

Fall 2014  
Benson 200  
T 12:30-3pm  
[rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu)

Professor Rachel Teukolsky  
Office: Benson 419  
Office hours: Thurs. 2:45-3:45pm  
& by appointment

## **English 318.**

### **Visuality, Visual Culture, and the Victorian Imagination**

This course will approach Victorian literary and cultural history from the angle of visuality. Historians often refer to a “pictorial turn” to describe the flourishing of visual culture in the nineteenth century, in objects that ranged from hand-held stereoscopes to panoramas to world exhibitions. We will consider the multifaceted aspects of Victorian visuality, from the science of optics to the politics of empire. Our objects of study will include literary works remarkable for their visual play, such as Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Brontë’s *Villette*, as well as the aesthetic (and political) philosophies of art critics John Ruskin and Walter Pater. We will explore some key archives of Victorian visual culture, including illustrated books, advertising posters, and representations of the Great Exhibition of 1851, usually considered the first World’s Fair. Class meetings will also consider Victorian photography, illustration, ekphrasis, criminality, empire, and decadence. For theories and histories of vision, we will look to W.J.T. Mitchell, Walter Benjamin, Jonathan Crary, Michel Foucault, Sharon Marcus, and Martin Jay, among others. The course, aimed at both specialists and non-specialists, will consider some basic questions: How to analyze an image? What is visual culture, and how is it related to the fine arts? What is the relation between politics and visuality in the nineteenth century?

#### Required Texts

- Charlotte Brontë, *Villette* (Penguin)
- Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (MIT)
- Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Penguin)
- Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four* (Broadview)
- Walter Pater, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (Oxford)
- John Ruskin, *Selected Writings* (Oxford)
- Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (Dover; make sure to get the edition with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley)

#### Schedule of Readings

##### Tues., Aug. 26 Introducing Visual Culture & the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

- Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1859; trans. 1965) (OAK)
- Walter Benjamin, from “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” in *Reflections* (Schocken 1978), 146-56. (OAK)
- Susan Buck-Morss, ch. 5 from *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, 78-109 (OAK)

- Vanessa Schwartz and Jeannene Przyblyski, “Visual Culture’s History: Twenty-First-century Interdisciplinarity and its Nineteenth-Century Objects.” *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader* (2004), 3-14. (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*
- W.J.T. Mitchell, “Showing Seeing: A Critique of Visual Culture,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 1, no. 2 (2002): 165–81.

Tues., Sept. 2 Victorian Art Writing

- Handout: “Looking at Art” (OAK)
- John Ruskin, from *Selected Writings*; see reading guide on OAK for specific pages.
- Ruskin, additional excerpts: “Of Truth of Colour”; “The Two Boyhoods”; on Turner’s *Slave Ship* (OAK).
- Images: sketches by Ruskin; paintings by J. M. W. Turner

Recommended reading:

- Teukolsky, “Modernist Ruskin, Victorian Baudelaire: Revisioning Nineteenth-Century Aesthetics” *PMLA* 2007

Tues., Sept. 9 Ways of Seeing in the 19<sup>th</sup> c.

- Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (1990)\* (A reading guide to this text will be posted on OAK).

Recommended reading:

- David Brewster, *Letters on Natural Magic* (1832)

Tues., Sept. 16 Victorian Spectacle: The Great Exhibition

- The official catalogue is online & download-able:  
[http://www.google.com/books?id=OfMHAAAAQAAJ&source=gbs\\_summary\\_s&cad=0](http://www.google.com/books?id=OfMHAAAAQAAJ&source=gbs_summary_s&cad=0)
- Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Routledge, 1995), 59-88. (OAK)
- Charles Dickens, “The Great Exhibition and the Little One,” *Household Words* (1851) (OAK)
- Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof,” from *Capital*, vol. 1 (1867); also a paragraph by Marx on the Great Exhibition (OAK)
- Thomas Richards, “The Great Exhibition of Things,” ch. 1 of *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford, 1990). (OAK)
- Images: The Great Exhibition of 1851

Recommended Reading:

- Richard Altick, *The Shows of London*

Tues., Sept. 23 Picturing London and Urban Modernity

- Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, I
- Lynda Nead, from *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets, and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (Yale, 2000), 1-36 (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Bruce Robbins, “Telescopic Philanthropy: Professionalism and Responsibility in Bleak House,” in Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (Methuen, 1990), 213-30.

Tues., Sept. 30

- Dickens, *Bleak House*, II
- Teukolsky, “Pictures in Bleak Houses: Slavery and the Aesthetics of Transatlantic Reform,” *ELH* 76:2 (Summer 2009): 491-522. (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Richard L. Stein, “Dickens and Illustration.” *The Cambridge Companion to Charles Dickens*. Ed. John O. Jordan (Cambridge, 2001), 167-188.

Tues., Oct. 7 Victorian Photography

- 19<sup>th</sup>-c. responses to photography by Elizabeth Eastlake, Henry Fox Talbot, Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Baudelaire. From Alan Trachtenberg, ed. *Classic Essays on Photography* (1980) (OAK)
- Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (OAK)
- Tom Gunning, “Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films and Photography’s Uncanny” in *Fugitive Images from Photography to Video* ed. Patrice Petro (Indiana, 1995) (OAK)
- Images: Victorian photographs by Henry Fox Talbot, Roger Fenton, Julia Margaret Cameron, Henry Peach Robinson, et al.

