ENGL4524 Irish Victorian Fiction

This class examines novels written about Ireland or by Irish authors during the Victorian period. It touches on issues such as the possession of land and relations between landlords and tenants, before and after the land war of the 1880s; the dynamics of rural society; Gothic and allegory in writing; realism in fiction; social satire and urban fiction; women novelists and the New-Woman Novel. The late nineteenth century has often been thought of as the great period for the novel in Britain and Europe. However, until recently, Irish novels from this period have been neglected for a variety of reasons, including the hostility of the Irish Revival and late twentieth-century literary criticism. Recently, however, there has been renewed interest in Irish Victorian fiction and it can open many opportunities for exciting research to scholars at all levels, including undergraduates. The class offers students the chance to write a research paper of significant length and depth.

James Murphy

ENGL4950 ATS: Literature of Slavery: Abolition

This seminar will examine the antislavery movement’s powerful impact on American literature and culture. Many nineteenth-century African American slave narratives, newspapers, and novels emerged out of and contributed to the struggle against slavery. Abolitionism also inspired bestselling novels such as Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Alongside nineteenth-century abolitionist texts, we’ll consider their lasting influence on contemporary writers, including Toni Morrison and James McBride, and in films such as 12 Years a Slave and Django Unchained. Since Boston was an important center of antislavery activism and literature, we will take advantage of libraries, museums, and other local resources throughout the semester.

Adam Lewis

ENGL4956 ATS: Animal Worlds in the Middle Ages

This course explores the troubled boundaries between human and non-human subjects and objects in the Middle Ages. Animals provided rich symbolism for human virtues, vices, and activities, often at the cost of any subjectivity or voice, but categories distinguishing humans from animals frequently blurred or broke down, creating both crises of human identity and anomalous animal voices; we will be on the lookout for “animals” who talk or bite back. We will read a variety of medieval genres alongside works in the emerging field of Critical Animal Studies to explore the ways in which humans and animals create one another.

Robert Stanton