Eng 452/552. 19th-Century British Fiction: Gender and Empire

MWF at 1:00 – 1:50 p.m. in 195 Anstett Hall
Professor: Deborah Shapple
Email: dshapple@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: MWF 2:00-3:00 p.m. in 365 PLC & by appointment

Course Description

When Britain’s Empire reached its height by the early twentieth century, it controlled nearly a quarter of the world’s land and population. British literature of the nineteenth century testifies to a history of unprecedented territorial expansion and colonial development, with all of the hope, anxiety, and violence that attended it. In this course we will consider how imperial fantasies of empowerment and conquest intertwine with tales of seduction in a selection of novels concerned with enticing, engendering, educating, and disciplining its subjects.

Over the course of the term, we will engage a variety of questions central to Britain’s colonial enterprise. How do narratives of individual and national development intertwine, and when do personal relationships come to resemble economic ones? How are gender and race constructed spatially, and how does the tension between domestic and colonial spaces complicate these constructions? How do authors attempt to give voice to traditionally disempowered characters differentiated by gender, race, class, caste, or religious affiliation? Beginning with novels by Jane Austen and Charles Dickens, in which the global concerns of empire enter into the domestic dramas of the English drawing room, we will then turn to shorter novels reflecting on the experience of empire abroad by authors like Olive Schreiner, Bankimchandra Chatterji, and Joseph Conrad.

Books available at the UO Bookstore, 895 E. 13th Avenue at Kincaid, 346-4331

Austen, Jane  Mansfield Park
Chatterji, Bankimchandra  Anandamath
Conrad, Joseph  Heart of Darkness
Dickens, Charles  Great Expectations
Schreiner, Olive  The Story of an African Farm

Course Requirements and Information

Reading: Secondary readings will be available on Blackboard under “Course Documents.” All required assignments, up to and including the chapters or sections specified, should be completed before class by the dates listed below. Please read each assignment carefully, with an eye toward ideas or issues you would like to introduce during class discussion.

Essays: Undergraduate participants in this course will have the option of writing 2 short critical essays (each approximately 4-5 pages in length) or one longer research essay (approximately 8-10 pages) preceded by an abstract of about 150 words and a brief bibliography (ca. 6-8 sources, including the primary text). Graduate students will be given the same option, although these essays should be longer in length (either two 5-7-page essays or one 10-12-page research paper). All essays will address a topic of your design, which I invite you to discuss with me in advance. Late essays will not be accepted without penalty. I will consider special situations that are brought to my attention, preferably 24 hours or more before an assignment is due. Each of the two shorter essays would comprise 30% of the final grade; the research essay would count for 50% of the final, with the abstract and bibliography each contributing an additional 5%.

Blackboard Posts: To facilitate out-of-class discussion and to ensure that your ideas help to shape the focus of our in-class agendas, you will be asked to write 2 short responses (ca. 250 words each) on 2 different texts (literary or critical) over the course of the term. While these posts may be informally written, they should nevertheless be focused and incisive; I would recommend centering your response on an issue or question that particularly interests you and that you feel could generate further discussion. You should also feel free to include any number
of questions for the class to consider, or to respond to another student’s post. As you may develop any of these posts into one of your longer written assignments, you could view Blackboard as a forum for generating potential essay topics. These informal writing assignments will form 10% of the final grade.

**In-class Responses:** Throughout the term, I will ask you to write a paragraph or two in response to a question concerning the readings for that day. Sometimes you will complete these quiz-like assignments with a peer, and sometimes by yourself. These responses will form 15% of the final grade.

**Participation:** Your participation in classroom discussions and activities comprises the remaining 15% of the final grade. Please remember that each of your contributions to class may enhance your own experience as well as that of your fellow classmates.

**Attendance:** Your ability to participate, of course, depends on your arrival to class in a timely fashion. Recurring lateness may lower your class participation grade; contact me early in the term if you foresee a regular problem in getting to class on time. Regular attendance will also be crucial for completing this course successfully. After 3 absences, your final grade will drop by 1/3 of a point (e.g., A- to B+) for each subsequent absence.

**Academic Integrity:** All work should be your own; any borrowed ideas, paraphrases, or quotations from outside sources must be properly documented in your writing. One act of plagiarism will result in automatic failure for the entire course. For further advice, please select the link “Course Information” from our Blackboard menu, click on the link “General Information,” and then “Avoiding Plagiarism.” If you are uncertain about how or whether to document a particular passage, don’t hesitate to ask me. Please be advised that the English Department is required to report all cases to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

**Tutoring:** Free writing tutoring is available through Academic Learning Services, located in 68 PLC. For further information, call 346-3226 or consult the website at http://als.uoregon.edu. I would also be happy to discuss your work or any related issues with you during office hours or by appointment.

**Course Calendar**

**Week 1**  
9 January. Introduction.

11 January. Austen, Volume I, Chapters I – VIII

13 January. Austen, Volume I, Chapter IX – XVII

**Week 2**  
16 January. No Class: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday

18 January. Austen, Volume I, Chapter XVIII – Volume II, Chapter VII


**Week 3**  
23 January. Austen, Volume III, Chapters II – IX

25 January. Austen, Volume III, Chapter X – End

27 January. Said, Edward, “Introduction,” “Narrative and Social Space,” and “Jane Austen and Empire” from *Culture and Imperialism*

**Week 4**  
1 February. Dickens, Volume I, Chapters I – IX

3 February. Dickens, Volume I, Chapters X – XVIII

Week 5

6 February. Dickens, Volume I, Chapter XIX – Volume II, Chapter VI

8 February. Dickens, Volume II, Chapters VII – XV

10 February. Dickens, Volume II, Chapter XVI – Volume III, Chapter II

Week 6

13 February. Dickens, Volume III, Chapters III – XII

15 February. Dickens, Volume III, Chapter XIII – End

17 February. Walsh, Susan, “Bodies of Capital: Great Expectations and the Climacteric Economy”

First essay for participants writing 2 shorter essays due Friday in class

Week 7

20 February. Schreiner, Book I, Chapters I – VIII

22 February. Schreiner, Book I, Chapter IX – Book II, Chapter II

24 February. Schreiner, Book II, Chapters III - VIII

Week 8

27 February. Schreiner, Book II, Chapter IX – End

29 February. Lane, Christopher, “Gregory’s Womanhood in The Story of an African Farm”

2 March. Chatterji, parts I – II

Short bibliography and abstract for participants writing research essay due Friday in class

Week 9

5 March. Chatterji, Parts III – IV

7 March. Ray, Sangeeta, “Nationalism in Drag: the Woman Warrior in Anandamath”

9 March. Conrad, part I

Week 10

12 March. Conrad, part II

14 March. Conrad, part III


McIntire, Gabrielle, “The Women do not Travel: Gender, Difference and Incommensurability in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness”

All final essays due by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, 21 March in 365 PLC

3