

Asst. Professor Katherine Wakely-Mulrone
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Date: Tuesdays, 13:30-16:20
Location: HSS Seminar Room 4

HL4018 S2 AY2024-2025

Advanced Studies in Romanticism



DESCRIPTION

What makes a poem Romantic? Does it have something to do with the style in which it is written? Is it a question of content or mood? Or can we simply use “Romantic” to categorise poems written between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? Focussing primarily on verse, students will examine a rich range of texts labelled “Romantic”, reflecting on what it means to read, sound out, listen to, and critically interpret poetry of the period. The course combines close reading with contextual analysis, giving students the opportunity to develop their understanding of poetic forms and devices while exploring works in their aesthetic, cultural, and political milieux. It also draws together current research in the fields of Romantic studies and poetics with literary criticism published during the period. Throughout the semester, students will consider how poems on the syllabus were experienced by Romantic audiences, using the William Blake Archive to access high-resolution reproductions of Blake’s illuminated books and the Princeton Prosody Archive to access late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century guidelines for reading poetry aloud.

Beginning with ekphrasis and the relationship between Romantic poetry and visual culture, students will read poems about art by John Keats, Felicia Hemans, Joanna Baillie, and Percy Bysshe Shelley, before considering art that seeks to represent the atmosphere through works by poets Lord Byron, Shelley, and Baillie, and painters J. M. W. Turner and William Constable. This portion of the course will conclude with a study of Blake’s poetry and printing process. Seminars on major works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth will be followed by a study of the humble and mundane in writings by Anna Letitia Barbauld and John Clare. We conclude with Charlotte Smith’s exploration of the role nature plays in our physical and mental wellbeing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- All primary readings (excluding those marked with an asterisk) are included in the Course Reader, available for purchase in the Print Shop on level B1.

ASSESSMENTS

- Participation and Preparation: 15%
- Close Reading Exercise: 15% (*Due Friday, February 28 by 11:59PM*)
- Term Paper: 30% (*Due Thursday, April 17 by 11:59PM*)
- Final Exam: 40%

Please refer to the Assessments Handout on NTULearn for further details and for course policy on AI.

SCHEDULE

1. JANUARY 14TH - INTRODUCTION

PRIMARY READING:

- John Keats, “To Autumn,” “When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be”

2. JANUARY 21ST - TRUTH AND BEAUTY

PRIMARY READING:

- John Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
- Felicia Hemans, “The Image in Lava,” “The Sculptured Children”
- Joanna Baillie, “Lines to a Teapot”

SECONDARY READING:

- James A. W. Heffernan, “Ekphrasis and Representation,” *New Literary History* 22.2 (1991)

3. JANUARY 28TH - RHYTHM IN ALL THOUGHT

PRIMARY READING:

- Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” “The Pains of Sleep

4. FEBRUARY 4TH - HORROR AND BEAUTY

PRIMARY READING:

- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery”

SECONDARY READING:

- Alexander M. Shulz, “Recovering the Beauty of Medusa,” *Studies in Romanticism* 54.3 (2015)

5. FEBRUARY 11TH - ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERES

PRIMARY READING:

- George Gordon Lord Byron, “Darkness”
- Percy Bysshe Shelley, “The Cloud”
- Joanna Baillie, “Wind”
- Luke Howard, “Essay on the Modification of Clouds”*

SECONDARY READING:

- C. S. Zerefos et al. “Atmospheric Effects of Volcanic Eruptions as Seen by Famous Artists and Depicted in their Paintings,” *Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics* 7 (2007)

6. FEBRUARY 18TH - HOLDING INFINITY

PRIMARY READING:

- William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence,” *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

SECONDARY READING:

- Derek Attridge, “Rhythm,” *William Blake in Context* (2019)
- J. Paul Hunter, “Couplets,” *The Oxford Handbook of British Poetry, 1660-1800* (2016)

7. FEBRUARY 25TH - A BOOK THAT ALL MAY READ

PRIMARY READING:

- William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience**

SECONDARY READING:

- Joseph Viscomi, “Digital Facsimiles: Reading the William Blake Archive.” *Computers and the Humanities* 36.1 (2002)
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8. MARCH 11TH - THE GROWTH OF THE POET’S MIND

PRIMARY READING:

- William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: Book I: Childhood and School-Time*

9. MARCH 18TH - BIG AND SMALL

PRIMARY READING:

- Anna Letitia Barbauld, “Washing Day,” “To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to Become Visible,” “The Mouse’s Petition”

SECONDARY READING:

- Sarah Tindal Kareem, “Enlightenment Bubbles, Romantic Worlds,” *The Eighteenth Century* 56.1 (2015)

10. MARCH 25TH - NESTING

PRIMARY READING:

- John Clare, “The Ants,” “Wild Bees,” “Insects,” “The Firetail’s Nest,” “The Thrush’s Nest,” “The Nightingale’s Nest”

SECONDARY READING:

- Mina Gorji, “John Clare and the Triumph of Little Things,” *Class and the Canon* (2012)

11. APRIL 1ST - ESSAY WRITING WEEK

12. APRIL 8TH - NATURE AND THE SELF

PRIMARY READING:

- Charlotte Smith, from “Beachy Head,” “On Being Cautioned Against Walking on an Headland Overlooking the Sea, Because it was Frequented by a Lunatic”

SECONDARY READING:

- Donelle Ruwe, “Charlotte Smith’s Sublime: Feminine Poetics, Botany, and Beachy Head,” *Essays in Romanticism* (1999)

13. APRIL 15TH - CONCLUSION

