

Fall 2020  
Online Course  
T R 12:45pm – 2pm  
[rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu)

Professor Rachel Teukolsky  
Office hours: email any time  
to set up a Zoom meeting

## English 3894W, Section 2. Oscar Wilde: Art Rebel

This course will explore the world, art, wit, meteoric rise, and tragic downfall of Oscar Wilde. How did the most popular writer of his age end up confined to a prison cell? We'll study his roots in Ireland, his ascent in London society as a celebrated playwright, and his stunning arrest and imprisonment for "acts of gross indecency" with other men. Wilde was more than a gay martyr: he was also a philosopher and member of a radical counterculture devoted to art and beauty. We will read a selection of Wilde's essays, plays, fairy tales, and his Gothic novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. One surprising thread will track the importance of race to the understanding of Wilde's life and works: why did he appear in racist caricatures? How did the British Empire influence nineteenth-century literature and identity? The course will also consider inheritors of Wilde, from contemporary Black dandies to the gay cowboys of *Brokeback Mountain*. What happens when an artist breaks the rules governing his world—and how do those rebellions look to us today?

### Required Texts

- Moisés Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. Vintage Edition, 1998.
- Robert L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Broadview Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 2015.
- Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays*. Signet Reprint, 2012.
- Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Penguin/Vintage Classics Edition, 2011.
- Oscar Wilde, *Salomé*, with illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. Dover Edition, 1967.
- Oscar Wilde, *The Happy Prince and Other Fairy Tales*. Dover edition, 2001.
- Additional readings will be posted online on the course's Brightspace website (BR)
- The course also requires the viewing of one film, along with videos and other media; the professor will provide instructions on how to access these items.

Tues., Aug. 25	<u>Course Introduction</u> . Who was Oscar Wilde? Why does he matter today?
Thurs., Aug. 27	<u>The Victorian Gentleman</u> . [All on BR:] Introductory comments on "the gentleman"; Newman, "The Definition of a Gentleman"; Carlyle, from <i>On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History</i> ; Tennyson, "Ulysses."
Tues., Sept. 1	<u>Late-Victorian London</u> . Stevenson, <i>The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i> (read the entire novella).
Thurs., Sept. 3	Judith Walkowitz, "Jack the Ripper." From <i>City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London</i> (BR).
Tues., Sept. 8	<u>The Aesthetic Movement</u> . Walter Pater, from <i>The Renaissance</i> (BR); paintings by W. P. Frith, D.G. Rossetti, J. M. Whistler (BR)
Thurs., Sept. 10	<u>Dandyism</u> . [all on BR:] Portraits and cartoons of Wilde; Charles Baudelaire

on the Dandy, from “The Painter of Modern Life” (BR); Monica L. Miller, “Stylin’ Out,” *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity* (2009), 1-26.

- Tues., Sept. 15 Decadence. Arthur Symons, “Decadence” (BR); excerpts from J.-K. Huysmans, *À Rebours* (translated as *Against the Grain* or *Against Nature*) (BR); Moreau paintings of Salomé (BR)
- Thurs., Sept. 17 Decadent Poetry. [All on BR]: Lionel Johnson, “A Decadent’s Lyric”; Oscar Wilde, “Helas,” “Symphony in Yellow”; Arthur Symons, “Pastel: Masks and Faces,” “The Opium-Smoker,” “White Heliotrope,” “Prologue: In the Stalls,” “To a Dancer”; Michael Field, “La Gioconda”

**Mon. Sept. 21 Paper #1 (4-5 pp.) due by noon, uploaded on Brightspace page**

- Tues., Sept. 22 Wilde in America. Wilde, “Personal Impressions of America” (1883) (BR); Newspaper reports of Wilde’s American tour (BR); Video: Wilde’s biography, 20 mins (BR)
- Thurs., Sept. 24 Caricatures, Race, and Irishness. [All on BR:] 19<sup>th</sup>-c. images of the Irish; Scholar Michele Mendelssohn explains racist parodies of Wilde (video); pictorial caricatures of Wilde on his American lecture tour; article excerpt: “Undisciplining Victorian Studies,” from *Los Angeles Review of Books*.
- Tues., Sept. 29 Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” (BR)
- Thurs., Oct. 1 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapters 1-8 (pp. 5-95)
- Tues., Oct. 6 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, chapters 9-20 (pp. 95-213)
- Thurs., Oct. 8 Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, cont.; preface; reviews of the book (BR); revisions Wilde made from the magazine version to the book version (BR)
- Tues., Oct. 13 The Wilde Trials. Moisés Kaufman, *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (a 1999 play based on historical documents); short clips from staged versions of the play (links on BR)
- Thurs., Oct. 15 Sexology and Same-Sex Desire. Michel Foucault, excerpts from *The History of Sexuality* (BR); Walt Whitman, “In Paths Untrodden,” from *Leaves of Grass* (BR); Alfred (“Bosie”) Douglas, “Two Loves” (BR)

