Romantic Literature and the Emergence of Modern Commercial Society

Instructor: Caroline Winter
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English Department
300-level course

We acknowledge and respect the Lkwungen-speaking peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

British Fiction and Nonfiction of the Early Nineteenth Century

From the Academic Calendar

Prose writings (novels, autobiography, essays, short stories) of the early 19th century. Focus on works by Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, Mary Shelley, James Hogg, Thomas De Quincey, and the Brontës; Gothic novels, historical novels, and novels of manners.

Course Overview

The early nineteenth century in Britain was a time of revolutions—political, social, and economic—the reverberations of which are strongly felt in Romantic and early Victorian literature. In this course, we will examine fiction and nonfiction of this time in its literary and historical context, paying special attention to the emergence of modern commercial society.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course, but you would benefit from a survey course introducing nineteenth-century literature, such as ENGL200C: English Literature, 1800-1914. Some useful background resources are posted on our CourseSpaces site.

Course Goals and Context

The main goal of this course is to read, analyze, and interpret a selection of British fiction and nonfiction from the early nineteenth century. To do this, we will take a variety of critical approaches, practice close reading, read and understand literary criticism, and practice building effective written arguments.
This course builds on the broad first-year survey courses The Literature of our Era (ENGL 146) and Great Moments in English Literature (ENGL 147), as well as the survey courses at the 200-level: English Literature to 1660 (ENGL 200A), English Literature 1660–1800 (ENGL 200B), and English Literature 1800–1914 (200C).

It complements upper-year courses that focus on literature before and after the early nineteenth century, such as The English Novel: 1750 to the Early 19th Century (ENGL 376B) and Victorian Fiction: Dickens to Eliot (ENGL 380). It also complements The Romantic Period I and II (ENGL 382 and 383).

Course Format

Classes will be discussion-driven, with in-class activities and occasional lectures. Because we'll be doing a lot of hands-on work in class, it's especially important that you attend class and come ready to participate.

Key Topics and Ideas

Readings and discussion will revolve around the following topics related to Romantic-era economic thought, as well as others that we'll identify together over the course of the term:

- Wealth, rank, and class
- Credit, debt, and money
- People and property
- Desire and consumption

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a selection of early nineteenth-century British fiction and nonfiction:
  - demonstrate familiarity with and understanding of the selected texts
  - identify and discuss their key issues and themes
  - identify and discuss their historical and literary contexts

Engage critically with secondary sources:
  - locate and evaluate secondary sources
  - summarize secondary sources, including the main argument
  - analyze, synthesize, and respond critically to other writers’ arguments

Understand and apply different critical approaches:
  - apply different critical approaches to analyzing texts
  - explain the effect of analyzing a text through a particular critical lens
Develop, write, and edit a research essay:
• generate and develop research questions
• develop effective arguments using evidence
• use rhetorical strategies to argue effectively
• document research using MLA style
• write clearly, correctly, and concisely

Reflect constructively upon your learning
• articulate your thoughts and opinions about what you read
• develop effective strategies for reading, writing, and learning

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Readings
The readings for the course are a selection of novels, essays, short stories, and critical sources.

For the novels, you are expected to read the introduction as well as the novel itself, so it’s important to get the edition listed. Some supplemental secondary readings will be assigned and made available online or as handouts.


Walter Scott, “Emma; a Novel” (1815), from The Quarterly Review, available online: https://bit.ly/2MsFZ6o


Walter Scott, “Wandering Willy’s Tale” (from Redgauntlet, 1824). Page images are available online at https://archive.org/details/redgauntlettale01scot (pp. 225–261) and as a PDF posted on CourseSpaces.


Assignments

The culminating assignment in this course is a research essay. The other assignments are designed to help you plan and develop your essay over the course of the term. This course also has a final exam that will let you draw connections between the ideas and text we’ll discuss over the entire term.

You’ll also be assigned three bonus assignments to be completed online via CourseSpaces. These do not count as graded assignments, but you’ll earn bonus marks on future assignments by completing them.

**Reading Reflections:** Three reflective pieces, each relating to at least one of the course texts. Each is due by the date listed at the latest.

**Length:** 250–500 words
**Weight:** 3 x 5%

**Close Reading:** a detailed analysis of a short passage of text.

**Length:** 500 words
**Weight:** 15% (with bonus marks for online activities)

**Annotated bibliography:** a brief summary and response to a secondary source that you will use in your research essay. To be shared as part of a class bibliography.

**Length:** 250 words
**Weight:** 15%

**Research Essay:** an argumentative essay about at least one of the texts studied in class, supported by evidence.

**Length:** 2500 words
**Weight:** 30%

**OR**

**Wikipedia Article:** an original encyclopedia-style article following Wikipedia’s editorial guidelines.

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Length: 2500 words
Weight: 30%