link.
- **twitter:** @susannegruss

### resources:

- **StudIP:**

### literature:

- Please **buy** the following texts (any edition will do):
  - (1) Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)
  - (2) Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (1893/94)
  - (3) H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896)
  - (4) H. Rider Haggard, *She: A History Adventure* (1886-87)
  - (5) Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)
- All **other texts** that are mandatory reading are available on StudIP.
- Please check the **bibliography** for further references (full bibliographical details, further reading).

### course description:

Radicalism and anarchism, Empire and colonial anxiety, the return of the Gothic (and the repressed), degeneration, decadence and aestheticism, the new Woman, the dandy, and gender anxiety – the keywords generally associated with the British fin de siècle (c.1880-1900) already betray the morbid fascination with transgression and decline many have described as characteristic for the late Victorian period. In this class, we will work on a detailed overview of the fin de siècle's literary and cultural politics, ranging from the literary genres to the discourses of Empire, sexuality and science that shape the time. We will discuss a variety of literary texts (James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Rider Haggard's *She*, Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Salomé*) and try to work out how these texts are a product of the discourses of the fin de siècle.

Students attending this course should be willing to shoulder a relatively heavy reading load – apart from the primary texts mentioned above, we will read and discuss essays, poems, and contemporary source material. A reader with short primary material and secondary texts will be provided online by the beginning of term.



**e-mail and Zoom etiquette:****- e-mail:**

Please give me some time to answer your **e-mails** (up to 4 days). I will not write e-mails after 8pm or on weekends.

As I teach five different classes, it would be very helpful if the class you are taking with me appeared somewhere in the body of your e-mail.

**- Zoom:**

Please **mute yourself** if you are not talking. If you feel uncomfortable talking into the camera (or if you have connection issues), feel free to use the **chat** to contribute to class discussions.

I obviously will not (and cannot) force anyone to turn on their **camera** when we zoom but would still kindly ask you to do so. Yes, staring at yourself onscreen can be cringeworthy, but if we want to use Zoom to create a **seminar experience**, being able to see each other's faces and nonverbal communication just makes everything so much easier for me (and you). Imagine trying to keep a discussion going while staring into a void of black rectangles.

Most of us will zoom from our **private spaces** – this means that my kids might make an appearance at some point (sorry). Zoom bombing family members, flatmates or pets are always welcome! Added bonus: you get to eat and drink during classes (as long as you have muted yourself, see above).

Our Zoom meetings should be a **safe space** for everyone. Recording (parts of) sessions or taking (and posting) screenshots is an absolute no-go. All material shared onscreen will be made available to you on StudIP.

- I am not exempt from the occasional **technical blip** – please be patient if I freeze and simply wait for a couple of minutes. Like the terminator, I will be back, promised.
- **Be kind (to yourself, to each other, and to me).**

**course performance & requirements:**

- Apart from preparing the **compulsory reading**, please stick to the tasks detailed in the course schedule below.
- I expect you to take part in class **regularly** and **actively**, both in synchronous and asynchronous sessions (I will also track your activity in the forum and on Perusall). Communication is key, so talk to me if you are struggling.
- Instead of a traditional oral presentation, each of you will join one of **4 expert groups**. Together with me, the expert groups are responsible for the **structuring of one session**. I would ask experts to
  - (1)** talk to me 2 weeks prior to their session
  - (2)** prepare a **brief handout** with background quotations and/or study questions and specify book chapters etc. they want to discuss in class (1 week prior to session)
  - (3)** e-mail me their session details, questions for discussion and the material they intend to use (e.g. ppt or online platforms) (Monday before session)
- For **asynchronous sessions**, I have indicated the tasks I expect you to cover over the week in the schedule below. This should not take more time than the 90-minute course slot (plus the time you would normally take to read/prepare for class).

**term paper:**

- If you need to write a term paper for this course, please stick to the department's style sheet, and attend the Zoom session on term papers (last session).
- Developing a topic **independently** and coming up with a suitable **thesis** is part of your assignment. Please talk to me/chat with me as soon as possible – I will not accept & grade your term paper if I have not talked to you about your topic.



