English 543: Seminar in Romantic Literature
The Beautiful and the Sublime

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Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30 pm, Phone: 243-3941 (my office), 243-3322 (dept)
5:30-6:30 pm, & by appt.

Course Description and Objectives

As the period of history and literature that produced "great" poets such as William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats but also "forgotten" writers such as Hannah More, Mary Prince, and Felicia Hemans, the Romantic period (1789-1832) is a rich and complex store of literature. In particular, the emphasis on nature and other environmental settings in the works of both canonical and non-canonical writers provides an interesting site for examining the ways in which "the landscape" (broadly defined) determined not only the physical reality people lived in but also the emotional framework for their lives. In this course, we will take the distinction between beautiful and sublime landscapes made by Edmund Burke and William Gilpin in the mid-eighteenth century, and use this distinction to understand other binaries of the Romantic period: innocence and experience, sense and sensibility, masculine and feminine, rich and poor, master and slave. By examining the various binaries that shaped the Romantic mindset, we can see how writers of the period both upheld and questioned the dominant perspectives of the period.

In keeping with the goals of the graduate program in English, we will take as our objectives: studying literature of the period with a focus on both breadth and depth; improving your articulation of issues of literary interpretation, both through writing and oral presentation; examining both primary and secondary sources, with emphasis on the importance of both in the discipline; and using literary research tools, with emphasis on how these tools can assist you in the production of high-quality seminar papers and conference presentations. In achieving these goals, I will assume undergraduate knowledge of the Romantic period (i.e., what you learned in your British literature survey and any other courses in the period you may have taken), but I also will fill in the gaps when needed. If you don't know much about this period, be sure to ask plenty of questions in class. No one knows everything about the Romantic period, so there's always more to be learned!

Required Texts


Additional readings, which will be available at the reserves desk in the CSUDH. Total number of pages is about 150 (if you fit two book pages on one xeroxed page), so you should be able to xerox the materials for about $15, which is much cheaper than a course packet.

Please purchase the editions I have specified here. It's very difficult to have a productive discussion if people are using a variety of editions, all with different page numbers.

Grade Breakdown

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar paper, 10-12 pages</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position paper/Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical Document assignment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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In-class writing assignments 10%

Assignments and Expectations

Seminar paper: The seminar paper is the major writing assignment for this class and acts as a capstone to the rest of the work you will do this term. Your seminar paper should be 10-12 pages and should articulate a clear but complex argument about one of the texts we’ve read in this class. You should demonstrate a critical awareness of the topic you choose by incorporating a range of secondary (and possibly primary) sources, and the annotated bibliography and historical documents assignments (see descriptions below) will help you gather the materials for your paper. You should discuss your topic with me as you begin developing it, and you will be expected to meet with me to discuss your progress on the paper during the last week of classes. Finally, you will need to submit an abstract with the final draft of your paper, which will be due Wed., Dec. 13, 8:00 pm.

Position Paper/Presentation: You will be asked to write one shorter position paper (3-4 pages, double-spaced), about one of the literary texts we are reading in this class. The paper should draw on at least one outside critical, theoretical, or historical source not already assigned for the course, and you should contact me to discuss your ideas for the paper before you write it. On the day you turn in your position paper, you will present the ideas in your paper to the class, in mock conference style. You are not responsible for the entire day’s discussion, but you are responsible for getting our conversation going, via your presentation. You should bring copies of your paper for everyone in the class. If you want to single-space the copies in order to save paper, that’s fine, but be sure to bring a double-spaced copy for me, so I have room to write comments on your paper.

Annotated Bibliography: The annotated bibliography is a list of 10 secondary sources, with brief summaries and analyses of the contents of those sources, on any topic related to this course. I would recommend that you choose the topic you plan to develop in your seminar paper, since annotating the sources will take significant time and effort. I’ll give you more details about this assignment in class. Due date: Mon., Nov. 20, at the beginning of class.

Historical Document assignment: Since part of the purpose of this class is to understand Romantic literature in its historical context, I would like you to read and analyze some historical documents related to one of the works of literature we are reading. You can choose documents related to any of the cultural issues raised by the texts, letters written by one of the authors we are reading, reviews of their work from the period, a portion of a biography or autobiography from the time, or any other historical documents you think are important. I will put some of these documents on reserve in the library, but you should feel free to seek out others that might be of interest to you. Once you have the documents, you will analyze them in a 3-4 page paper. As the assignment due date draws closer, we will discuss this assignment in more detail. Due date: Wed., Oct. 18, at the beginning of class.

Participation: In graduate seminars, participation is an absolute must. I expect you to come ready to discuss the readings for the day with enthusiasm, and I expect everyone to contribute to the discussion at least once during every class. Attendance is also a must. You are allowed 2 absences, and I will not distinguish between excused and unexcused. Save them for emergencies (death in family, severe illness, other professional commitments). If you miss more than 2 classes, there will be a significant reduction in your participation grade. You may not miss your presentation day nor a day on which a major assignment is due. Part of the assignment is being in class to present your findings.

