

ENGLISH 535A
Summer Term 1A 2010
TTH 10:00-12:00
BuTo 597

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VICTORIAN AESTHETIC THEORY

It is impossible to understand the intellectual history of the British nineteenth century without grappling with Victorian aesthetic theory. For the Victorians, aesthetics was much more than a systematic theory of the beautiful, but was also inextricably interconnected with the great social questions of the day: poverty, political economy, slavery, and the woman question. In this course we will read a hefty dose of the writing of Victorian “sages” (with an introductory foray into the Romantics), paying particular attention to the ways that theories of the beautiful and good underpinned a broader social and political praxis in the nineteenth century. We will also read contemporary criticism alongside the original texts, and interrogate the relationship between Victorian aesthetic theory and the central theoretical and methodological issues confronting literary scholars at the moment.

COURSE READINGS

1. Texts

The following books are all available at the UBC Bookstore. Please use these editions, since we will need to be working together from the same source material:

John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (Da Capo Press)
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Penguin Classics)
William Morris, *The Wood Beyond the World* (BiblioLife)

2. Other Reading Materials

The majority of the course reading materials will be made available electronically, either as downloadable files or as links to on-line versions; either way they will be available on the course Vista page under “Readings.” The readings for each class will be available on Vista about 1-2 weeks in advance. Please be sure to **bring the readings to class with you in some form** each week, either by printing out and bringing hard copies or by bringing a laptop or some other reading device to class; we will be referring to these texts extensively in class and will need to have them before us.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Reading Responses

For each class, you will prepare a formal response to the readings. This response should be the equivalent of 1-2 pages of typed, double-spaced writing reacting to the assigned readings for that class. Your response may be about any or all of the readings for that class. You must post your response to the course Vista page **by 8:00 p.m.** each Monday and Wednesday evening. To post your response, please do the following: 1. Go to the course Vista page; 2. Click on the “Discussions” link on the left-hand side of the page; 3. Under the topic “Reading Responses,”

find and click on the link for the appropriate date (the date of the upcoming class); 4. Click on “Create Message”; 5. **Make the Subject line simply your first and last name**; 6. Type or cut and paste your response in the Message box; 7. Click “Post” when you’re done. I realize this sounds a bit persnickety, but it can get difficult to track and give appropriate credit for weekly responses if everyone is not doing things the same way. You are also encouraged to read your colleagues’ responses, and to respond to them yourself, in addition to posting your own.

2. Class Discussion

I hope it goes without saying that you are expected to participate in class discussion. I realize that some folks are chattier than others, but please do your best within the parameters of your personality and comfort level.

3. Final Research Paper

Each class member must write a final research paper, approximately 20 typed and double-spaced pages, due June 28. **Please note:** If you want to receive your course mark on time, you *must* submit your paper by this date; otherwise, you must arrange for deferred standing—you are responsible for doing this yourself.

COURSE SCHEDULE

May 11: Introduction, syllabus

Readings: Kant, *Critique of the Powers of Judgment* [Guyer translation], First Part; Burke, from *A Philosophical Inquiry Into ... the Sublime and the Beautiful*; Gilpin, from *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty*

May 13: Romantic Aesthetic Theory I: Wordsworth’s Prefaces

Readings: Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and Preface to *Poems* of 1815; Wordsworth, from *A Guide to the Lakes*; Jeffrey, review of Wordsworth’s *Excursion*; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* chaps. 4 and 14; Coleridge, from *The Statesman’s Manual*; Pfau, “Pragmatics of Culture in Wordsworth’s Preface to *LB*”; Balfour, from *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy*; Duff, from *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*

May 18: Romantic Aesthetic Theory II: Shelley’s Defence

Readings: Peacock, “The Four Ages of Poetry”; Shelley, “A Defence of Poetry,” “Mont Blanc”; De Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality”; Klancher, from *Making of English Reading Audiences*; Bloom, from *Romanticism and Consciousness*; Hartmann, “Words, Wish, Worth”; Ferguson, from *Solitude and the Sublime*; McGann, from *The Romantic Ideology*; Kaufman, “Everybody Hates Kant”

