

ENGHD: Victorian Literature and Culture

Autumn 2011

Convenors: TBC

This module provides an introduction to key aspects of Victorian culture, from its manifestations in selected literary texts of the period to other aspects of cultural production, including painting, journalism and aesthetics. The module proceeds by way of a self-conscious interrogation of the notion of 'Victorianism' itself, addressing itself to such questions as the postmodern fascination with the nineteenth century; the distinctions between fiction and history; as well as the range of pressing theoretical questions attendant upon any act of literary-historical periodization. Throughout, in fact, the module is theoretically preoccupied with the ways in which we read the Victorian age, asking, for instance, how and why it is that we have tended to mythologise the nineteenth century as an epoch of unprecedented sexual repression, often as a foil to our sexually liberated modernity. Our primary aim is to foster close, historically sensitive readings of selected literary and theoretical texts, especially as they might be informed by other relevant aspects of nineteenth-century cultural history.

Prescribed Texts:

Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Penguin)

George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (Penguin)

Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (Penguin)

Francis O'Gorman, ed. *Victorian Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*. Blackwell

Assessment:

Assessment will be by means of two equally weighted essays of approximately 2500 words each.