Recommended reading:

- Susan Sontag, *On Photography*
- Siegfried Kracauer, “Photography”

Tues., Oct. 14 Illustration

- Richard Maxwell, “Introduction” and “Afterword” to Maxwell, ed. *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, xxi-xxx, 385-422 (OAK)
- Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, “Poetry and Illustration,” in Cronin, Chapman, and Harrison, eds., *A Companion to Victorian Poetry* (Blackwell, 2002), 392-418 (OAK)
- Jerome McGann, “Literature by Design since 1790.” *Victorian Poetry* 48:1 (Spring 2010): 11-40. (OAK)
- Julia Thomas, “Picturing Slavery: *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its Early Illustrations,” *Pictorial Victorians: The Inscription of Values in Word and Image* (Ohio, 2004), 21-52 (OAK)
- Images: Illustrating Tennyson’s “Lady of Shalott”; other selected images (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- William Morris and William S. Peterson, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*.

Tues., Oct. 21 Gender and the Female Gaze

- Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*
- Sharon Marcus, “Reflections on Victorian Fashion Plates.” *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14.3 (2003) 4-33 (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Eva Badowska, “Choseville: Brontë’s *Villette* and the Art of Bourgeois Interiority” *PMLA* 120:5 (Oct 2005): 1509-23.

Tues., Oct. 28 The Aesthetic Movement: Art, Life, & the Body

- Walter Pater, selections from *The Renaissance*: see reading guide on OAK for specific pages.
- Teukolsky, “Walter Pater’s *Renaissance* (1873) and the British Aesthetic Movement” an online article (OAK)
- Robert Browning, “Fra Lippo Lippi” (OAK)
- Martin Jay, “Scopic Regimes of Modernity” (OAK)
- Images: The visual culture of aestheticism. Paintings by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Whistler; satirical cartoons by Du Maurier; various collectible objects (OAK)

**Meet with me this week to discuss final paper topic.**

Tues. Nov. 4 Theorizing Word and Image

- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, “The Blessed Damozel,” “Introductory Sonnet,” “Body’s Beauty,” “Found (for a picture),” “Venus Verticordia,” “For a Venetian Pastoral, by Giorgione” (all poems on OAK).
- Please read the online introduction to Rossetti’s “double works” and view his paintings at: <http://www.rossettiarchive.org/racs/doubleworks.rac.html>
- Robert Buchanan, “The Fleshly School of Poetry” (1871) (OAK)
- W. J. T. Mitchell, “Ekphrasis and the Other,” from *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago, 1995) (OAK).
- Peter Wagner, “Introduction: Ekphrasis, Iconotexts, and Intermediality – the State(s) of the Art(s),” in Wagner, ed. *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality* (de Gruyter, 1996), 1-40. (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- WJT Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*

**Statement of topic and (lightly) annotated bibliography due.**

Tues., Nov. 11 Detection and the Disciplinary Archive

- Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*
- Havelock Ellis, brief excerpts from *The Criminal* (OAK)
- Michel Foucault, from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (OAK)
- Alan Sekula, “The Body and the Archive.” *October* 39 (Winter, 1986): 3-64. (OAK)
- Images: the Victorian criminal (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Ronald R. Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (1999)

Tues., Nov. 18 Seeing Empire, Race, Otherness

- Richard D. Altick, “The Noble Savage Reconsidered,” *The Shows of London* (1978), 268-287. (OAK)
- Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising,” *Imperial Leather*, ch. 5 (OAK).

- Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York, 1989), 33-59. (OAK)
- Images: Victorian advertising posters (OAK)

Recommended reading:

- Tim Barringer, “Images of Otherness and the Visual Production of Difference: Race and Labour in Illustrated Texts, 1850-1865,” in Shearer West ed., *The Victorians and Race* (1996), 34-52.
- James R. Ryan, “Photographing the Natives,” *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago, 1997), 140-182.

**Paper thesis paragraph and outline due.**

Tues., Nov. 25 NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tues., Dec. 2 Decadent Visions

- Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (Dover edition with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley)
- Sharon Marcus, “Salomé!! Sarah Bernhardt, Oscar Wilde, and the Drama of Celebrity.” *PMLA* 126:4 (October 2011): 999-1021.

Recommended reading:

- Sander L. Gilman, “Salome, Syphilis, Sarah Bernhardt, and the Modern Jewess.” *The Jew in the Text: Modernity and the Construction of Identity*. Ed. Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (1996), 97-120.
- Lorraine Janzen Kooistra, *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* (Scolar, 1995).

**Monday, Dec. 8 Final paper (15-20 pp.) due in Benson 419 by 4pm.**

#### A FEW COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To introduce the literature, culture, and imagery of Victorian Britain.
- To investigate theories of visibility, visual culture, and aesthetics, speaking both to the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries.
- To practice analyzing visual objects, taken from the realms of both high art and mass culture.
- To discuss issues relevant to graduate student professionalization.
- To discuss the art of writing seminar papers, and to break down the writing process into manageable steps.
- To encourage perfect attendance and participation by every class member during each class meeting.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Please plan on attending every course meeting. Acceptable absences are those due to illness or professional obligations; in either case, inform me in advance via email. More than one absence will prompt me to suggest that you drop the class. For each class meeting, I will ask you to bring in a 1-2 pp. double-spaced response paper which you will present briefly to the class. The response paper should choose a specific passage, image, or trope to analyze. Moving from specific to general, you should try to explain how the chosen detail opens up into larger themes, ideas, or theories. Please use formal and elegant prose to write the response paper, and avoid using the "I." Each response paper might be seen as a potential seed for the final seminar paper.

The final seminar paper will be written over the course of the semester, beginning with a conversation with me. Intermediary assignments will allow me to give you feedback at each step. A "Statement of topic and (lightly) annotated bibliography" will be due Nov. 4; a "Thesis paragraph and outline" will be due Nov. 18. The final paper, 15-20 pp., is due in Benson 419 by 4pm on Monday, Dec. 8. I look forward to reading your work, and encourage you to stop by my office hours to discuss the course.