

VL Key Concepts: The Victorian Age

This lecture will provide an overview over the literature and culture of the Victorian era (1837-1901). For better and worse, the Victorian age is particularly noteworthy for consolidating a culture of modernity: The period is marked by rapid technological change, urbanization, industrialization, the proliferation of empirical and natural science, and by constant imperial expansion. These developments were attended by the transformation of many social relations in the realms of work, gender, family, society, and politics. Over the course of the lecture, we will look at literary responses of these developments in fiction, drama, and poetry. In addition to these thematic concerns, we will also discuss literary-sociological phenomena like the serialization and commoditization of novels, West-End theatre culture, and the professionalization of literary criticism. All of these technological, political, and institutional novelties will be linked to the numerous formal innovations of the age: from the development of literary realism in the novel and the dramatic monologue in poetry, over the repeated renaissances of the Gothic and the literary application of naturalism, to the advent of modernism that can be found in the proliferation of free indirect discourse and free verse towards the end of the 19th century. Alongside literature we will also frequently look at developments in visual arts, such as impressionism, Pre-Raphaelism, or the development of photography.

Course requirements:

- Three quizzes (pass/fail) during the term
- M.Ed students are additionally required to hand in one close reading