Romanticism and Contemporary Culture

What is “romanticism” and did it come to an end on or around 1832? Or is romanticism not merely a discrete historical period in literary and cultural history but a set of motifs or themes or ideas that remain as vital to certain strains of contemporary culture as they were in early nineteenth-century Britain? In this seminar, we will address these questions and the various literary and cultural issues that arise from them. We will have two principal objectives: a careful examination of some defining texts of British Romanticism and a critical reflection on the ways in which some important strains of contemporary culture are continuations or “revisitations” of what we call romanticism.

Assignments and Policies Students will write three brief (2-page max) close readings of an assigned text (10% each), a take-home final essay-exam (30%), and a final critical project that includes a five-minute preliminary presentation (30% project, 10% presentation). Attendance in this seminar is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive on time having read or viewed all assigned texts. Students who miss five classes for any reason will lose one full letter from the final course grade.

Texts Norton Critical Editions of Frankenstein and Wuthering Heights are available at the UO bookstore. Otherwise, assigned literary and critical texts will be uploaded to the seminar’s Canvas site. Students will be expected to view films and access songs on their own prior to the class meeting.
Romanticism and Contemporary Culture
Schedule of Readings, Viewings, and Listenings


1. Lyricizing Ballads: Experimentation and the Popular

8 Jan: Wordsworth, “A slumber did my spirit seal,” “Strange fits of passion,” “She dwelt among the untrodden ways,” “Three years she grew in sun and shower”


2. Romantic Artists, Dead or Dying

A. “drunk the milk of paradise”
18 Jan: Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Holiday

B. Bigmouth Strikes Again
25 Jan: Byron, selections from Childe Harold’s Pilgrimmage

C. All Apologies: The Aura of Painful Regret
29 Jan: Keats, “When I have fears that I may cease to be,” “On Sitting Down to Read King Lear Once Again,” “Ode on Melancholy,” “Ode to a Nightingale,” “Ode on a Grecian Urn”

D. The Agency of Dead Men
3 Feb: Jarmusch, Dead Man
5 Feb: **Blake**, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*
8 Feb: **Blake**, from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

### 3. Aesthetic Experience: Beauty and the Sublime

**A. “A Sight to Behold”**

**B. The Truth of Beauty**

**C. The Might of the Sublime**
15 Feb: **Kant**, from *A Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*

### 4. The Constellations of a Clandestine History

24 Feb: **Todd Haynes**, *Velvet Goldmine* 

### 5. Romanticism’s Critique of Romanticism; Or, Love Will Tear Us Apart Again (Parts One and Two)

26 Feb: **Mary Shelley**, *Frankenstein*
29 Feb: **Mary Shelley**, *Frankenstein*
2 Mar: **Emily Bronte**, *Wuthering Heights*

7 Mar: Project Presentations
9 Mar: Project Presentations
11 Mar: Project Presentations

17 Mar: Final Due date for Projects and Take Home Exams