English 21916/41916

Professor Benjamin Morgan

Winter 2012

**Science and the Literary Imagination, 1830-1900**

This course focuses on how Victorian writers explore scientific concepts in fiction and poetry. We will interpret “science” broadly to include major developments such as theories of evolution and heredity in biology and the atomic theory in physics, as well as branches of research that are now either discredited or entirely transformed: phrenology, physiognomy, degeneration, biogenetic recapitulation, atavism, mesmerism, moral management, sexology, and hysteria. Our aim will be to examine the role of literature in its relations with science: What possibilities for imagining the implications of scientific theories do literary works offer that may be unavailable in nonfiction prose? Beyond addressing science thematically, how does literature respond formally, for example reimagining structures such as “ character” or genres such as the multiplot novel in light of biological and psychological explanations of how humans think, reason, and develop? As we explore these questions within a particular historical context, we will consider how recent critics have offered theoretical justifications for and modes of relating science and literature.

**Requirements**

*Presentation*. Each member of the class will give one ten-minute presentation during the quarter. You have several options for the format of your presentation. Using our assigned readings, you may propose an interpretation, question, or problematic that merits further discussion. Or you may discuss original research that you’ve done about the scientific context of one of the literary texts on the syllabus. Or, if you want the practice, you’re welcome to treat this as a mini conference paper (read from a paper and field questions afterward). I am also open to and encourage unconventional formats, such as a collaborative project, a guided close reading, a literary experiment, etc. Use your imagination, but check with me in advance if you’re thinking of doing something especially creative.

*Papers*. You may write either two short papers or one long paper. If you write two papers, I’ll expect a 6-8 page paper from you at mid-term and an 8-10 page paper from you at the end of the course. If you write one paper, I’ll expect a 20-25 page paper from you at the end of the course. Papers should be submitted by email to [bjmorgan@uchicago.edu](mailto:bjmorgan@uchicago.edu). I am open to requests for extensions, but please ask at least a day in advance of the deadline.

*Course Blog (optional)*. I’ve set up a course blog on the chalk website. I encourage you to post and discuss links of interest/relevance to this course.

**Office Hours**

Rosenwald 415A, M/W 4:30-5:30

**I use the scheduling system on chalk.uchicago.edu for my office hours**. To make an appointment log into the course website and click “Make office hours appointment” in the left sidebar. If you haven’t made an appointment, I may not be in my office. I am happy to look over drafts of papers in office hours.

**Laptop Policy**

I prefer that you don’t use laptops in class.

**Grading**

20% presentation

80% paper(s)

**Required Texts**

George Eliot, *The Lifted Veil* (Oxford)

Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White* (Oxford)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Norton)

Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau* (Oxford)

Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race* (Broadview)

Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (Oxford)

Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Penguin)

**Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty Notice**

Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, is a serious offense. Academic dishonesty consists of any presentation of another’s ideas as your own. This includes not only word-for-word copying, but also the presentation of another’s argument without attribution, the purchase of academic work online, and the submission of the same paper to more than one class without both instructors’ knowledge. Academic dishonesty may result in immediate failure of the course and administrative disciplinary measures.

**Schedule**

* As indicated, some readings are in the “course documents” section of chalk.
* If an individual essay is assigned, it will be available in the “library course reserves” section of chalk.
* Please print the readings so that you can take notes on them and bring them to class.
* Unless otherwise indicated, I will give you page numbers for works that we’re discussing in more than one class session.

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| **week 1** | **Part I: The Embodied Mind** |  |  |
|  |  | 1/4 | Introduction |
| **week 2** |  |  |  |
| 1/9 | Eliot, "The Lifted Veil" (complete) | 1/11 | Eliot, "The Lifted Veil” |
|  | Levine, "Darwin Among the Novelists" |  | Chalk folder excerpts |
| **week 3** |  |  |  |
| 1/16 | MLK day -- No Class | 1/18 | Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde* (complete) |
|  |  |  | Hayles, "Information or Noise" |
| **week 4** |  |  |  |
| 1/23 | Stevenson, *Jekyll and Hyde* | 1/25 | Collins, *The Woman in White* |
|  | Chalk folder excerpts |  |  |
| **week 5** |  |  |  |
| 1/30 | Collins, *The Woman in White* | 2/1 | Collins, *The Woman in White* |
|  | Chalk folder excerpts | 2/3 | DA Miller, "Cage Aux Folles"    **Midterm Paper due (FRIDAY)** |
| **week 6** |  |  |  |
| 2/6 | Collins, *The Woman in White* | 2/8 | Collins, *The Woman in White*  Beer*,* “Introduction,” *Darwin's Plots (*Library Course Reserves*)* |
|  | Magnetic Evenings at Home (Course Documents)  DA Miller, "Cage aux Folles" (Library Course Reserves) |  | Dames, "The Birth of Amnesia" (LCR) |
| **week 7** | **Part II: The Human Animal** |  |  |
| 2/13 | Wells, Dr. Moreau (entire)  Darwin, Origin of Species (1-100) | 2/15 | Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*  Beer, "Fit and Misfitting" |
|  |  |  | Darwin, Origin of Species (100-200) |
| **week 8** |  |  |  |
| 2/20 | Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* | 2/22 | Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* |
|  | Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (200-300)  Criticism on *Island of Dr. Moreau*: "Burning out the Animal"; "Experimenting at the Threshold"; "Victorian Chimeras" |  | Darwin, *On the Origin of Species (300-392)*  Criticism on *Moreau*: "Reading Meat"; "Green Confusion"; "Monkey in the Mirror" (LCR) |
| **week 9** |  |  |  |
| 2/27 | Bulwer-Lytton*, The Coming Race* (entire) | 2/1 | Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race (****including editorial material in the Broadview edition****)*  Gold, from *Thermopoetics* (LCR) |
|  | Darwin, *The Descent of Man skim chapter 1-2 read carefully ch 3-4* |  | Darwin, *The Descent of Man ch 5,7,8* |
| **week 10** |  |  |  |
| 3/5 | Laura Otis anthology on Evolution, pp 240-325 (Course Documents)  Darwin, Descent of Man, ch 19-21 | 3/7 | *Conference Papers; conclusion* |