

E379S Senior Seminar: The Romantic Novel

Spring 2010, The University of Texas at Austin

Meeting Times: Tu Th 12:30-1:45

Location: PAR 304

Unique Number: 35180

Instructor: Professor Samuel Baker, Ph.D.
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Calhoun 308
W 2:30-5:30 (and by appointment)
(512) 471-8389

For this capstone course in a program accrediting its students as readers of literature, we will reflect on reading as a spiritual exercise that involves both self-creation and self-abnegation. To do so, we will look at novels from the period when fiction established itself firmly as the leading imaginative arena in which to think about both what it means to have a self and what it means to dissolve one's self in the contemplation of the world. Tracing forward the literary movement—"Romanticism"—that became synonymous with an ethos of extravagant self-concern, we will reflect on what kind of selves this fiction wants to create—and destroy—and on how this fiction urges us to live differently than we have otherwise. Meanwhile, we will track the emergence of literary realism in works of the period, and consider such realism in relation to Romanticism. The course will thus be a course not only in the history of the novel in the Romantic period, but also in the Romantic theory of the novel. Accordingly, students will have the opportunity to work with supplemental primary sources and secondary sources.

All students are required to do the reading, attend class, and participate. Occasional quizzes will be given to encourage completion of the reading and help brainstorm for discussions. (These will factor into the participation and attendance grade.) Most Wednesdays at 5 PM, a 500-word essay will be due on a theme assigned the previous Friday. The best seven of these eleven short papers will count toward your grade (so three may be skipped without further penalty). There will also be a 500-word paper on some selected secondary readings; a research visit to the Harry Ransom Center; an annotated bibliography assignment; a final five-page paper developing one of the shorter essays; and a short paper, not independently graded, introducing a final class portfolio assembling all of the above work. Students who wish to substitute a ten-page research paper for the final five-page paper may also skip (or have not counted) an additional Wednesday theme. Final research papers need not center on texts read for this class, although they must be in dialogue with the class's concerns.

Final Grade Formula:	Attendance and informed participation	50%
	Writing Assignments	50%

Assignment and final grades will be given across a range from A to F that will include the plus and minus grades (e.g. A- and C+) recently introduced at the University of Texas.

Policies:

Communication. Be sure to let me know what's on your mind, and be sure that you understand as best you can your texts, classmates, and professor throughout the semester. To these ends:

Email. Please be sure that you regularly check for email sent to the address you have on file with the University. (If you don't know how to change this, contact the ITS help desk, at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/help/> or 475-9400.) If I am awake, I am generally reachable by email; I can't promise, however, to respond to email immediately or extensively.

In Person. I can best help you in person, so do come see me in my office hours on Wednesday afternoons, or email or call to make an appointment. (I am at my office at some point almost every day.)

On the Web. We will likely be using both blackboard and the eReserves system at some point in the course of the semester. Here are the urls for the class:

<http://courses.utexas.edu> takes you to the main blackboard portal;

<http://reserves.lib.utexas.edu> takes you to the eReserves pages.

Disabilities. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, by calling (512) 471-6259. If you believe that one of the policies below should be adapted for your case because of a disability, talk to me about it, but be sure also to discuss the matter with Services for Students with Disabilities (as I will be doing as well).

Reading. Read the assigned texts (literature and criticism alike, including, when assigned or online, your colleagues' written responses) actively, formulating remarks, questions and concerns that you can voice in our discussions. Make use of the reading questions provided, but go beyond these as well. You must come to class with copies of the readings in hand. Alternative editions are fine (although you are responsible for being aware of any discrepancy in editing).

Attendance. Come to class on time and prepared. I pay close attention to who attends and who participates. In the long run, nothing is worse for your grade than repeated absences, tardiness, or inadequate preparation. Explanations for missed class time, while polite and usually appropriate, unfortunately cannot substitute for the direct experience of the course. Conversely, if you shine in these areas that should help your marks. All that said, informing me in advance when you will miss class or when you will be late can mitigate your grade penalty. In particular, I will make special allowances for classes missed because of religious holidays: but per UT policy, in such cases the student is responsible for notifying the Professor of the absence "at least 14 days prior to the classes scheduled."

Participation. While no student is required to participate at any given moment of a classroom session, all students should contribute regularly to the overall discussion. While the quality of student contributions weighs more heavily than their quantity, risk-taking will be rewarded.

