

**English 451-16423:**  
**Victorian London Literature**  
Fall 2014

**Professor H. Kaufman**

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**Class Meetings:**

307 Volcanology

MW 8:30-9:50

**Course Description**

The city of London experienced profound cultural, geographical, and social change throughout the Victorian period (1837-1901). Londoners in this era witnessed the building of a railroad system and the invention of street lighting; they encountered the benefits of a new public sewage system that provided widespread public health benefits; they experienced the effects of extreme urban poverty; and they struggled to alleviate a rise in crime by developing a professional police force. Urban literary and print culture were simultaneously transformed as literacy rates climbed, school systems expanded, and novelists—taking Dickens’s lead—began writing serialized, multi-part novels focused on the drama of the modern urban sphere.

This course will focus on one such literary depiction in Charles Dickens’s last complete novel, *Our Mutual Friend*, published in monthly parts from May 1864—November 1865. As we work our way through this rich text we’ll focus on depictions of the novel’s organization of the city—from the street level to the rooftops of houses; from the wealthy suburbs to the dockside slums; and from the Thames river’s path above the city to its watery depths below. Along the way we’ll examine this single novel as both a material object and a narrative of London’s transformation in the Victorian period. How did *Our Mutual Friend* come to be written and published? How is the narrative shaped by Victorian print technologies? How would Victorian readers have encountered such a long novel broken into parts and read in dark, candle-lit rooms? And what is the significance of the way Dickens translates the new urban sphere—with its terrifying and exciting changes—in a novel about the forces that unite Londoners through their social and economic institutions?

**Learning Outcomes**

- 1) To read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions.
- 2) To draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts.
- 3) To perform critical, formal analyses of literary, cinematic, and other cultural texts.
- 4) To write focused analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose.
- 5) To employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce original, persuasive arguments.
- 6) To employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay’s thesis.

**Required Texts/Supplies (available at the UO bookstore).**

- \*Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Penguin 1997), with introduction by Adrian Poole  
ISBN: 978-0-140-43497-2 (**you must get the edition with this ISBN number**)
- \* Assorted readings posted on Blackboard or in hyperlinks listed on the syllabus
- \* Speedball No. 102 Crow Quill pen and ink set (which is available in the basement of UO bookstore for \$6.49)

**Course Expectations and Details**

**I Class Work**

**Respect**

Everyone enrolled in this course is expected to help foster a community of respect. We will read controversial material and you may find that you don't always agree with a view expressed by a classmate, teacher, author, or text. It is crucial that we listen carefully and contribute respectfully to class discussions. Classroom behavior should enable and not interfere with learning.

**The use of cell phones and social media during class time is prohibited**

This prohibition applies to spaces outside of the classroom, such as the bathroom, hallway, or lobby of the classroom building.

Please turn cell phones to vibrate before class begins and silence electronic equipment capable of interrupting class.

Class notes should be taken on paper. Computers should not be turned on during class.

**Restrooms should be used prior to or following class**

Excessive absences from class for visits to the bathroom are disruptive. If you have a medical situation requiring you to make regular visits to the restroom during class please let me know during the first week of the term so that I can make appropriate accommodations to minimize disruptions.

**Please plan to attend all classes on time and remain for the duration of the class period**

If a one-time situation interferes with class please let me know in advance. Persistent lateness or early departures are prohibited.

**Bring the following to each class:** the course syllabus, the book we are studying, hard copies of assigned reading from Blackboard, paper for in-class writing exercises and note-taking, and a writing utensil. Website readings (excluding essays on Blackboard) will be made available in class.

**Quizzes**

Quizzes are unannounced and will focus on the reading due on the day of the quiz. If you are absent on the day of a quiz you cannot make it up (since it will be "pop"). However, you may drop one quiz grade from your quiz grade average. If you've missed one quiz you can count it as your "dropped" quiz. If you haven't missed a quiz then the lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes take place at the start of class.

## Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. Your regular attendance is vital to the goals of this course. You may miss two class meetings without penalty. *Your final grade will drop one-third of a letter grade for each subsequent absence unless you have contacted me and we have agreed on alternative arrangements.*

**\*\* You are responsible for work due or assigned on days you are absent. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to contact a fellow student to find out what you've missed. \*\***

## What to do if you are absent

There is no need to email me. I will assume you're using one of your two allotted absences.

More than two absences will result in a lower final course grade (see Attendance Policy). If your absences are the result of a medical situation **it is your responsibility to provide a medical note.** The note should be written by the medical doctor who treated your illness. It should be written on official stationery from your doctor's office, and should not only state that a medical situation prevented you from attending class but should include the dates of your absences. The doctor's name must be clearly identified on the note.

**It is your responsibility to communicate long-term (more than two missed classes) absences due to medical situations.** Specific medical details are private and do not need to be shared. However, you *do* need to take responsibility for missing class by communicating with your professors and by providing medical documentation verifying your absences.

## Class Participation

You should expect to participate fully in class discussions by contributing your ideas, asking questions, pointing to passages that interest or confuse you, and by taking notes.

## II Written Work

Written course assignments should be turned in either electronically or in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date. Due dates and submission format (electronic or paper) are listed on the "Writing Assignments" section of this syllabus. Work submitted on Blackboard should be **saved as a single MS Word file** onto the section on Blackboard titled "Assignments."

Written work can be turned in after a deadline but will be counted as late. Assignments will be docked 5 points for each day beyond the deadline. Extensions and incompletes will be given only for documented emergencies.

I do not accept written work submitted by email.

I encourage you to find a backup plan in case your printer stops working. Late papers resulting from broken printers will be counted as late.

## Plagiarism

All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources. Plagiarism will be handled according to the [\*Student Conduct Code\*](#)

### **III Coursework Assessment, Support, and Access**

- 20% Class participation — including quality and consistency of contributions to discussions, punctuality, preparedness for class, and quiz/in-class writing grades
- 35% Average of Candlelight, Letterpress, and Handwriting Assignments
- 25% Lee Jackson Dictionary Essay & Presentation
- 20% Final Essay

#### **Course Website ([blackboard.uoregon.edu](https://blackboard.uoregon.edu))**

You will need to access this site to download reading assignments, upload writing assignments, receive feedback on your written work, and access syllabi and handouts. I frequently return essay comments electronically on blackboard. Please be sure to check your comments when they have been returned. **When you come to my office for appointments please bring a printed copy of your essay along with my comments.**

#### **Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodation, let me know by week two of the term so that I can make appropriate arrangements. Please request that the [UO Accessible Education Center](#) send me a letter explaining that you've consulted them about your disability.

#### **Tutoring and Help**

Writing help is available through Academic Learning Services located in 68 PLC (call for an appointment: 541-346-3226). I am also very happy and eager to help you with your writing. Please feel welcome to contact me to set up a time to discuss your course work.

### **IV Assignment Schedule**

This class will have some demanding (but wonderful!) reading assignments. I will expect everyone to keep up with the reading. For each reading assignment you will want to take notes—writing down questions, identifying important or confusing passages, and/or observing features of the writing that interest you. I've included a Reading Guide below to suggest strategies for keeping up with the reading assignments. Please feel free to add items to this list. It's a work in progress!

Assignments are due on dates listed below. You'll need to use editions of the texts listed on the first page of this syllabus. Please Note: Editions of *Our Mutual Friend* vary in page designation, illustration content (sometimes none, sometimes just a few illustrations), and chapter breakdowns. Everyone in this class will work from the same edition of the novel so that we will be on the same page (literally and figuratively) in class discussions and for essay citations. The edition of the novel we'll be using contains 4 "books" which I've designated below with Arabic numbers (1, 2, 3, 4). Chapters appear parenthetically in Roman Numerals (I, II, III). For example, Book 2 chapters 6-8 will look like this: 2(VI-VIII).