# Schedule

 mandatory reading / study

 experts

 background reading (optional)

01 20.10.21

## organisation

tools (Flinga, Padlet, Perusall)

text: William Butler Yeats, "The Autumn of the Body" (1898)

to read / to do:

- W. B. Yeats, "The Autumn of the Body" (52-71) 

tasks:

- Have a quick look at the forum **before we start** and introduce yourself (including your pronouns) – if you want to, you can also upload a selfie and/or a picture of your workspace. And if you have a pet, upload a pic for us (pretty please).
- prep for class:** Think about the idea of the 'end' of a century.
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.** Please do so each week – I will get back to your open questions at the beginning of each session.

02 27.10.21

## Background & Politics 1

from the Victorian Age to the Fin de Siècle

Socialism, Radicalism, Anarchism

to read / to do:

- handout "Socialism – Radicalism – Anarchism" 
- W. Greenslade, "Socialism and Radicalism" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 73-90) 

tasks:

- prep for class:** Read the **handout** I have uploaded to StudIP & think about what you know about what you already know about the **Victorian Age** / the **Fin de Siècle**.
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**



03 03.11.21 *Background & Politics 2*

Outcast London – the metropolis

text: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* 1

to read / to do:

- read the novel 
- handout “Outcast London – the metropolis” 

tasks:

- reading prompt:** Read *Dorian Gray* with a focus on the depiction of **London** (for today), the **aestheticist “Preface”** (session 04), and the depiction of **masculinity** and the **dandy** (for session 11).
- prep for class:** Read the **handout** I have uploaded to StudIP & **take some notes**.
- after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions**.

04 10.11.21 *Decadence & Aestheticism*

asynch.

John Ruskin – Walter Pater – Oscar Wilde

texts: Walter Pater, from *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1888) - Oscar Wilde: from “The Critic as Artist” (1891), from “The Decay of Lying” (1891), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) 2

to read / to do:

- W. Pater, from *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (1888) 
- Oscar Wilde: from “The Critic as Artist” (1891), from “The Decay of Lying” (1891) 
- D. Denisoff, “Decadence and Aestheticism” (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 31-52) 

tasks:

- Read & comment on the excerpts from **Pater** and **Wilde (Perusall)**, link in today’s session on StudIP). We will briefly evaluate your experience of using Perusall in next week’s class.
- Use the **forum** thread “**Decadence & Aestheticism**” to discuss further what you have found out about decadence & aestheticism.
- after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions**.



05 17.11.21 *Realism – Fantastic Fiction*

## experts 1

## literary debates

texts: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) 1, H.G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) 1

to read / to do:

- read James's novella and Wells's novel 
- material by experts 
- S. Arata, "Realism" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 169-187) 
- N. Ruddick, "The Fantastic Fiction of the Fin de Siècle" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 189-206) 

tasks:

- reading prompt 1:** Read *The Turn of the Screw* with a focus on **realism** / the **supernatural/horror** (for today) and the **psychological state** of the governess (session 13).
- reading prompt 2:** Read *The Island of Doctor Moreau* with a focus on **realism** / **fantastic fiction** (for today) and the depiction of **science, degeneration** and **racial science** (session 12).
- prep for class:** Anything **experts 1** might have asked you to read / prepare.
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism**, and **open questions**. Include (constructive) feedback for the experts if possible!

06 24.11.21 *Poetry*

## asynch.

## Symbolism – Aestheticism

texts: Algernon Charles Swinburne, "A Forsaken Garden" (1878) – Oscar Wilde, "Symphony in Yellow" (1889) – Earnest Dowson, "Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration" (1896) – Lionel Johnson, "The Dark Angel" (1895)

to read / to do:

- poetry (see above) 
- M. Thain, "Poetry" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 223-240) 
- Alkalay-Gut, "Aesthetic and Decadent Poetry" (*Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry* 228-54) 

tasks:

- Members of **expert groups** collaborate on **Persuall** for the detailed analysis of 1 poem each:  
**experts 1:** Swinburne – **experts 2:** Wilde – **experts 3:** Dowson – **experts 4:** Johnson
- Read the Perusall analyses of the other groups, then use the **forum** thread "**Poetry**" to collate your results. What makes the poems you have discussed on Perusall examples of **symbolist/aestheticist poetry**, and are there **shared characteristics**?
- after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism**, and **open questions**.