Writing. Follow MLA or Chicago style in citing texts in your papers (see the MLA handbook, widely available at libraries and bookstores). Plagiarism is forbidden, unethical, boring, and likely to fail, given the idiosyncratic course writing assignments, eagle eye of the instructor, and the University's investment in anti-plagiarism search engines. For more details on academic integrity standards see http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php

Peer Commentaries. I reserve the right to circulate any and all student papers to the class; write with that possibility in mind.

Exercises. At the end of some classes, students will write freely: capturing unvoiced thoughts, extending lines of argument to texts not covered, or posing questions. The best of these exercises will be transferred to the Blackboard site where further discussion will ensue.

Field Trips and Additional Meetings. Fill out the supplied questionnaire to help me assign you to a group for our secondary research meetings the first week of March. The first such meeting is mandatory; after the first meeting there will be a series of less-formal second meetings for students who wish to participate further. In April we will meet at the Harry Ransom Center, which I suggest you familiarize yourself with beforehand.

Classroom Etiquette. All electronic devices, including laptops, should be turned off and stowed while you are in the classroom. I may make individual exceptions for students because of a disability (see above) or an emergency situation, but I must be asked in advance of class in order to make such an exception. Along similar lines, students wishing to record the audio of the lecture may do so, but they must ask for permission in advance, and arrange to share any audio recording with me. (I may in turn make it available to the whole class.) If you wish to have course notes on your laptop, plan to take them by hand and transcribe them later.

Quizzes. These short exercises (some scheduled on the syllabus, some given as surprises) are intended not only to make you read, but also to make you think, and thus to help us brainstorm before crucial discussions. Prepare by studying assiduously: be sure that you can remember, without referring back to your book, the names and terms that you will need to know in order to say what you want to say in response to whatever questions might appear.

Readings:

Each of the works listed below is available at the University Co-op, with two exceptions: the selections from Ossian, available for downloading and printing (you must bring a printout) on blackboard, and Goethe's *Werther*, available as a packet from Abel's Copies, 715-D West 23rd Street. (This packet contains a period translation, which will enable us to track semantic continuities between *Werther* and the novels we read that were originally written in English.)

James Macpherson, from *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) and *Fingal* (1761). Purported to be translations of bardic tales from the dark ages, Macpherson's haunting prose poems created a sensation, remapping the relationship between emotion and literary style for subsequent readers and writers.

What kinds of reading, and what kinds of readerships, do Macpherson's texts invite? How do they mesh neoclassical, Hebraic (i.e. Old Testament) and gothic (i.e., archaic non-Roman European) resources and references?

Discussion: 01/21, handout (print out from Blackboard site and bring to class)
Essay due: n/a

Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling* (published anonymously; London: Thomas Cadell, 1771). Mackenzie's landmark work of sentimental fiction inspired a subsequent generation of novelists to compose in its tradition.

What can we make of how Mackenzie's frame narrative positions his reader in regard to the events he chronicles? With whom do we sympathize in the text, and how do the novel's ironies inflect our sympathies, if at all? How does Mackenzie characterize the "manners" of the day?

Discussion: 01/26, the novel complete (pages 45-139)
Essay due: 01/27 (#1)

Charlotte Smith, *The Old Manor House* (London: J. Bell, 1793). Among the most popular novelists and poets of the early 1790s, Smith's following was at its height when she published this novel. Her fans included the young Jane Austen, who was influenced by this novel's weave of sentimental, political, and gothic themes.

How much philosophy is there in *The Old Manor House*, and where is it (and where is it not)? For all of its sentimentalism, does the novel also pay its respects to realism? Or is it fundamentally a romance?

Discussion: 01/28 (volume I), 02/02 (volume II), 02/04 (volume III)
Essay due: 02/03 (#2)

Matthew “Monk” Lewis, *The Monk* (Waterford: J. Saunders, 1796). Burlesquing the gothics of Charlotte Smith and, in particular, of Ann Radcliffe, while deepening their horror quotient by introducing new techniques of sensationalism, Lewis’s novel was one of the most scandalous publications of its time. We will read this “page-turner” as it was read in its time: quickly, for the plot and the accumulating atmosphere.

How seriously can we take *The Monk*? Does it have literary value? How or how not? Does it make an argument? Why does Lewis call it (in his original subtitle) a “Romance”? Is it also in any way a work of realism?

Discussion: 02/09, the novel entire (!)