May 20: Initial Responses

Readings: Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book I; Mill, “What Is Poetry?”; Browning, “Essay on Shelley”; De Man, “Wordsworth and the Victorians”; Pfau, from *Romantic Moods*, “Aesthetic Cognition after Kant” and response; Sha from *Perverse Romanticism*; Hamilton, from *Metaromanticism: Aesthetics, Literature, Theory*; Henderson, from *Romanticism and the Painful Pleasures of Modern Life*

May 25: Ruskin I

Readings: Ruskin, from *Modern Painters*; Birch, “Elegiac Voices: Wordsworth, Turner, and Ruskin”; Cleere, “Dirty Pictures”; Leng, “*Modern Painters* 5 and ‘The Origin of Wood’”; Wettlaufer, “The Sublime Rivalry of Word and Image”

=> **Please note:** I will also distribute a largish bibliography of additional Ruskin readings that you are encouraged to peruse according to your own interests

May 27: Ruskin II

Readings: Ruskin, from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and from *The Stones of Venice*; Tanner, from *Venice Desired*; Craig, from *Ruskin and the Ethics of Consumption*; Levine, “Ruskin’s Radical Realism”; Baljon, “Interpreting Ruskin”; Breton, “The Stones of Happiness”; O’Gorman, “Ruskin’s Aesthetic of Failure in *The Stones of Venice*”; Maynard, “Architectures of Sacrifice”

June 1: Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*; Bruns, “The Formal Nature of Victorian Thinking”; Hagelman, “Victorian Thinking”; Gallagher, “The Politics of Culture and the Debate over Representation”; Pecora, “Arnoldian Ethnology”

June 3: Ruskin’s Legacy I: The Pre-Raphaelites, Proust, Benjamin

Readings: Ruskin, *Pre-Raphaelitism*, from *Lectures on Art*, from *Sesame and Lilies*, “Fiction, Fair and Foul,” from *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century*; selections from *The Germ*; Macksey, from *On Reading Ruskin*; Austin, “Reading and the Romantics”; Leng, “Ruskin’s Production of Britain’s ‘Modern Painters’”; McLaughlin, “Aesthetic Value from Ruskin to Benjamin”; Morrison, “Myth, Remembrance, and Modernity”; Teukolsky, “Modernist Ruskin, Victorian Baudelaire”; Coyle, “Ruskin, Proust, and the Art of Failure”; Werner, from *Pre-Raphaelite Painting and Nineteenth-Century Realism*; Pecora, from *Households of the Soul*

June 8: The Aesthetic Movement

Pater, from *The Renaissance* and from *Marius the Epicurean*; Wilde, “The Artist as Critic,” “The Decay of Lying,” selected poems; Symons, from *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*; Bruder, “Constructing Artist and Critic Between J. M. Whistler and Oscar Wilde”; Bizup, “Pater and the Ruskinian Gentleman”; Shrimpton, “Ruskin and the Aesthetes”; Daley, from *The Rescue of Romanticism: Walter Pater and John Ruskin*; Dellamora, from *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*

June 10: Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

June 15: Arts & Crafts Movement

Morris, Preface to Ruskin’s “Nature of the Gothic” and selected writings; Breton, “William Morris and the Gospel of Work”; Miller, “William Morris, Print Culture, and the Politics of Aestheticism”; Latham, “The Political Texts of Morris’s Textiles and Wallpapers”; Livesey, “Morris, Carpenter, Wilde, and the Political Aesthetics of

Labor”; Arata, “On Not Paying Attention”; Thomas, from *Cultivating Victorians: Liberal Culture and the Aesthetic*; Gagnier, from *The Insatiability of Human Wants*; Dowling, from *The Vulgarization of Art*; Lesjak, from *Working Fictions*

June 17: Morris, *The Wood Beyond the World*; Bolus-Reichert, “Aestheticism in the Late Romances of William Morris”; Plotz, from *Portable Property*