## Week 1

M 9/29

Course Introductions, London Introductions, Maps

W 10/1

(1) Read the *ODNB* (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*) entry on Charles Dickens. You don't have to remember every detail of this essay. Rather, strive to get a sense of the overall contours of Dickens's life and career as contexts for the study of *Our Mutual Friend*. You can access this database by first going to the [library home page](#). From there click on "Databases A-Z" (on the lower left-hand column); next, scroll down to the "O" section; click on *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; type in "Charles Dickens" in the search box. If you plan to access the library's site remotely you'll need to set up your VPN account. The library has a [help link for connecting from off campus](#).

(2) Read the BL's (British Library's) article,

["Henry Mayhew's \*London Labour and the London Poor\*"](#)

(3) Read the BL's article, ["The Working Classes and the Poor"](#)

## Week 2

M 10/6

*Our Mutual Friend* 1(I-IX) —be sure to look at illustrations, including "Birds of Prey" which depicts the novel's opening paragraphs and appears opposite the Table of Contents (no page number listed, unfortunately)

W 10/8

Discussion continued: book history and form—parts, multi-plot, etc.

(1) Read the BL's ["Print Culture"](#)

(2) Read the BL's ["Victorian Readers"](#)

(3) Read this partial entry from Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* on [The Dustman](#)

## Week 3

M 10/13

**Read by candlelight** (see description of Candlelight Assignment) *Our Mutual Friend* 1 (X-XVII)

W 10/15

Discussion continued: Victorian book illustration; **Candlelight Assignment due**

## Week 4

M 10/20

*Our Mutual Friend* 2 (I-VIII)

W 10/22

**Visit to Letterpress Studio**

Read [Robert Patton's Essay](#) on the composition, publication, and reception of *Our Mutual Friend* as preparation for our visit to the letterpress studio

## Week 5

M 10/27

*Our Mutual Friend* 2 (IX-XVI)

W 10/29

Discussion continued; **Letterpress Assignment due**

### **Week 6**

M 11/3 *Our Mutual Friend* 3 (I-VIII)

W 11/5 [Lee Jackson's Dictionary](#) assignment due

### **Week 7**

M 11/10 *Our Mutual Friend* 3 (IX-XVII)

W 11/12 **Visit to Special Collections and introduction to Victorian handwriting**

### **Week 8**

M 11/17 *Our Mutual Friend* 4 (I-VIII)

W 11/19 Discussion continued; **Victorian Handwriting Assignment due**

### **Week 9**

M 11/24 *Our Mutual Friend* 4 (IX through "Chapter the Last")

W 11/26 *Lee Jackson Dictionary* presentations

### **Week 10**

M 12/1 *Lee Jackson Dictionary* presentations continued

W 12/3 *Lee Jackson Dictionary* presentations continued and concluding discussion  
**Final Essay due by 5:00 PM.** Essays should be uploaded to Blackboard as MS Word attachments.

## **Writing Assignments**

### **10/15 Candlelight Assignment (1 full page min.): The Victorian Reading Experience**

For this assignment you'll have a chance to read *Our Mutual Friend* using the technologies available to working or middle class Victorian households. Your reading must take place after the sun has set or at dusk. You should light as many candles needed to complete the assigned reading by candlelight. If you get a headache or have vision problems you should stop reading immediately. Hopefully you'll be able to read long enough, however, to get a sense of the experience of reading a nineteenth-century novel at night by candlelight. Please be VERY, VERY careful to keep an eye on your candles. Do not leave the room while they are lit, and be sure to keep them in a safe place where they're unlikely to fall or catch on fire. Fire accidents are not part of this assignment!

Once you've completed the reading assignment you'll write a reflection about the experience of reading a Victorian novel by candlelight. What did you learn about the way Victorian readers would have accessed this story? Did features of the story jump out because of the way you were reading? Did you understand our contemporary reading practices (by electric light) differently as

a result of the candlelight experience? Why would a novel read by such dim light be so popular? Did you notice night-time scenes from a new perspective? What does your experience of reading by candlelight help you to understand about Victorian experiences with night lighting? Reflection essays should be 1-2 pages (min) and do not need to be written by candlelight. Your essay should follow the Writing Checklist and Guide (below) and hard copies should be brought to class on the due date.