Essay due: 02/10 (#3)

Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1791). Responding to Lewis’s provocation, Radcliffe here took her patented “travel and terror” formula to a new level, transcending the Gothic genre to establish a tremendously influential but utterly unique mindspace that the intrepid have been visiting ever since.

How does Radcliffe’s use of the Italian setting compare to Lewis’s? What happens to one’s sense of time as one becomes immersed in the novel, and what techniques create those effects? Within this strange landscape, do Radcliffe’s characters have any dimensionality to them whatsoever?

Discussion: 02/11 (volume I), 02/16 (volume II), 02/18 (volume III)

Essay due: 02/17 (#4)

William Godwin, *St. Leon* (London, 1799; our edition is based on the 1831 text published by Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley). Perhaps now best known as the husband of the political theorist and pioneering feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and the father of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*, Godwin was one of the leading public intellectuals of the 1790s. His 1794 novel *Caleb Williams* was an event, complemented by his contemporaneous *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. By the time of *St. Leon* Godwin was bitterly reconsidering, if not renouncing, the stoicism and political radicalism of his earlier work.

How does history matter for Godwin’s novel? Is this a tale of the supernatural, of “the supernatural explained,” or of Enlightenment? What philosophical positions on interpersonal and institutional ethics does Godwin entertain? Can you say where he finally stands on such questions?

Discussion: 02/23 (volume I), 02/25 (volume II), 03/02 (volumes III and IV)

Essay due: 03/03 (#5)

Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, from *Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion. By the Author of "Pride and Prejudice," "Mansfield-Park," &c. With a Biographical Notice of the Author* (Composed circa 1800, published posthumously; London: John Murray, 1818). Jane Austen revised her manuscript of *Northanger Abbey* to make her heroine Catharine Morland a too-avid reader of not Smith but Radcliffe: she herself was an aficionado of both. This, her first work, went unpublished in her lifetime.

Parodic tributes to Radcliffian Gothic are easy enough to spot here, but can you also find lingering traces of Smith's influence? Does this novel show Austen already transforming the genre—or does it seem of a different order than her later productions?

Discussion: 03/04, the novel complete (we'll also discuss it periodically earlier in February)
Essay due: 03/10 (#6)

Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, from *Northanger Abbey: and Persuasion. By the Author of "Pride and Prejudice," "Mansfield-Park," &c. With a Biographical Notice of the Author*, 1818. Austen's last novel saw her depart further than ever before from Johnsonian sobriety; it evinces a lyricism not before seen in her work. Written in the immediate aftermath of Waterloo, *Persuasion* can nevertheless feel like a historical novel about a previous epoch.

How are we to take the various scenes in which Austen foregrounds the reading and writing of letters and billets, poems and peerages? Is this an anatomy of literature's uses for life, or a random assortment? Is Austen's novel less sentimental, sensational, or philosophical than its more generic forerunners? Or does it simply articulate those facets of the Romantic novel differently?

Discussion: 03/09 (volume I), 03/11 (volume II)
Essay due: 03/24 (#7)

Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering* (published anonymously; Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1815). Already established as Britain's leading poet, Scott, fearing embarrassment, published his first novel, *Waverley*, anonymously. Its tremendous sales led him to write two dozen more "Waverley Novels" (so-called because most were attributed to the "Author of *Waverley*"), of which *Guy Mannering* was the first, and one of the most beloved. This successful second effort found Scott exploring the 1770s and 1780s, crucial decades for Britain at home and in its empire.

Scott's keen sense of audience can be seen both in his solicitude toward his reader and in his willingness to test his reader's patience in order to bring off his unprecedented narrative feats. To whom is he writing, and how does he seek to manipulate those readers? How does he interrelate (or avoid interrelating) Scotland and England, Britain and India?

Discussion: 03/23 (volume I), 03/25 (volume II), 03/30 (volume III)
Essay due: 03/31 (#8)

Walter Scott, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in *Tales of My Landlord. Collected and Arranged by Jedediah Cleishbotham, Schoolmaster and Parish Clerk of Gandercleugh. Third Series* (published by Constable in 1819 with no further information). Trying to break away from the *Waverley* template, Scott established a new set of novels presented as redacted stories collected by a Scottish schoolmaster. No one was fooled. Now encased within thick layers of Introductions, Prefaces, Morals, and Postscripts, some of which were original to the text and others of which accreted to it in its later existence, this, arguably Scott's most searing novel, was the basis for Donizetti's great opera *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Here Scott returns to the seventeenth century—to what effect? In what ways does the love story at the heart of this novel seem an artifact of that epoch, and in what ways does it seem to reflect Scott's moment? Scott's son-in-law famously attributed the novel's atmospheric to the laudanum Scott was taking at the time due to an illness (a claim disputed by modern literary historians, some of whom posit *Ivanhoe* as his true opium novel). Can we instead account for its visionary style by considering Scott's use of the gothic tradition?

