

# READING URBAN MONSTROSITY: THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH NOVEL IN LONDON

V41.9530  
NYU Summer in London 2007

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**PLEASE NOTE:** You have chosen to enroll in a course that reads several Victorian novels over a six-week period. Therefore, it is extremely important that you begin your reading *before* arriving in London. In particular, students should arrive in London with at least the first half of Dickens's *Dombey and Son* completed.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course reads selected works of Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, and Evelyn Waugh to examine not only London's material conditions (geography, architecture, publishing practices, novelists' homes, booksellers) as they are reflected in fictional representations of the city that Daniel Defoe had once characterized as "monstrous," but also Henry James's generic description of the novel itself as a "loose, baggy monster." Students will visit and research locations that figure prominently in---or relate to---the novels we read. One of these locations will be Dickens's House.

In particular, this course targets two issues related to the Victorian novel: the city and genre. The first task of the course is to interrogate the relationship between urban geography and nineteenth-century novels. The course questions how Victorian novelists used geography to help Londoners relate to their "monstrous" urban surroundings more easily. In addition to London, our readings will address the City of Bath, imaginary cities, and the nineteenth-century British town. The second task of this course is to determine whether there are any formal characteristics or thematic concerns that define "the nineteenth-century novel" and distinguish it from its eighteenth-century predecessor. In particular, we will trace the techniques that Victorian novelists used to construct their readers' interiors. By the end of the course, students will be able to outline the contributions of nineteenth-century urban novelists to a British tradition of novel-writing.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** Although the following texts will be available at Blackwell's Bookstore in London, it is highly recommended that you purchase these editions in the States and begin your reading before the course commences (see above note). *Please purchase these exact editions so that your course notes will correspond directly to the page references used during class:*

1. Austen, Jane. *Northanger Abbey*. Ed. Marilyn Butler. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003. ISBN: 0141439793.
2. Conrad, Joseph. *The Secret Agent*. Ed. John Lyon. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. ISBN: 0192801694.
3. Dickens, Charles. *Dombey and Son*. London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2002. ISBN: 0140435468.
4. Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. New York: Signet Classics, 2003. ISBN: 0451528956.
5. Waugh, Evelyn. *The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2000. ISBN: 0316926604.
6. *London: A to Z*. Sevenoaks: Geographers' A-Z Map Co. Ltd., latest ed. (purchase upon arrival)

**GRADING:** To receive a grade for this course, you must complete the following:

1. One London Travelogue Presentation  
(*due on the date when we discuss your selection*) [30%]
2. Short Paper, 3 pages (750 words); (*due July 10*) [20%]
3. Final Paper, 6-8 pages (1500-2000 words); (*due July 31*) [30%]
5. Pro-Active Participation and Attendance [20%]

All papers must be typed and follow MLA style. Papers must be submitted on the deadlines to receive

a grade. Tardiness on any assignment will be penalized. Attempts at plagiarism will be handled with strict attention to University protocol.

**COURSE STRUCTURE:** To contextualize the Victorian novel in terms of London's nineteenth-century geography, we will do close readings; therefore, come ready to discuss your readings. Note exact page numbers, chapters, or paragraphs that appear to be complex and demand interpretation. Your marginal comments generated during your first-readings are incredibly important. Because this course will be run as a seminar, pro-active participation is expected. A typical meeting will organize itself around the following schedule:

- i. **Presentation of London Travelogue:** Students (those assigned to research the day's destination) will present their travelogues to the class.
- ii. **Seminar:** Discussion, background, dramatic readings, and critical conclusions.

**EXCURSIONS:** During this six-week course, we will, as a class, visit several sites that were important to Victorians during their everyday lives and that appear in the novels we read. Weekly excursions have in the past included visits to the Museum of London, guided walks through Westminster and the City of London, and visits to the Victoria and Albert Museum's Library to view Dickens's original manuscripts.

**ADVISING:** I am available to discuss readings, paper topics, and questions during my office hours at 6 Bedford Square. Should these office hours conflict with your schedule, please make an appointment to meet during a time that is more convenient for you. You may also e-mail any questions or concerns to me at erikbond@umich.edu.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS:**

**Travelogue  
Destinations:**

June 26	<b><i>Introduction: A Twenty-First-Century Bedford Square?</i></b> AUSTEN, <i>Northanger Abbey</i>	-Regent Street
June 28	<b><i>Reading Urban Conduct</i></b> Steps AUSTEN, <i>Northanger Abbey</i>	-The Roman Baths off Surrey -Burlington Arcade
July 3	<b><i>American Who? Serialization and Imperialism</i></b> DICKENS, <i>Dombey and Son</i>	-Fleet Street -Cleopatra's Needle on the Embankment
July 5	<b><i>Domestic London</i></b> DICKENS, <i>Dombey and Son</i>	-Dickens's House at 48 Doughty Street -The Bank of England at Threadneedle St.
July 10	<b><i>Nurturing the Victorian Commuter</i></b> DICKENS, <i>Dombey and Son</i>	-Victoria Station -Mayfair
July 17	<b><i>Dickens and Literary Celebrity</i></b> DICKENS, <i>Dombey and Son</i>	-Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey
July 19	<b><i>Engineering Urban Angst</i></b> STEVENSON, <i>The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll</i>	-Soho Square -Cavendish Square & Harley Street

*and Mr. Hyde*

July 24	<b><i>Cholera, Plague, and Victorian Pestilence</i></b> STEVENSON, <i>The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> CONRAD, <i>The Secret Agent</i>	-Madame Tussaud's Waxworks
July 26	<b><i>The Global City and the Fin-de-Siècle</i></b> CONRAD, <i>The Secret Agent</i>	-The Elgin Marbles at the British Museum -Greenwich Observatory
July 31	<b><i>Empire, Revisited</i></b> CONRAD, <i>The Secret Agent</i>	-Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament -The Imperial War Museum
August 2	<b><i>Victorian Legacy and Modernism</i></b> WAUGH, "The Man Who Liked Dickens" from <i>The Complete Stories of Evelyn Waugh</i>	