ENG 5344.001: Studies in Victorian Literature and Culture:

**What the Victorians Did For Fun**

Spring 2014: Tues 7 – 9:30  
Professor Molly Engelhardt  
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*Can I view thee panting, lying/ On thy stomach, without sighing:/ Can I unmoved see thee dying/ On a log/Expiring frog!* (Pickwick Papers)

**Course Description:** The Victorians were as silly as they were serious. They worked hard to reform the schools, hospitals, prisons, and they put money and lots of grit into the construction of railroads, sewage systems, and workhouses. But less studied are the ways in which Victorians pursued fun in the face of the challenges brought on by living in a world in flux; indeed, one of the most popular publications at mid-century was entitled *Fun Magazine*. In this course we will use play theory and literature of the period to tap into the ambivalent spirit of being Victorian in the modern world. Why such voracious eating and drinking habits, such love for bad jokes and melodrama, such exuberant dancing and bawdy behavior at theatres? In what ways was having fun an outlet for Victorians to escape, transgress, forge an identity or join a community? What difference does having fun make anyway?

**Student Learning Outcomes:** After completion of the course students will be able to:

- Analyze literature and cultural/theoretical texts at a graduate level;
- Facilitate class discussion at a graduate level;
- Make connections between social forces contributing to the production and reception of Victorian literature;
- Produce a scholarly paper that builds on research skills and contributes to the study of Victorian literature and culture.
Required Readings:

Novels, Short Stories, and Plays:
Anonymous. “Sweeney Todd or the Strong of Pearls”
Bronte, Charlotte. *Villette* (Penguin)
Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking Glass.*
Dickens, Charles. *Pickwick Papers* (Penguin)
Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Cranford.* (Penguin)
Le Fanu, J. Sheridan. *Carmilla*
Gilbert and Sullivan, “The Mikado”
Wilde, Oscar. “Lady Windermere’s Fan”

Historical/Scholarly Readings posted on blackboard:
* Andrews, Malcolm. “Falling Apart Laughing” (from *Dickensian Laughter*)
* Bakhtin, Mikhail. “Carnival and the Carnivalesque”
* Boone, Joseph. Excerpts from *Homoerotics of Orientalism*
* Carlyle, Thomas. “The Spirit of the Times”
* Franklin, Jeffrey. From *Serious Play: The Cultural Form of the 19th Century Realist Novel.*
* Gillooly, Eileen. “Humor as Daughterly Defense in *Cranford*”
* Gilmour, Robin. “A Parvenu Civilisation” (from *The Victorian Period*)
* Huizinga, J. from *Homo Ludens.*
* Kincaid, James R. “Fattening up on Pickwick” (from *The Other Victorians*)
* Mayhew, Henry. Excerpts from *London Labour, London Poor*
* Melman, Billie. “Harem Literature” (from *Women’s Orients*)
* Owen, Alex. “Victorian Spiritualism and The Spiritualist Woman”
* Powell, Kerry. From *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre*
* Said, Edward. Intro to *Orientalism*
* Shuttleworth, Sally. “Reading the Mind: Physiognomy and Phrenology”
* Stallybrass, Peter, and Allon White. “The City: The Sewer, the Gaze and the Contaminating Touch” (from the *Politics and Poetics of Transgression*)
* Stott, Rebecca. “The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard’s Adventure Fiction”

Grade Break-down:
* Class preparation and participation 10%
* Class Presentation on “Fun” topic 10%
* 6 reading responses 20%
* Two short analyses 20%
* Research paper (12 - 15 pages) 40%
A = 90-100 points; B = 80-89 points; C = 70-79 points; D = 60-69 points; F = below 60 points
Overview of Student Responsibilities:

**Class Participation (10%)**: The format of the course will consist of both teacher and student-facilitated discussion. In addition, students will work in small groups throughout the semester and discuss the readings. Consistent and informed participation in class discussion is essential and attendance is required. You may only miss one class without your grade being affected (5 points deducted from final grade for each class missed).

**“Fun” Presentation: (10%)** Each of you will identify something that the Victorians did for fun—from croquet, to hunting, to playing charades—and conduct outside research on it. You will present your findings to the class, ideally on the day that your topic makes an appearance in the reading. For example, Dickens is often credited with creating Christmas as we know it today. If you chose to work with Christmas, your presentation would be scheduled during our reading of Pickwick (big Christmas scene in novel). Besides edifying the class about this Victorian pastime, you will lead a discussion making connections between your findings and the literature to help us better understand the Victorians, as well as complicate them. This will be presented at the beginning of class and should last approximately 30 minutes. You will be evaluated on the content of your presentation (your findings and what you do with them), your teaching style—clarity, creativity—and your ability to facilitate discussion in a way that enhances learning.

**Reading Responses: (20%)**: The purpose of these responses is to help you synthesize the readings and identify areas of interest that you work with more deeply and fully. You will write six of these, each about 500 words. You may only turn in one response for each class and I will not accept responses for non-discussion class days. I would be smart and do these early in the semester to allow you more time to identify a topic of interest and use the responses to help you build your project.