**Mon. Oct. 19 Paper #2 (5 pp.) due by noon uploaded to Brightspace page**

- Tues., Oct. 20 The New Woman. [All on BR:] R. Altick, “The Weaker Sex”; Schaffer, on “The New Woman”; O. Wilde, editorial in *Woman’s World*, 1888; The New Woman in Multimedia; G. Egerton, short story: “A Cross Line”
- Thurs., Oct. 22 New Woman, cont. Two short stories: Sarah Grand, “The Undefinable” (BR); Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper” (BR)
- Tues., Oct. 27 Drama. Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (in Signet edition)
- Thurs., Oct. 29 Wilde, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (Signet edn)

Tues., Nov. 3 Wilde, *Salomé* (Dover edition; read all)  
Thurs., Nov. 5 *Salomé*, cont. Focus on Beardsley illustrations; also performance photos (BR)

Tues., Nov. 10 Prison. Introducing Wilde's prison writing (BR); Wilde, from *De Profundis* (BR); Wilde, Letter to the *Daily Chronicle* on prison conditions (1898) (BR)  
Thurs., Nov. 12 Ireland & the British Empire. [All on BR:] Introducing the British Empire; Declan Kiberd, "Oscar Wilde: The Artist as Irishman," in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of a Modern Nation*; Matthew Arnold, from *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867); Wilde's review of a novel by J. A. Froude.

**Mon., Nov. 16 Paper #3 (5 pp.) due by noon, uploaded to our Brightspace page**

Tues., Nov. 17 Fairy Tales. Wilde, "The Selfish Giant," "The Happy Prince," "The Young King," "The Nightingale and the Rose" (Dover edition).

Thurs., Nov. 19 Wilde Legacies I. TV show: Pose (2018), Episode 1. Also, essay on Wilde, the male "metrosexual," and commodity culture today (BR).

Nov. 21 – Nov. 29 NO CLASSES – Thanksgiving Break

Tues., Dec. 1 Wilde Legacies II. Movie: Brokeback Mountain, dir. Ang Lee (2005).

Thurs., Dec. 3 Wilde Legacies Wrap-Up: Who do you think is an inheritor of Oscar Wilde today, and why?

**Paper Revisions—Optional—due Mon., Dec. 7 by noon uploaded to our Brightspace page**

## Course Policy

Teaching and Learning in the COVID-19 Era: The world is currently being engulfed by a global pandemic. These are tough circumstances for taking a class. Any one of us might get sick. You may need to shift your lodgings abruptly. In all cases, **communication is key**. Please let me know if you get sick, or if personal issues arise that will affect your course performance. We can make adjustments if you need extensions on deadlines or ways to make up missed classes.

Requirements: This course requires three 5-page essays and a series of smaller writing assignments. The grade break-down is as follows: Paper #1 (25%), Paper #2 (25%), Paper #3 (25%), Participation (25%). Smaller writing assignments will go toward the Participation grade. Course participation will take place online via Zoom; see below for more details.

Revision Option: You will have the option of revising any of the papers toward a higher grade. The new grade will be averaged with the old grade. A new grade will only be awarded if the paper is significantly rewritten, using my comments on the earlier draft. The revisions are **optional** and are due at the end of the semester on Monday, Dec. 7 (noted above).