### **10/29 Letterpress Response Essay (1 full page min.): Making a multi-plot novel**

On 10/22 we will take a field trip to the Art department's Letterpress Studio to learn about how Victorian novels were created. You'll want to begin this assignment, which follows our visit, by summarizing what you learned at the letterpress studio about the technology of Victorian books—how were they made, printed (using moveable type as opposed to a computer or typewriter), assembled, etc.? How do you see the novel differently when viewed as a text produced by letterpress rather than typewriter? What relationships do you see (if any) between the content of the novel and the print technologies used to create it? Do you see evidence of printing, publishing, reading, buying or selling of texts (books or newspapers) in the novel? What do you think this novel has to say about urban print culture? Hint: you don't need to answer all of these questions. I pose them here to get the creative juices flowing. Pick a question or two related questions around which to focus your response. Essays should follow the Writing Checklist and Guide (below) and hard copies should be brought to class on the due date.

### **11/5 Visit to *Lee Jackson's Dictionary* Assignment (2 pages min.): OMF's Victorian Contexts**

[Lee Jackson's Dictionary](#) hosts a great number of primary materials connected with Victorian London. This assignment has three stages:

**First**, explore *Lee Jackson's Dictionary* and select an entry that reveals some issue (literary, social, economical, psychological, political, or historical) about Victorian London that relates (contrasts, illustrates, elaborates, etc.) to *Our Mutual Friend*. The issue might be a social problem like disease or crime; it might be an institution like marriage or the workhouse; it might be a category of people, such as children, women, the rich, gamblers; or it might be a location in London (Houndsditch, Hyde Park, the City, etc.). **Hint:** every item on Jackson's dictionary list fits the bill, so choose something that you find so fascinating it keeps you up at night.

**Second**, read the item you've selected from *Jackson's Dictionary* carefully several times.

**Third**, write an essay (2 pages minimum) in which you develop a description and analysis of the item you've selected. Essays should follow the Writing Checklist and Guide (below) and hard copies of your essay should be turned in on the due date. You will want to address each of the 6 following items in your essay:

- 1) Identify the author of this work, or find out if it's anonymous
- 2) Identify the title of this work if one exists
- 3) Summarize the content of the text you've selected. What is its subject and what does it have to say about that subject?

- 4) What do you notice about the way this text makes its point? Describe the text's use of voice, perspective, tone, and/or style. Does it seem objective, intimate, speculative, exaggerated, persuasive? What features of the writing lead you to this conclusion?
- 5) What do you think the text is trying to convince readers of? How do you know? Point to examples that demonstrate your point.
- 6) Concluding paragraph: How does Victorian London appear through the lens of this text?

### **11/19 Handwriting Assignment: Victorian Handwriting Technologies**

For this assignment you'll have an opportunity to experience what it was like to write like a Victorian. **First**, select a section of the novel (1-2 pages) that strikes you as interesting or important. Read that section quietly and carefully. **Second**, copy the section you've just read using your dip pen and ink set. Your writing should follow (as much as you can) the handwriting guide you received in the Special Collections handwriting class. **Third**, finally, write a 1-2 page response essay in which you consider what it might have been like to write an 800-page novel by hand. Response essays should be written by hand using your dip pens. How does this writing technology affect the way you produced the writing? What did you begin to understand about the passage or see anew by reproducing it with a writing technology that is slower than those more familiar to us? What did the experience of writing by dip pen help you to understand about the process of writing in Victorian times? What did it help you to see about our current writing technologies such as smart phones, tablets, laptops, or desktop computers? Hard copies should be brought to class on the due date. You should turn in both your handwritten copy of the passage from the text and your response essay.