- 07**    01.12.21    *Drama*
- varieties of performance  
text: Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (1893/94) 1
- to read / to do:
- read the play 
  - J. Stokes, "Varieties of Performance at the Turn of the Century" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, 207-222) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read *Salomé* with a focus on **aestheticist drama** (for today) and the depiction of the **femme fatale** (session 09).
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 
- 08**    08.12.21    *Empire*
- asynch.    case study: Charles Kipling
- texts: Charles Kipling, "The Man Who Would Be King" (1888), "Gunga Din" (1892) – H. Rider Haggard, *She* (1886-87) 1
- to read / to do:
- read Kipling (see above) 
  - R. G. Forman, "Empire" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*, 91-112) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt 1:** Read the 2 texts by Kipling with a focus on the point of view of the (white, male) coloniser.
  - reading prompt 2:** Read *She* with a focus on the depiction of **discovery / colonisation** (for today), the depiction of deviant female sexuality (session 09), and **racial science / racism** (session 12).
  - Read & comment on Kipling's short story and his poem (Perusall).**
  - Use the **forum** thread "**She and the British Empire**" for a brief reading response and a discussion of the colonial politics of Rider Haggard's novel.
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.
- 
- 09**    15.12.21    *(Deviant) Sexual Identity 1*
- experts 2**    women/femininity, the *femme fatale*  
sexology
- texts: Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (1893/94) 2 – H. Rider Haggard, *She* (1886-87) 2
- to read / to do:
- material by experts 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Anything **experts 2** might have asked you to read / prepare.
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism, and open questions**.



- 10      22.12.21      *The New Woman*
- texts: George Egerton, "A Cross Line" (1893) – 'Borgia Smudgiton' (Owen Seaman), "She-Notes" (*Punch*, 1884)
- to read / to do:
- read New Woman material (see above) 
  - S. Ledger, "The New Woman and Feminist Fictions" (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 153-168) 
  - "The New Woman" (*The Fin de Siècle Reader* 75-96) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read the New Woman material with a focus on the depiction of **gender / femininity** and **politics** (Smudgiton).
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**
- 29.12.21      *Christmas Break*
- 05.01.22      (no class)
- 11      12.01.22      *(Deviant) Sexual Identity 2*
- experts 3**
- men/masculinity, the dandy (case study: Oscar Wilde)
- text: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) 3
- to read / to do:
- material by experts 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Anything **experts 3** might have asked you to read / prepare.
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**
- 12      19.01.22      *Science 1*
- scientific naturalism – psychology – psychical research
- texts: Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) 2 – W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" (1919)
- to read / to do:
- W. B. Yeats, "The Second Coming" 
  - *The Fin de Siècle Reader*: "9. Scientific Naturalism" (221-242), "10. Psychology (243-268)", "11. Psychical Research" (269-290) [I'll upload a handout with quotations in time for class] 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Think about what you know about the development of **psychoanalysis** and **science** more generally in the fin de siècle.
  - after class:** Use the forum thread "**Feedback**" to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**



- 13 26.01.22 *Science 2*  
**experts 4**  
 degeneration – anthropology – racial science  
 texts: H.G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) 2 – H. Rider Haggard, *She* (1886-87) 3  
to read / to do:
- material by experts 
  - *The Fin de Siècle Reader*: “1. Degeneration” (1-24), “13. Anthropology & Racial Science” (315-341) [I’ll upload a handout with quotations in time for class] 
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Anything **experts 4** might have asked you to read / prepare.
  - after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**
- 14 02.02.22 *Visual Arts 1*  
 the Pre-Raphaelites  
 texts: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “Nuptial Sleep” (1870), “Song 8: The Woodspurge” (1870/1881) – Christina Rossetti, “Babylon the Great” (1893)  
to read / to do:
- poetry (see above) 
  - D. Riede, “The Pre-Raphaelite School” (305-320) 
  - S. West, “The Visual Arts” (*Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle* 131-152) 
- tasks:
- reading prompt:** Read the poems with a focus on the depiction of **sexuality.**
  - prep for class:** Brush up your knowledge on the **Italian** and the **English sonnet** and have a look at some **Pre-Raphaelite paintings** (this is a good place to start: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/pre-raphaelite>)
  - after class:** Use the forum thread “**Feedback**” to (anonymously) post **comments, criticism,** and **open questions.**
- 15 09.02.22 *Visual Arts 2*  
 Aubrey Beardsley  
 round-up, open questions, term papers  
to read / to do:
- /
- tasks:
- prep for class:** Think about what you have learned in this class – do you have any open questions?



