

**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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## Teaching groups languages

You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject. Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2023.

## Prerequisites

This is an obligatory subject for the Literature and Culture track of the UAB's Official Master's Degree in Advanced English Studies. Students admitted onto the MA will therefore have fulfilled the initial requirements.

## Objectives and Contextualisation

This course aims to illustrate how literary theory is applied to the nineteenth-century novel, and specifically how theory engages with the controversial notion of adultery and marriage, issues of great concern to Victorian society.

The course also aims to provide a fuller understanding of the nineteenth-century novel, for two main 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 it is also the genre that all critical schools have arguably felt the need to analyse in particular depth. In other words, it underscores our contemporary literature and culture.

## Competences

- 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 one's 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.
- Develop the ability to assess sex and gender inequalities in order to design solutions.
- 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 one's 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 literary critical text in English, applying secondary sources to the critical argumentation.
9. Identify the contributions of gender studies to the study of nineteenth-century English literature.
10. Make oral presentations in English on issues and texts related to advanced research of English Literature and literary criticism in this language.
11. Read and analyse the literary and cultural discourse of romantic love in the English language.
12. Show respect towards the opinions, values, behaviours and/or practices of others.

## Content

The course comprises two units. Students must obtain and read the editions indicated.

Part one, the Mid-Victorian period

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst) -- Victorian values

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Norton Critical Edition, ed. Carole T. Christ) -- the female Bildungsroman

Mary Elizabeth Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* (Penguin English Library) -- the "Sensation Novel"

Selected Victorian essays by John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, etc., these will be posted on the Moodle -- Victorian thought

Part two, the end of the century

George Gissing, *The Odd Women* (Oxford World Classics) - the New Woman"

Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Short Stories* (Oxford World's Classics, ed. John Sloan) - an age of decadence?

Students will be informed about secondary reading (i.e., critical sources) once classes begin. However, for essential background texts, please see the bibliography section in this course guide.

## Methodology

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, subsequently, how the interpretations of both fiction and critical material are achieved and reinforced.

Es reservaran 15 minuts d'una classe, dins del calendari establert pel centre/titulació, per a la complementació per part de l'alumnat de les enquestes d'avaluació de l'actuació del professorat i d'avaluació de l'assignatura" per tal de recordar al professorat la necessitat de potenciar les enquestes entre l'alumnat.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

## Activities

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
See description below	39	1.56	2, 1, 3, 4, 12, 6, 7, 11, 5
Type: Supervised			
See description below	27.75	1.11	2, 1, 4, 7, 11, 10, 5
Type: Autonomous			
See description below	86.25	3.45	2, 1, 3, 4, 12, 6, 7, 11, 8, 5

## Assessment

General Requirements:

1. To read thoroughly, methodically and critically.
2. To have a solid working knowledge of the major ambits of literary theory and their practical application to literary criticism.
3. For the works studied, to have a grasp of the novels' reception from their date of publication to the present day.
4. To show sufficient knowledge of the relevant social and historical context.
5. To be familiar with the life and works of the authors outside the text we are studying.

Specific Assessment Activities:

1. Course paper (50% of the overall final grade). You will be required to write an academic paper following the basic requirements of postgraduate research.
2. Short assignments (25% of the overall final grade).
3. Participation, and oral presentation (25% of the overall final grade). The presentation is delivered in lecture-like format to the whole class. Subjects will be agreed on during the course, but will usually be 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 dealt with in the lectures and the course paper.
4. Active participation is both desirable and expected.

Single-assessment option:

1. Oral exam, 35%
2. Written exam, 35%
3. Assignment, 30%
4. Reassessment uses the same procedure as indicated below.

## Review

On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing awarded grades, and the date on which such a review will take place.

## Reassessment

Reassessment for this subject requires a content-synthesis test, for which the following conditions are applicable:

- The student must previously have submitted a minimum of two-thirds of the course-assessment items.
- The student must previously have obtained an average overall grade equal to or higher than 3.5.
- The student must previously have passed 75% of the subject's assessment requirements.
- The maximum grade than can be obtained through re-assessment is 5.0.

## Not assessed

Students will obtain a Not assessed/Not submitted course grade unless they have submitted more than 50% of the assessment items.

## Plagiarism:

In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject.

Irregularities refer, for instance, to copying in an exam, copying from sources without indicating authorship, or a misuse of AI such as presenting work as original that has been generated by an AI tool or programme.

## Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Class Participation & Class Presentation	25%	18	0.72	2, 1, 3, 4, 12, 6, 7, 9, 11, 10, 8, 5
Course Paper	50%	36	1.44	2, 1, 3, 4, 12, 6, 7, 9, 11, 10, 8, 5
Short assignments	25%	18	0.72	2, 1, 3, 4, 12, 6, 7, 9, 11, 8, 5

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## Bibliography

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

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

- Altick, Richard. *Victorian People and Ideas*.
- 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*
- Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*.
- Rivkin, Julie and Ryan, Michael. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*.
- Parrinder, Patrick. *Nation and Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day*.
- Praz, Mario, *The Hero in Eclipse in Victorian Fiction*.
- Strachey, Lytton. *Eminent Victorians*.
- Thompson, F.M.L., *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain: 1830-1900*.
- 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 Charles Dickens*
- *The Cambridge Companion to George Eliot*
- *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Culture*
- *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, Second Edition
- *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Women's Writing*

## Software

not applicable