In-class writing assignments: Occasionally, we will start the day’s discussion with an in-class writing assignment, which will focus on the reading for the day. If you miss a day on which we have an in-class writing assignment, you cannot make it up. If you miss one in-class writing assignment, your grade will be calculated using the number of assignments you completed. If you miss more than one of these assignments, a zero will be entered for all assignments missed except the first one missed.
**Grading criteria:** I will assign a numerical grade for all assignments. The numerical/letter grade correlation is as follows: 97-100=A+, 94-96=A, 90-93=A-, 87-89=B+, 84-86=B, 80-83=B-, 77-79=C+, 74-76=C, 70-73=C-, 67-69=D+, 64-66=D, 60-62=D-, and 0-59=F. While the English department is committed to using the full range of grades in graduate courses, the graduate grading scale is different from the undergraduate grading scale. You must maintain a 3.0 GPA to maintain good standing in the graduate program.

**Late assignments:** Expect deductions for late assignments. Typically, I deduct one-third of a letter grade (3.3333 points) per 24 hours; for example, a paper that earns a 92 (A-) but is a day late will drop to an 88 (B+). No papers or assignments submitted via email and no double submissions (same assignment for another class).

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and may result in a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, and/or university disciplinary action. For more details about the university’s policy on this issue, see pages 14 and 68-69 in the University Catalog.

**Drop policy:** The University requires a “serious and compelling reason” for drops after the third week of the semester, and I (and the department chair) must be willing to accept the reason for the drop and sign the drop form. Poor performance in the course does not constitute a serious and compelling reason.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1:**

**M, 8/28:** Introduction to Course

**W, 8/30:** Eighteenth-Century Precedents

Edmund Burke, from *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin . . .*, pp. 134-37 in Mellor
William Gilpin, from *Three Essays: On Picturesque . . .*, pp. 138-40 in Mellor
James Thomson, from *The Seasons*, pp. 2692-96 in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature, vol. 1C* (on reserve, my personal copy so there’s no call number)

**Week 2:**

**M, 9/4:** No class--Labor day

**W, 9/6:** Gothic Satire

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Biographical Notice, Advertisement, and Volume 1, Chapters 1-10

**Week 3:**

**M, 9/11:** Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Volume 1, Chapter 11 - Volume 2, Chapter 5

**W, 9/13:** No class, but keep reading *Northanger Abbey*!

**Week 4:**

**M, 9/18:** Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, Volume 2, Chapter 6 - end
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<td>Helen Williams, <em>Letters from France</em>, pp. 508-29 in Mellor</td>
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<td>In class: Discuss Historical Documents assignment</td>
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<td>Week 5:</td>
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<td>Week 6:</td>
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<td>Week 7:</td>
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<td>M, 10/9</td>
<td>Enslaved Africans and the Sublime</td>
<td>&quot;Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Abolition in Britain,&quot; pp. 53-55 in Mellor</td>
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<td>Thomas Clarkson, &quot;History of the Rise, Progress, and . . . ,&quot; pp. 74-80 in Mellor</td>
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<td>Mary Prince, <em>The History of Mary Prince</em>, pp. 868-80 in Mellor</td>
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<td>George Gordon, Lord Byron, <em>Don Juan</em>, Canto I, pp. 955-80 in Mellor</td>
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<td>Week 8:</td>
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<tr>
<td>W, 10/18</td>
<td>No reading assignment</td>
<td>Historical Documents Assignment due</td>
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In class: Share research findings and discuss Annotated Bibliography assignment

Week 9:

M, 10/23:  Second Generation Reflections on Imperialism, Beauty, and Death  
Edward Trelawny, Excerpts from Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron, Chapters 11-13 and 18-21 (on reserve PR5671 .T5 A7 1971)

W, 10/25:  Theory and Criticism: Colonialism and English Nationalism  

Week 10:

M, 10/30:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Introduction (the second one), Dedicatory Epistle, and Chapters 1-6

W, 11/1:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Chapters 7-14

Week 11:

M, 11/6:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Chapters 15-24

W, 11/8:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Chapters 25-31

Week 12:

M, 11/13:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Chapters 32-38

W, 11/15:  Walter Scott, Ivanhoe, Chapters 39-end

Week 13:

M, 11/20:  No reading assignment  
Annotated Bibliography due

In class: Share research findings

W, 11/22:  Theory & Criticism: Shifting Landscape from Romantic to Victorian  
Richard Cronin, Romantic Victorians, Introduction (on reserve PR468 .R65 C76 2002)  

Week 14:

M, 11/27:  Please look at Turner's Slave Ship in Marcus Wood's Blind Memory (on reserve N8243 .S576 W66 2000). It's the second color picture after p. 58, and this is the image Ruskin is writing about in his essay "Of Water, as Painted by Turner," which is part of your reading assignment.
John Ruskin, Excerpts from *The Longman Anthology of British Literature, vol. 2B*, pp. 1473-76 and 1488-97 (on reserve, my personal copy so no call number) and *Praeterita*, pp. 199-218 (on reserve PR5263 .A2 1949)

W, 11/29: DeQuincey, Excerpts from *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* 848-65 in Mellor

Week 15:

M, 12/4: Individual Conferences

W, 12/6: Individual Conferences

Seminar paper and abstract due on Wed., Dec. 13 at 8:00 pm.