**Short Studies: (20%)**: You will identify a passage or scene from one of our primary works—prose or fiction—and write a 3 – 4 page analysis that works closely with the language of the text to make explicit some idea, theme, insight that would otherwise go unnoticed by the lay reader. While text-based—meaning that the text is where you will find your substance—feel free to use theory and/or historical/cultural scholarship to help you complicate your reading. These studies are designed to help you identify topics for further research. You may use one or both as springboards for your final research project.

**Research Paper: (40%)**: From the first day of class, you should be thinking about a topic, text, and/or author that you want to investigate and learn more about to help you produce your final research paper. Feel free to venture away from “fun” into the more serious terrains of Victorian poverty, psychology, crime, empire….well, the list goes on. By narrowing early on, you can work more efficiently during the semester to produce a quality paper containing readings and ideas that you’ve worked through in earlier assignments. You will turn in a detailed proposal with a working bibliography, a draft, and a polished essay, which is due on the scheduled final date.
Additional Information

**Late Papers:** I will not accept late writing assignments unless you have made previous arrangements (“previous” means at least 48 hours before the due date).

**Notice to Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom, or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance.

**Academic Advising:** Upon entering the MA in English Program, each student is assigned a faculty mentor by the Graduate Coordinator. You should make an appointment to meet with your faculty mentor every semester to develop a degree plan and monitor your progress toward graduation. Your faculty mentor can also answer questions and provide valuable information about the comprehensive examination, other degree requirements, Ph.D. programs, and career opportunities. To finalize your degree plan and register for graduation, you must also meet with the Graduate Student Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Center for the College of Liberal Arts. This office is located in Driftwood 203E and can be reached at (361) 825-3466.

**Graduate Student Academic Integrity Statement:** English graduate students are expected to 'conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty’ (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Graduate Catalog). The Student Code of Conduct defines Academic Misconduct as cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, complicity, fabrication, falsification, and misrepresentation; in addition to “any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion” (*Student Code of Conduct*, Article III, 1. Academic Misconduct). Academic misconduct is a serious offense that will result in the professor assigning a serious penalty, possibly including failure for an assignment, failure in a course, or recommendation for dismissal from a program (*TAMUCC Graduate Catalog, Academic Honesty*). For each Academic Misconduct case, the faculty member must file a record, including a description of the disciplinary action taken, along with any materials involved, with his or her college dean, who will forward a copy to the Office of Student Affairs. Further information regarding the judicial process is available on the website of the Office for Student Affairs

**Grade Appeal Process:** As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint
about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete
details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the
number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule
13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student
Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules
Web site  http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance
and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student
Affairs.

Reading Schedule: (readings are to be completed on the days indicated. Asterisked
texts are available on blackboard)

January 28:  “A Parvenu Civilisation” (Gilmour)
            “Spirit of the Times” (Carlyle)

February 1:  Proposals due for “Visions of Elsewhere” conference

Laughter in the Streets and Home
February 4:  Pickwick Papers (ch 1 – 25)
            * “Fattening up on Pickwick” (Kincaid)

February 11: * from Homo Ludens (Huizinga)
             * “Carnival and Carnivalesque” (Bakhtin)
             * “The City: The Sewer, the Gaze and the Contaminating Touch”
               (Stallybross and White)
             * from London Labour, London Poor (Mayhew)

February 18: Pickwick Papers (to end)
            * From Dickensian Laughter (Andrews)

February 25: Cranford
            * “Humor as Daughter’s Defense in Cranford” (Gillooly)
            * “Domestic Humour in Elizabeth Gaskell’s Cranford” (Malfait)

February 28: Short study 1 due

Reading/Performing Pleasures
March 4:    Villette
            * “Reading the Mind: Physiognomy and Phrenology” (Shuttleworth)

March 11:   Spring Break

March 18:   Villette
March 25: Carmilla
* “Victorian Spiritualism and The Spiritualist Woman” (Owen)

Research proposal due
Meet individually with Engelhardt this week

April 1:
* “Sweeney Todd or the String of Pearls”
* “The Mikado” (Gilbert and Sullivan)
* “Lady Windermere’s Fan” (Wilde)
* “Before the Curtain” (Auerback)
* “Encountering Melodrama” (Mayer)
* “Comedy and Farce” (Booth)

Conference with Engelhardt during the week

April 4:
Short study 2 due

**Fantasies and Travel**

April 8: Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking Glass
“Sense and Nonsense in the Alice Books”

April 15:
* Travel Narratives (Burton, Stanley, Kingsley)
* “Harem Literature” from Women’s Orients (Melman)
* Intro to Orientalism (Said)
* from Homoerotics of Orientalism (Boone)

April 17: Professor Joe Boone talk
April 18: “Visions of Elsewhere”: Graduate conference

April 22: Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines
* “The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body” (Stott)

April 29: Presentations

May 6: Presentations