

# ENGL:7500:0001 Fall23 Seminar: Victorian Literature

"The Captive Slave" by John Philip Simpson, 1827

Simpson's painting which appears in the "[Afro-Atlantic Histories](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)" exhibition, both draws on and subverts artistic traditions, seemingly to send an abolitionist message.

"Simpson's painting uses a predictable visual language of enslavement, shackles peeking out from under the man's orange jumpsuit like carceral bracelets. A heavy chain weighs down his arm, the links the size of his large hands. Those hands exude power, but power tamed.

Simpson played with convention, using the most obvious symbols of slavery and borrowing from representations of religious figures. He also subverted the portraiture of the wealthy. Art lovers who saw *The Captive Slave* in the 1820s may have gasped at its audacious departure from longstanding representations of slavery in English art. The object became the subject."

--Cynthia R. Greenlee, National Gallery of Art

This course will trace several parallel and divergent features of British and American writings of the period, with emphasis on the cultural environments and formal features of poetic, fictional, dramatic and argumentative texts.

We will pay special attention to three questions: How did our authors respond to themes of tradition/history and memory? How did conceptions of race influence attitudes toward empire and war? And finally, was a better future for the inhabitants of Britain/the United States possible, especially in the aftermath of the horrors of WWI?

Course texts may include: John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*; Charlotte Mew, "The Trees are Down"; John Muir, *The Mountains of California*; William Morris, "Sir Peter Harpdon's End"; Alfred Tennyson, "In Memoriam," "The Holy Grail"; Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*; Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*; Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*; Hannah Crafts, *A Bondwoman's Narrative*; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*; Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*; Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*; William Morris, "The Future of Society", *News from Nowhere*; William Dean Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*.

Background: Jonathan Dymond, essays on war; Responses to WWI: Sassoon, Rosenberg, Owen, Thomas Hardy, Alice Meynell, Charlotte Mew (also selections by German French poets); Mark Twain, *The War Prayer*, Susan Glaspell, *The Inheritance*.

## Course Syllabus

7500 Transatlantic Contrasts: Tradition and Upheaval  
in British and American Literature 1840-1920

This course will trace several parallel and divergent features of British and American writings of the period, with emphasis on the cultural environments and formal features of poetic, fictional, dramatic and argumentative texts.

We will pay special attention to three questions: How did our authors respond to themes of tradition/history and memory? How did conceptions of race influence attitudes toward empire and war? And finally, was a better future for the inhabitants of Britain/the United States possible, especially in the aftermath of the horrors of WWI?

Course texts may include: John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*; Charlotte Mew, "The Trees are Down"; John Muir, *The Mountains of California*; William Morris, "Sir Peter Harpdon's End"; Alfred Tennyson, "In Memoriam," "The Holy Grail"; Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*; Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*; Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*; Hannah Crafts, *A Bondswoman's Narrative*; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*; Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*; Upton Sinclair; *The Jungle*; William Morris, "The Future of Society", *News from Nowhere*; William Dean Howells, *A Traveler from Altruria*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*.

Background: Jonathan Dymond, essays on war; Responses to WWI: Sassoon, Rosenberg, Owen, Thomas Hardy, Alice Meynell, Charlotte Mew (also selections by German French poets); Mark Twain, *The War Prayer*, Susan Glaspell, *The Inheritance*.

Tentative Readings and Schedule for Fall 2023

### Week 1

August 22 T introduction

August 24 Th Caroline Norton; John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, *The Subjection of Women*

### Week 2

August 29 T Margaret Fuller, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

August 31 Th Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*

Week 3

September 5 T Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

September 7 Th Victor Sèjour, "The Mulatto"; Frances Harper, poems; report on Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig*

Week 4

September 12 T selection from *Das Kapital*; Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*

September 14 Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*

Week 5

September 19 T Chartist and other working-class poems: Jones, Laycock, Bamford, Johnson, Hamilton

September 21 Th working-class autobiographies: Ellen Johnston and Elizabeth Campbell

Week 6

September 26<sup>th</sup> T Rebecca Harding Davis, *Life in the Iron Mills*

September 28<sup>th</sup> Th Hamlin Garland, *Main Travelled Roads*

Week 7

October 3 T Tennyson, "In Memoriam"