### **12/3 Final Essay (4 pages min.): Reading Dickens in Context**

Identify a passage (1-2 pages) in *Our Mutual Friend* that relates (contrasts, illustrates, elaborates, etc.) in some way with the item you selected from *Lee Jackson's Dictionary* (11/5 assignment). Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two texts. What is significant or important about the way each one narrates a particular literary, social, economical, location/geographic, psychological, political, or historical issue about London? How do these two writers (Dickens and the author of the text you've selected from *Lee Jackson's Dictionary*) present that problem differently? How does the nature of the problem or issue shift when we consider it from these two different views? Essays will build upon and integrate a revised form of your *Lee Jackson Dictionary* Assignment. You should follow the Writing Checklist and Guide (below). Essays should be uploaded to Blackboard (**as an MS Word attachment**) by 5:00 PM on 12/3.

## Reading Guide

How does one read an 800-page Victorian novel today? Please contribute to this list as you develop new reading strategies.

- 1) Step away from your computer.
- 2) Turn off (not silence, but actually shut off the power) of your cell phone, tablet, and other e-devices.
- 3) Sit in a quiet place with a notebook and pen.
- 4) Engage in SLOW READING: Anticipate how much time it will take to read each assignment and plan accordingly. If you try to rush through passages you'll miss important details. Leave enough time each week for completing your reading assignments with care and full attention.
- 5) Create a character list as you move through the book. When you encounter significant details about a character (the guy who murdered his wife, the woman who wears a pink dress and laughs funny, etc.) record them on your list. If you keep that list handy when you're reading you will not only be able to continue adding to it, but it'll be useful in times when you forget the identity of a character.
- 6) Mark passages that interest you and mention them in class. Articulate your interests and questions aloud during class discussion.
- 7) Pay attention to places mentioned in the text (pubs, schools, streets, parks, or buildings), social problems, key events in history, or subtleties that you think may be indicators of later plot developments.

## Writing Checklist & Guide

Responses and Essays should focus on the assigned essay questions. Be sure to read the assigned questions several times before starting your essay. As you draft and revise your essay you will want to revisit those questions to be sure your thinking remains on task. Your essays should **NOT** address features of the text that you “relate to.” Such responses may be good places to begin thinking about a text, but analysis requires us to think beyond first impressions. Instead you should consider the following questions as guides: identify an important feature of the writing; offer an interpretation of why that feature is important; and point to examples from the text to help you prove your interpretation.

1) Unless otherwise noted, all essays should be typed and double-spaced with 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides. You should use Times New Roman 12 pt. font.

2) Essays should have a title focused around your thesis. Titles should not have quotation marks.

**Correct:** Response Essay 1: The Uses of the Hidden Archive

**Incorrect:** Response Essay 1

3) Your name should appear in the upper left-hand corner of the essay’s first page followed by the professor’s name and assignment due date.

4) Insert page numbers on the bottom center of each page except the first.

5) Keep a copy of your paper.

6) Staple all work longer than one page.

7) Revise, proofread, and edit your paper many, many, many times before submitting it. Thoughtful, well-written, edited essays cannot be thrown together at the last minute.

8) Introduce authors by citing their complete name; thereafter, use the last name only. For example,

**Charles Dickens’s** *Our Mutual Friend* emphasis the interior struggles of his characters. For example, the narrator describes features of Bella Wilfer’s character that render her a traumatized victim of circumstance. **Dickens** develops these features in later passages by including adjectives highlighting Bella’s emotional struggle.

The title of the work you are discussing should be italicized (if it is a published book). Published articles or shorter works should have quotation marks around the title.

9) Quotes should be cited according to MLA guidelines. A direct quote from a text should look like this:

“As an incontrovertible proof that those baleful attributes were all there, Mrs. Wilfer shuddered on the spot” (Dickens 117).

**Please note:** quote marks appear at the start and end of the quote and not at the end of the sentence; only the author’s last name and page number appear inside parentheses (no need for “page” or “p.”); and the period always appears at the end of the sentence.