Discussion: 04/06 (volume I), 04/08 (volume II), 04/13 (volume III)

Essay due: 04/14 (#9)

Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Dublin, 1820). For years only Walter Scott among Britain's literati seemed to recognize the talents of the Anglo-Irish clergyman Maturin; his epic Gothic *Melmoth* would change that. While Maturin's untimely death kept him from further establishing himself, his masterpiece exerted a continual influence into the twentieth century: Oscar Wilde, for instance, was a devotee.

Where, if anywhere, have we seen precedents for Maturin's elaborate narrative structures and intense manner? What ethical and religious arguments does his novel proffer, and what changes do they ring on those offered by earlier Romantics?

Discussion: 04/15 (volume I), 04/20 (volume II), 04/22 (volume III), 04/27 (volume IV)

Essay due: 04/28 (#10)

W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (London, 2001). The Germano-Briton Sebald emerged around the turn of the millennium as one of Europe's leading novelists, with *Austerlitz* being considered perhaps his greatest effort. A historical detective tale, the novel is also an argument about the historical constants governing the long modern epoch from St. Leon's day to the present.

"Austerlitz" is the name of a character in this novel, but also (as the novel explains) the name of a key battle in the Napoleonic wars. What does it do to our considerations of Romantic fiction to see their preoccupations taken up by a novel that is centrally concerned with the Holocaust?

Discussion: 04/29 (first half), 05/04 (second half)

Essay due: 05/05 (#11)

Other Assignments:

Weekly Themes. Due most Wednesdays. Your best seven each count for approximately 4% of your final grade. Assignments given in class on the previous Thursday or emailed Friday.

Commentary on Secondary Readings. Due March 21st; 5% of final grade. A short essay assignment specific to your Secondary Reading Group.

Annotated Bibliography. Due April 11th. 7% of final grade. Short descriptions of the contents and bibliographical status of at least three primary source works and five secondary works (books or articles) joined by a common theme.

HRC Show and Tell. In early April we will travel to the Harry Ransom Center to look at some rare books relevant to our course. I strongly suggest that you become a reader there and page a book or two for me to present in our show and tell session.

Five-Page Paper. Due April 19th unless you choose to write your five-page essay on *Melmoth the Wanderer* (skipping that short paper), in which case you can hand in that five-page essay on April 28th. 10% of final grade.

Research Paper Option. Draft due April 23rd; final paper due with Portfolio on May 11th. If you write a research paper, you need not write a five-page paper for the course and can discount one additional short theme. Those wishing to pursue this option should begin discussing it with me by the end of Spring Break at the very latest.

Portfolio Overview Essay and final Portfolio. Due May 11th. Not independently graded, but bonus points will be awarded for an impressive presentation. If you revise papers, include photocopies of your originals with my comments. (I will average the grades of revised short papers with the originals.)

While I'll email final comments to research paper writers and anyone wanting final observations on their portfolio, my comments will mainly come in the course of the Semester and not at its end.

Checklist for writing assignments:

Seven short papers:

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— (could be research paper)

Four additional short papers:

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[—]
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*Commentary on secondary readings:

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*Annotated bibliography:

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*Five-page paper:

— (could be research paper)

*Portfolio introduction:

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Survey for Secondary Readings Assignment (return on Tuesday 2/2)

Name _____

Question One. Write “yes” or “possibly” below the days/times when you could, or could with some difficulty, attend a meeting out of class.

| Th 3/4 10-11am | F 3/5 10-11am | M 3/8 10-11am | M 3/8 4-5pm | T 3/9 5-6pm |

Question Two. Rank the following four topics from 1 to 4 in order of interest, 1 being the topic that interests you the most, 4 being the topic that interests you least:

The Novel and the Revolutions in America and France _____

Ann Radcliffe and Gothic Terror _____

William Godwin and Mary Shelley (if you've read *Frankenstein*) _____

Walter Scott and the Historical Novel in America _____