October 5 Tennyson, Th "In Memoriam"

Week 8

October 10 T Oscar Wilde, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol"

October 12 Th American poetry selection, to be determined

Week 9

October 17 T John Ruskin, selections from *Fors Clavigera*; William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, first half

October 19 Th William Morris, “The Society of the Future,” *News from Nowhere*, second half

Week 10

October 24T Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

October 26 Th Ethel Carnie, *Miss Nobody*

Week 11

October 31 T Ethel Carnie, *Miss Nobody*; Jack London, “To Build a Fire”

November 2 Th Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (first half)

Week 12

November 7 T Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, *Anandamath*

November 9 Th Alicia Callahan, *Wynema: A Child of the Forest*

Week 13

November 16 -----

November 18 -----

Thanksgiving week

-

Week 14

November 28 T First World War: poetry by Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, German and French war poets

November 30 Th First World War, poetry by women poets of war, Charlotte Mew

Week 15

December 5 T Mark Twain, *The War Prayer*; Susan Glaspell, *The Inheritors*

December 7 Th graduate student reports

Exam week: Tuesday December 12<sup>th</sup>, final exam meeting, graduate student reports

Submission of final 15+ page essay by Friday of exam week, December 15<sup>th</sup>

## **Course Information and Assignments for 7500**

### **Transatlantic Contrasts: Tradition and Upheaval in British and American Literature 1840-1920**

**Florence S. Boos** 319 EPB 335-0434 [florence-boos@uiowa.edu](mailto:florence-boos@uiowa.edu).

Course location: 2057 Library. Office hours are TTh 6:30 p. m. (after my second class); usually after our class ends at 3:15 (but if possible let me know); and Wednesday and Friday afternoons by appointment.

The syllabus and other course materials, including university regulations, will be posted on our ICON site at <https://uiowa.instructure.com/courses/209430>.

For background, please order *Transatlantic Anglophone Literatures, 1776-1920*, edited by Linda Hughes, Sarah Robbins, and Andrew Taylor, which is readily available in paperback. As background for your first ICON posting, please read the introduction to this, as well as the introduction to *The Handbook of Transatlantic Literary Studies*, ed. Julia Straub, and available online through the UI Library at <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy.lib.uiowa.edu/lib/uiowa/reader.action?docID=4587099&ppg=1>

[Links to an external site.](#)

For our first classes, we will be reading excerpts from Caroline Norton (I will provide), John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, and Margaret Fuller's *Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Once we have agreed on the other class texts, I will order any you wish from the UI Bookstore, unless you prefer to purchase them in some other form. I will also provide the shorter selections such as essays or poems in the form of scans and/or handouts.

**ICON postings:** Please write 6 brief (2 double-spaced page) essays and post these to ICON, two in September, two in October, and one each in November and December. At least two of these postings should respond to work by your fellow students. These will be ungraded, but I will read them carefully.

The first essay should respond to the brief introductions in Hughes, Robbins, et alia. and in Straub. I would like your opinions on which aspects of their approaches you found most valuable, as well as any critiques you may have. The second essay should present one or more contrasts between the American and British literature of our period which you anticipate finding based on your prior reading. The sixth and final post should circle back and offer your reflections on the similarities and differences you have observed over the course of the semester.

The other three will respond to aspects of one or more of our texts.

**Class discussions:** Class will be largely student led, with students assigned to bring in brief background information as well as discussion questions for our authors. In addition, those not assigned to lead discussion for the day should plan ahead to offer additional questions.

**Final essay:** Students will write a 15+ page paper/article draft on an original topic of their choice. This need not be fully comparative, though it should address at least peripherally some aspect of the literary relationship between the two countries.

For this, students should submit a title and short bibliography before Thanksgiving break. If you give me an advance draft by Tuesday December 5<sup>th</sup>, I will review this and offer comments and suggestions for revisions. During the last regular class Thursday December 7<sup>th</sup> and at the final exam Tuesday December 10<sup>th</sup>, students will present a 10 minute summary of their essay to their fellow students. (The latter date can also be changed if students vote for a different exam time.)

The completed version will be due Friday December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.