

Key Concepts in British Literature and Culture: The Nineteenth Century

(Online: asynchronous lectures + Q&A session)

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This lecture series offers a survey of the British Literature and Culture of the Nineteenth Century, from the period of romanticism up to pre-modernist tendencies at the threshold of the twentieth century. Focusing on key concepts of the period and their critical discussion today, the lectures will present you with a broad spectrum of authors, ranging from Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad. We will cover different genres and media, from the poetry of Walter Scott to the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites and the comedies of Oscar Wilde, thus introducing you to canonical and less canonical texts and cultural artifacts. The lectures will focus, for instance, on the political discourse of rights in the Romantic period which reverberates in the two Great Reform Acts, on the industrialization of Victorian society and its representation in the novel or other media, and on the class-inflected gender constructions and hotly debated “woman question” under the reign of a female monarch.

Specific features of the historical context essential for understanding contemporary cultural objects and movements will receive particular attention – such as the empire and colonialism, Victorian science, and the emergence of a thriving visual and theatrical culture. But we will also consider the massively accelerated fossil fuel extraction and other modes of terra forming which left in/tangible traces both in that period’s nature/culture and our own. Our lectures will move back and forth between systematic surveys on the one hand, and case studies of individual media and texts on the other.

Course requirements:

- Three quizzes (pass/fail) during the term for all students
- M.Ed students are required to hand in one close readings in addition