

EN 354 The Novels of Dickens
Fall 2011, T TH 1:30
Gasson 310

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Office hours: W TH 10-12
and by appointment

Popular showman and shrewd cultural critic, Charles Dickens was a publishing phenomenon in England and America for forty years. His novels defined a nineteenth century world teeming with energy but anxious about the very things it was celebrating – human progress, national power, individual success, global commerce, personal desire....all the “great expectations” we’re still arguing about.

In this course we’ll study the artist’s development in the context of his times (1830’s-1860’s) as he moves from free-lance journalist to world-famous novelist, producing stories which function as mashups of his personal traumas and those of his culture, and as brilliant remixes of his key images and issues. Energetic reading is at the center of the course; discussion and a series of short-ish essay and other writing assignments and other exercises are meant to facilitate this: I will offer a longer paper-writing option alongside the take-home final exam-essays at the end.

READINGS, VIEWINGS, DISCUSSIONS, WRITINGS

Sept. 6-8 **Introduction: Dickens and “Dickensian.”** Early Dickens journalism and biography. Texts for Tuesday to be read in advance: email coming -- ten pages from early newspaper and magazine sketches by “Boz”: “Brokers and Marine-store Shops,” “The Prisoners’ Van,” “The Parlour Orator,” “The Hospital Patient.” Texts for Thursday to be handed out on Tuesday: “Night Walks,” “Hard Experiences in Boyhood.” Also, read first three chapters of Oliver Twist (**brief writing assignment due Thurs.**)

The young Dickens: energy, mobility, compulsion

Sept. 13-XX Oliver Twist, or The Parish Boy’s Progress (1837-38); Norton Critical Edition. For Tuesday’s class please read through ch.19, “In which a Notable Plan is discussed and determined on.” There will be no class on Thurs. Sept. 15: I have a professional obligation which will take me out of town, but the reading assignment for that day is Oliver Twist through ch. 31, “Involves a Critical Position.” There will be a **brief writing assignment to be emailed to me by Friday Sept. 16.**

Sept. 20-22 Oliver Twist. Read through ch. 50, “Pursuit and Escape” for Tuesday’s class. For Thursday read the last two chapters and write **a 3 page paper on a topic of your choosing**, due in class Thursday—I’ll give you a handout on what I expect in this paper, with some possible topics if you wish. (Film clips from several treatments of OT)

Sept. 27-29 The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby (1838-39/2002). **Required class showing** of the most recent film version of this early Dickens novel is scheduled for **Mon. evening Sept. 26 at 6 p.m. in Devlin 008: pizza provided.** Discussion of assigned “Dickensian” topics Tuesday; further discussion and film clips from this and other versions Thurs.

Prime Time Dickens: history, subjectivity, dream

Oct. 4-6 Bleak House (1852-3), through ch. 20 “A New Lodger”; “recitation” meetings in my office.

Oct. 11-13 Bleak House, through ch. 42 “In Mr. Tulkinghorn’s Chambers”
“recitation” meetings

Oct. 18-20 Bleak House, to conclusion. **The writing assignment for this section is either a reading journal turned in each Thurs, or a 4-6 page paper turned in Mon. Oct. 24 on a topic you’ve been following throughout your reading.**

Oct. 25-27 A Tale of Two Cities (1859), through ch. 23 “Still Knitting”

Nov. 1-3 A Tale of Two Cities, to conclusion. **Writing/presentations on scenes and symbols.**

Late Dickens: identity, vitality, mortality

Nov. 8-10 Great Expectations (1860-61), through Part 18/ch. 29

Nov. 15-17 Great Expectations, through conclusion and “The Endings of Great Expectations, plus one assigned critical essay. Required class showing of an interestingly updated film version of this Dickens novel (1997, stars Ethan Hawke, Gwynneth Paltrow, Robert DeNiro) is scheduled for **Nov. 16, place and time TBA.**

Nov. 22-XX (Thanksgiving) Our Mutual Friend, through Book One ch. 15 “Two New Servants”

Nov 28-Dec. 1 Our Mutual Friend, through Book three ch. 7 “The Friendly Move...”

Dec. 6-8 Our Mutual Friend, to conclusion. Take-Home final exam handed out (or topic-page for final eight-page paper discussed and approved). **Final exam essays (or final paper) due at the time scheduled for T TH 1:30 class final exams, Thurs. Dec. 15, between 9 and 11:30 a.m.**

Writing exercises (papers, reading journals, notes about topics) and discussion exercises (small group topic meetings, “recitations”, presentations) are meant to inspire and record/reward good reading and thinking, and to enable each person to continue strengthening discussion and writing skills. Grading will be based on the Oliver Twist, Bleak House and Tale of Two Cities papers/presentations, the final exam paper/essays, and your active participation in discussion, including short assignments meant to facilitate this, roughly counting 40%, 40%, and 20%. I trust that BC students need only the gentlest reminder that **the academic integrity contract that is part of your citizenship in the University requires that all written work be entirely your own, including, of course, the final exam essays or paper.**

Dickens films on reserve in O’Neill Media Room:

Oliver Twist (Polanski, Ben Kingsley) PR 4567 A1 2005, **Oliver!** (musical, Lionel Bart) PR 4567 A1 1998 (orr. 1969), **Oliver Twist** (David Lean, Alec Guinness) PR 4567 A1 1998 (orr. 1948), **Nicholas Nickleby** PR4565 A13 (2003) **Nicholas Nickleby** (RSC version PR 4565 A13 2002 orr. 1982) **Bleak House** (Gillian Anderson, Masterpiece Theater 3 discs) PR 4556 B63x 2006 (orr. 2005) **A Tale of Two Cities** (Ronald Colman, David O Selznick) PR 4571 A1x 2006 (orr. 1935) **Great Expectations** (Hawke, DeNiro, Paltrow) PR 4560 G686

1997 **Great Expectations** (John Mills, Jean Simmons, David Lean) PR 4560 A1 1986 (orr.
1947) **Our Mutual Friend** (3 videocassettes Masterpiece Theater)PR4568 A12 1998