Assignments: Complete all the readings for the day listed on the syllabus. If the syllabus lists a video, movie, or TV show, you should watch it before the class meeting. Many of the course readings will be posted on Brightspace (BR). *Please make sure that you have all the course readings accessible for our class discussion.*

Writing Assignments: Papers should be double-spaced, in a reasonable twelve-point font (like Times New Roman), with one-inch margins all round. Papers are due by noon on the day noted in the syllabus: they should be uploaded under the “Assignments” tab on the course Brightspace page. Late papers will be penalized 1/3 grade for each day they are late. If you need an extension on a paper deadline, please try to ask me in advance, ideally at least one week before the paper is due. *In the pandemic era, the professor is more flexible about assignments and due dates. However, you must **communicate with me via email** if you need an accommodation for a paper due date.*

Class Meetings: Class meetings will take place online, using Zoom. You can find the link to enter class on the course Brightspace page, under the ‘Zoom’ tab. This class is a “synchronous” online class, which means that course participation will largely take place during our course meeting time, from 12:45pm to 2pm. I invite you log in to Zoom a couple of minutes early, if possible, so that we can start class on time. Please be considerate and don’t be late!

Attendance: Attending our online conversation is a vital and mandatory part of this course. You will be allowed 2 unexcused absences. Every additional absence will decrease your **final** grade by 1/3 of a letter.

If it turns out that you must miss class, owing to illness or a faulty internet connection, you can **make up the missed class** by turning in a five-page, double-spaced paper that answers the discussion questions posted for the day. I will post a PowerPoint presentation for each class on Brightspace; it will go live usually 10 or 15 minutes before class starts. The PowerPoint will cover the day’s course material. If you miss a class, I invite you to **watch the recording of our class discussion** while writing your make-up paper and working through the PowerPoint, so that you can see how your classmates weighed in on the day’s discussion questions. **If you miss 6 or more classes without turning in make-up papers, you will fail the course.**

Participation: I want to hear from you. It is important to me to get as many people talking in class as possible. Even if you are shy or unused to speaking in class, you will have the opportunity to practice in our friendly and welcoming environment. Please be aware that **I may call on you during our class discussion**. Zoom is sometimes a challenging environment for class conversations, and it helps to break the ice if I can randomly call on students. You will always have the opportunity to say ‘Pass’ if you can’t think of anything to say. Often, you will be asked to weigh in on a question that was asked in advance, so you’ll have time to prepare something before class starts. Your voice matters to me!

Technology: In an in-person class, I ask that students put away cell phones and other distracting electronic devices. For an online class, I still prefer that you turn off and stow your phone during class. Consider taking notes the old-fashioned way, using pen and paper. I ask that you do everything you can to focus your attention on our Zoom screen conversation.

Academic Integrity: This class is governed by the Vanderbilt Honor Code. You are required to bring your own original ideas to the interpretation of the texts. I ask that you don't consult outside sources in the writing of the papers. If you present the words or ideas of others without citing your sources, then you are guilty of plagiarism. Your case will be referred to the Vanderbilt Honors Council, and you will likely fail the class. For an in-depth description of what counts as plagiarism, please see:

<[http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student\\_handbook/chapter2.html#honorcode](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/chapter2.html#honorcode)>

Documented Disability: If you need to be accommodated for any kind of documented disability, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that I can work with you to help you succeed.

Grade Distribution: Paper grades are equivalent to the following numerical values:

<b>A+= 100</b>	<b>B+=88</b>	<b>C+=78</b>	<b>D+=68</b>
<b>A= 95</b>	<b>B=85</b>	<b>C=75</b>	<b>D=65</b>
<b>A/A-= 93</b>	<b>B/B-=83</b>	<b>C/C-=73</b>	<b>D-=61</b>
<b>A-= 91</b>	<b>B-= 81</b>	<b>C-=71</b>	<b>D--=59</b>
<b>A-/B+=90</b>	<b>B-/C+=80</b>	<b>C-/D+=70</b>	

The following percentages translate into letter grades for your final grade.

<b>A=100-93</b>	<b>C+=79-78</b>
<b>A-=92-90</b>	<b>C=77-70</b>
<b>B+=89-88</b>	<b>D=69-60</b>
<b>B=87-83</b>	<b>F=below 60</b>
<b>B-=82-80</b>	

Reaching Me: You can email me anytime to set up an appointment on Zoom: [rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:rachel.teukolsky@vanderbilt.edu). We can find a time that will work for both of us. If anything is happening in your life that will affect your course performance, please get in touch. Feel free to set up an appointment to chat about how the class is going. I look forward to getting to know you.