

ENG 451
Winter 2014
MWF 11-12
HEDCO 142

Prof. Pyle
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Hours: MWF 12-1
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Nineteenth-Century British Studies: Aestheticism

Romantic, Pre-Raphaelite, Decadent, Glam: each of these terms names a version of the strain of British aestheticism that runs from the poetry of Percy Shelley and John Keats through the writings of Oscar Wilde and well into the 20th century. This course will be a close and sustained examination of the poetry, prose, painting and even music we have come to associate with the term “aestheticism.” From the Grecian Urn to the Blessed Damozel, from the Goblin Market through Dorian Gray to David Bowie, we will examine this strain of British Aestheticism and the cluster of issues that it attends to with all the obsession of a lover: beauty, desire, and death. In addition to the poetry of Percy Shelley and John Keats and the writings of Wilde, we will read poems by Christina Rossetti, Dante Rossetti, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, essays by Walter Pater; and we will look at the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (DG Rossetti, Hunt, Millais, and Burne-Jones). I’m also interested in examining how this 19th century fascination with aesthetic experience -- how this aestheticism -- continues to engage and agitate contemporary theory and culture. To this end, we’ll read from a range of important theoretical texts and view and discuss three recent films that address these texts and issues explicitly or implicitly.

Readings and Viewings Readings and paintings will be made available on Blackboard. Films will be made available in the Media Center.

Assignments, Assessments, and Attendance Three 2-page close readings (30%), a critical project of 6-8 pages (30%), a comprehensive final exam (30%), and class participation (10%). Attendance is mandatory. This is a rare opportunity for a seminar format and as such it requires active and consistent prepared participation. After five absences, for whatever reason, students will lose one full letter grade for the course.

Syllabus

- 5 Jan: Introduction: **Oscar Wilde** Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, “Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young”
- 7 Jan: **Walter Pater** from *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*: “Preface” and “Conclusion” **Emmanuel Levinas** “Reality and its Shadow”
- 9 Jan: **Percy Shelley** “Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,” “Ode to the West Wind,” “Mont Blanc”
- 12 Jan: **Percy Shelley** *A Defence of Poetry*, **Walter Benjamin** “Theses on the Concept of History”
- 14 Jan: **Todd Haynes** *Velvet Goldmine*, **Georges Bataille** “The Notion of Expenditure,” “The Sacred”
- 16 Jan: **Todd Haynes** *Velvet Goldmine*, **Michel Foucault** “What is Enlightenment”
- 19 Jan: **Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday**
- 21 Jan: **Oscar Wilde** “The Decay of Lying,” “The Critic as Artist”
- 23 Jan: Guest Lecture: Veronica Alfano: **William Morris** “In Defense of Guenevere”
- 26 Jan: **Percy Shelley** “Ozymandias,” “The Cloud,” “To a Sky-Lark”
- 28 Jan: **John Keats** “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer,” “Sleep and Poetry,” “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles,” “On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again,” from *Endymion*, Bk I, ll. 769-8
- 30 Jan: **John Keats** selected letters, **Oscar Wilde** “The Tomb of Keats”
- 2 Feb: **John Keats** “La Belle Dame Sans Merci,” “Ode on Indolence,” “Ode to Psyche”
- 4 Feb: **John Keats** “Ode on Melancholy,” “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” “Ode to a Nightingale”
- 6 Feb: **Percy Shelley** *Adonais*
- 9 Feb: **Roland Barthes** “The Third Meaning,” “On Leaving the Movie Theatre” **Peter de Bolla** “Aesthetic Experience”
- 11 Feb: **Walter Pater** “The School of Giorgione,” “Leonardo da Vinci”
- 13 Feb: **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** “The Blessed Damozel,” “The Portrait” **Walter Pater**, “Aesthetic Poetry” and “D.G. Rossetti,” **Christina Rossetti** “In an Artist’s Studio” **Pre-Raphaelite Painting**, **Elisabeth Bronfen** from *Over Her Dead Body*
- 16 Feb: **Dante Gabriel Rossetti** from *The House of Life*, **Robert Buchanan**, “The Fleshly School of Poetry” **Clement Greenberg** from *Modernism with a Vengeance*, **Slavoj Zizek** from *The Metastases of Enjoyment*
- 18 Feb: Guest Lecture, Heidi Kaufman, from *The Yellow Book*
- 20 Feb: Guest Lecture, Heidi Kaufman, from *The Yellow Book*

23 Feb: **Gerard Manley Hopkins** “The Windhover,” “Pied Beauty,” “To what serves Mortal Beauty?” “That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire and of the comfort of the Resurrection,” “God’s Grandeur”

25 Feb: **Christina Rossetti** *Goblin Market*

27 Feb: **Christina Rossetti** from *Monna Innominata*

2 Mar: **Oscar Wilde** *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

4 Mar: **Oscar Wilde** *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

6 Mar: **Oscar Wilde** *Salome*

9 Mar: **Oscar Wilde** *Salome*

11 Mar: **Oscar Wilde** *De Profundis*

13 Mar: **Wong Kar-Wai** *In the Mood for Love*

17 Mar: 10:15-12:15 Final Exam