

**Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism: Adultery  
and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Fiction**

Code: 42303  
ECTS Credits: 9

Degree	Type	Year	Semester
4313157 Advanced English Studies	OT	0	A

## Contact

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## Teachers

David Owen  
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## Use of languages

Principal working language: english (eng)

## Prerequisites

This is an **obligatory subject** for the Literature and Culture track of the UAB's Official Master's Degree in Advanced English Studies.

## Objectives and Contextualisation

This course illustrates how literary theory is applied to the nineteenth-century novel.

The approach is basically practical, focussing on how approaches such as formalism, Marxism, feminism, psychoanalysis (to name only a few *schools*) have studied and discussed fiction, and how-in light of this-students are better enabled to read both fiction and critical material.

The nineteenth-century novel is chosen for two basic reasons: first, for its focus on the modern institutions of life which theory has taken a deep interest in, such as romance, marriage, the family or the nation-state; second, the nineteenth-century novel not only represents one of the so-called "golden ages" of English literature, but also because the novel is the genre-and the 1800s the century-that all critical schools have arguably felt the need to analyse in particular depth, plausibly because of the fundamental role that this genre and this century play in the understanding of contemporary literature.

## Skills

- Analyse and synthesise information at an advanced level.
- Analyse the relationship between factors, processes or phenomena in the acquisition of English as a second language, its learning and teaching methods, and its literature, history and culture.
- Apply methodological knowledge of statistical analysis and data generation, treatment and codification of multilingual databases, analysis of literary texts, etc. to research.
- Communicate the knowledge acquired and the contributions of ones research correctly, accurately and clearly both orally and in writing.

- Critically argue, issue judgements and present ideas on the basis of the analysis of information originating from scientific production in these areas.
- Develop autonomous learning skills applicable to the research process.
- Distinguish and contrast between the different methodological and theoretical models applied to the academic study of the acquisition, teaching and use of English as a second language in multilingual and multicultural contexts, literary studies and cultural studies.
- Show respect towards the opinions, values, behaviours and/or practices of others.
- Use the English language for academic and professional purposes related to research into the acquisition, teaching and use of English as a second language in multilingual and multicultural contexts, literary studies and cultural studies.

## Learning outcomes

1. Analyse and interpret 19th century narrative texts by applying the advanced techniques of literary criticism.
2. Analyse and interpret at an advanced level Nineteenth Century English critical produced texts, extracting relevant citations and making content summaries.
3. Analyse and synthesise information at an advanced level.
4. Communicate the knowledge acquired and the contributions of ones research correctly, accurately and clearly both orally and in writing.
5. Consider literary and cultural criticism in the English language through reading, debating and analysing texts.
6. Develop autonomous learning skills applicable to the research process.
7. Distinguish and contrast the different theoretical and methodological models applied to literary criticism in the English language.
8. Draft texts defending an idea in relation to a to a literary critical text in English, applying secondary sources to the critical argumentation.
9. Make oral presentations in English on issues and texts related to advanced research of English Literature and literary criticism in this language.
10. Read and analyse the literary and cultural discourse of romantic love in the English language.
11. Show respect towards the opinions, values, behaviours and/or practices of others.

## Content

### Theory and Practice of Literary Criticism - 2016-17

The nineteenth century is generally regarded as one of the most significant and productive periods of English literature, a perception based primarily on the central role played by the novel in Victorian culture.

This course has two basic aims: one, to widen students' awareness of the scope of the C19 English novel; two, to widen students' awareness of literary criticism. It is precisely because the novel was so prolific that no literary genre has ever been studied in such depth and from so many different angles. Social class and literature is discussed by a huge school of Marxist criticism; women's literature is discussed by another huge school of criticism; book production, reading and readership, likewise (and so on). In short, the Victorian novel is interesting for students of literature not just for its content but also for its reception. This is confirmed, very clearly, by the contemporary industry of mock-Victorian books and films, and the unceasing number of television adaptations of canonical fiction.

The course comprises four primary texts/units. Students must obtain the editions indicated. The Norton Critical Editions are a little more expensive than most other editions, but represent a good investment as they include material (biographical and critical) that is sometimes difficult to obtain elsewhere.

1. The Voice of the Intellect: George Eliot - *The Mill on the Floss* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Carol T. Christ).
2. The Voice of Desire: Thomas Hardy - *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Scott Elledge).
3. The Voice of the Adult: Charlotte Brontë - *Villette* (Oxford World Classics, intro. Tim Dolin).

4. The Voice of Sensation: Mary Elizabeth Braddon - *Aurora Floyd* (Oxford World Classics, ed. P.D. Edwards).

You will be advised on secondary reading once classes begin. However, for essential background reading, please see the section in this *Guia docent* titled "Bibliografia".

## Methodology

From previous years' experience, it is clear that the major problem students face when taking this course is that they are not greatly accustomed to reading and thinking independently. There is a marked tendency to vacillate between, on the one hand, thinking that critical writing is simply a matter of expressing an opinion, and, on the other, the belief that all literary texts will fit a determined literary theory. Neither is true.

What you will be required to do (throughout the entire course):

- read thoroughly, methodically and critically.
- have sufficient knowledge of the major critical schools.
- have a grasp of the novels' reception from their date of publication to the present day.
- show sufficient knowledge of the relevant social and historical context.
- be familiar with the life and works of the authors outside the text we are studying.

Initially, this might appear rather daunting. But when the course finishes, you should be able to appreciate how essential these five requirements are and how far you have progressed in a year.

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
<b>Type: Directed</b>			
See description below	39	1.56	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11
<b>Type: Supervised</b>			
See description below	27.75	1.11	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10
<b>Type: Autonomous</b>			
See description below	86.25	3.45	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11

## Evaluation

1. Course paper. You will be required to write an academic paper (at the end of the course) following the basic requirements of postgraduate research.

2. The class presentation is a short oral activity (c. 10-15 minutes), delivered in lecture-like format to the whole class. Subjects will be agreed on during the course, but are generally related to the general area of Victorian culture that are not directly covered by the course. Presentations are NOT given on the course authors or their works, as these are covered in the lectures and the course paper

3. Class attendance is COMPULSORY; active participation is both desirable and expected.

## Evaluation activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning outcomes
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Class Participation & Class Presentation	50% (Participation: 20%; Presentation: 30%)	36	1.44	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
Course Paper	50%	36	1.44	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

## Bibliography

(For primary texts to be read during the course, please see "Continguts")

It is impractical to provide a short bibliography that covers the major areas and controversies. Instead, here is a list of ten classic works essential for understanding the Victorian novel and context. All items are in the UAB Humanities Library.

Altick, Richard. *Victorian People and Ideas*.

Elizabeth Gaskell *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*

Flint, Kate. *The Woman Reader 1837-1914*

Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

Kaplan, Fred. *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature*.

David Lodge, *Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel*.

Rivkin, Julie and Ryan, Michael. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*

Parrinder, Patrick. *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*.

Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*.

Williams, Raymond. *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*.

In addition, a very useful starting point is the Cambridge Companion series, which is available online. In this respect, of particular initial relevance are the following:

*The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture*

(<http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/companions/ebook.jsf?bid=CBO9781139002813>)

*The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel, Second Edition*

(<http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/companions/ebook.jsf?bid=CCO9780511793370>)

*The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*

(<http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/companions/ebook.jsf?bid=CCO9781107587823>)