## Literature

### primary literature

- Dowson, Ernest (1896). "Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 667-668
- Egerton, George (1893). "A Cross Line." *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Virago, 1993. 47-68.
- Haggard, H. Rider (1886-87). *She: A History of Adventure*. Ed. & intr. Patrick Brantlinger. London, et al.: Penguin, 2004.
- Harrison, Fraser (ed.). *The Yellow Book: An Illustrated Quarterly*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1974.
- James, Henry (1898). *The Turn of the Screw. Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. Eds. Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren. New York and London: Norton, 1999.
- Johnson, Lionel (1895). "The Dark Angel." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 677-79. (07 EN/I 171/6)
- Kipling, Rudyard (1888). "The Man Who Would Be King." *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories*. London: Macmillan, 1951. 202-253.
- (1892). "Gunga Din." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 646-648.
- Rossetti, Christina G. (1893). "Babylon the Great." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 393.
- Rossetti, Dante Gabriel (1870). "Nuptial Sleep", "Song 8: The Woodspurge." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 367-369.

### secondary literature

- Alkalay-Gut, Karen. "Aesthetic and Decadent Poetry." *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*. Ed. Joseph Bristow. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 228-254.
- Beckson, Karl, ed. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose*. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1981.
- Briggs, Asa. "The 1890s: Past, Present and Future in Headlines." *Fins de Siècle: How Centuries End 1400-2000*. Eds. Asa Briggs and Daniel Snowman. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996. 156-195.
- Byron, Glennis. "Gothic in the 1890s." *A Companion to the Gothic*. Ed. David Punter. Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000. 132-142.
- Glick, Elisa. "The Dialectics of Dandyism." *Cultural Critique* 48 (2001): 129-163.
- Hammond, J. R. H. G. *Wells and the Modern Novel*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1988.
- Ian, Marcia. "Henry James and the Spectacle of Loss: Psychoanalytic Metaphysics." *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*. Eds. Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. 115-136.
- Ledger, Sally, and Scott McCracken, eds. *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Libby, Andrew. "Revisiting the Sublime: Terrible Women and the Aesthetics of Misogyny in H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*." *The CEA Critic* 67.1 (2004): 1-14.

- Smudgiton, Borgia (Owen Seaman, 1884). "She-Notes." *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Ed. Elaine Showalter. London: Virago, 1993. 69-73.
- Swinburne, Algernon Charles (1878). "A Forsaken Garden." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 506-509.
- Wells, H.G. (1896). *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. London: Penguin, 2007.
- Wilde, Oscar (1889). "Symphony in Yellow." *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Ed. Francis O'Gorman. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004. 588.
- (1889). from "The Decay of Lying." *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Reviews and Reactions, Criticism*. Ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie. New York and London: Norton, 2007. 337-344.
- (1890). from "The Critic as Artist." *The Picture of Dorian Gray: Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Reviews and Reactions, Criticism*. Ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie. New York and London: Norton, 2007. 329-336.
- (1890). *The Picture of Dorian Gray. Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Reviews and Reactions, Criticism*. Ed. Michael Patrick Gillespie. New York and London: Norton, 2007.
- (1893/94). *Salomé. A Tragedy in One Act*. Boston: Branden, 1996.
- Yeats, William Butler (1898). "The Autumn of the Body." *Essays*. London: Macmillan, 1924. 232-238.
- (1920). "The Second Coming." *The Poems*. Ed. and intr. Daniel Albright. London: Everyman's Library, 1992. 235.

- Luckhurst, Roger, and Sally Ledger, eds. *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History c. 1880-1900*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Marshall, Gail, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Navarette, Susan J. *The Shape of Fear: Horror and the Fin de Siècle Culture of Decadence*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998.
- O'Gorman, Francis, ed. *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Malden, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell, 2004.
- Pittock, Malcolm. "The Decadence of *The Turn of the Screw*." *Essays in Criticism* 55.4 (2005): 332-51.
- Pykett, Lyn, ed. *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*. Harlow: Longman, 1996.
- Raby, Peter, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Riede, David. "The Pre-Raphaelite School." *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*. Eds. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman and Antony H. Harrison. Malden, et al.: Blackwell, 2002. 305-320.
- Showalter, Elaine, ed. *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siècle*. London: Virago, 1993.
- . *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*. London: Virago, 1992.

