

SYLLABUS FOR ENGL-28100

Romantic and Victorian Literature: Darwinian Affinities

James Swafford
Fall 2009
1:10-2:25 TR
swafford@ithaca.edu

Office: 330 Muller Center
Phone: 274-3540
Office hours: 3:00-4:00 MW, 2:30-3:30 R.
Other times by appointment.



Erasmus Darwin



Charles Darwin

COURSE GOALS:

In honor of Charles Darwin's 200th-birthday year and the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, this survey will focus on the theme of Evolution in 19th-century British literature. We'll look at some of Darwin's writing and examine some of the verse written by his grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, a medical doctor who became perhaps the best-known English poet of the 1790s. But mostly we'll consider the impact of both Darwins on the literature of the era between 1789 and 1900, including the shift in the very meaning of "evolution" from its reference to the individual to its reference to the group.

A secondary but still important aim is to investigate the interpretive process, partly by considering the way that process is enacted in the literature, partly by investigating different critical perspectives on selected works.

The readings—which we'll tackle in generally chronological order—include poetry, fiction, and even some nonfiction prose. The course will also give you an opportunity to practice upon this excellent and demanding material your skills in writing and analysis.

FORMAT AND STYLE:

Sometimes I (or a student in the class) will provide a brief lecture to provide helpful background, but this course relies heavily on discussion. You are expected to come to class well prepared and ready to participate actively.

Having the assignment read on time is the *sine qua non*, an absolute necessity, in a literature course that depends on discussion. No excuses, no exceptions. Pop quizzes over the reading material are always a possibility.

REQUIREMENTS:

I'll allow two unexcused absences from this Tuesday/Thursday class. (Consult the Undergraduate Catalog for an explanation of excused and unexcused absences and of the procedures for notifying instructors.) More than two unexcused absences will result in a penalty to the final course grade. Any student with a grand total of six absences—three weeks' worth of classes—may be removed from the course.

I'll assign several "thinkpieces" during the semester, brief and informal writing

assignments about the day's readings. The point is to focus and encourage class discussion, so for full credit, those pieces must be submitted at the beginning of the class period on the day that the material is discussed.

The course grade will be computed as follows:

2 MAJOR PAPERS – total of 50%

MIDTERM EXAM – 15%

THINKPIECES, EXERCISES, QUIZZES, ACTIVE CLASS PARTICIPATION
– 15% (perhaps more, perhaps less, depending on number of assignments)

FINAL EXAM – 20%

Except in extraordinary and disastrous circumstances, no rewrites will be allowed on the papers. Any paper submitted after the due date will suffer a grade penalty. A paper more than one week late will not be accepted, and a “zero” on a major assignment is much worse than an honest “F.” When you turn in a paper, keep a copy immediately available.

Reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the College before any academic adjustment will be provided.

PLAGIARISM:

If you do research for a paper or receive any help in writing or correcting it, document your sources carefully. You must cite sources if you quote, of course, but you must also cite your source even if you borrow only a general idea or paraphrase someone else's words. If you have any questions at all about how to document, check with the Writing Center in Smiddy Hall. Plagiarism, the use of another's words or ideas without giving credit, is a serious academic offense. See Vol VII of the Ithaca College Policy Manual (online) for information on standards of academic conduct and possible sanctions.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Supplemental reading booklet available from 309 Muller.

Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein; 1818 Text*. Oxford World's Classics.

Alfred Tennyson. *In Memoriam*. Norton Critical Edition.

Thomas Hardy. *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Oxford World's Classics.

R. L. Stevenson. *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Dover Thrift Edition.

H. G. Wells. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Dover Thrift Edition.

H. G. Wells. *The Time Machine*. Dover Thrift Edition.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

Aug. 27 Introduction. Passages from Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (handout).

Sept. 1 Poems by Erasmus Darwin (booklet 1-20).

Sept. 3 Blake, some plates from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (booklet 21-23);
Wordsworth, “Lines Written in Early Spring” (booklet 30); Coleridge,
“Effusion XXXV” (booklet 41-42).

- Sept. 8 Blake, *The Book of Thel* (booklet 24-29).
 Sept. 10 Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey" (31-34).
- Sept. 15 Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere" (booklet 43-53).
 Sept. 17 Wordsworth, "Ode" (booklet 35-40). Also have a look at "A Letter to Sara Hutchinson" (booklet 54-58), which Coleridge wrote after hearing the first four sections of Wordsworth's poem.
- Sept. 22 P. B. Shelley, passage from *Queen Mab*, "The Sensitive Plant," and "Ode to the West Wind" (booklet 59-66).
 Sept. 24 M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pages 1-118 (through Ch. VIII of Volume II, the end of the Creature's narration).
- Sept. 29 M. Shelley, *Frankenstein*, pages 118-191 (to the end of the novel).
 Oct. 1 Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, Prologue through Lyric XXXIX (pages 5-31).
- Oct. 6 Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, Lyric XL through Lyric CVI (pages 31-81).
 Oct. 8 Tennyson, *In Memoriam A.H.H.*, Lyric CVII through the Epilogue (pages 81-101).
- Oct. 13 **MIDTERM EXAM**
 Oct. 15 Fall Break – no class
- Oct. 20 Charles Darwin, from *The Origin of Species* (booklet 67-71).
 Oct. 22 Humanity in comic perspective? Hardy, Bevington, Kendall, Naden, and Egerton (booklet 79-101). **First major essay due.**
- Oct. 27 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Phase the First and Phase the Second (pages 11-113).
 Oct. 29 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Phase the Third (pages 115-167).
- Nov. 3 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Phase the Fourth (pages 169-244).
 Nov. 5 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Phase the Fifth (pages 245-322).
- Nov. 10 Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Phase the Sixth and Phase the Seventh (pages 323-420).
 Nov. 12 Browning, "Caliban upon Setebos" (booklet 72-78).
- Nov. 17 Social Darwinism (booklet 102-107). Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau*.
 Nov. 19 Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, continued.

THANKSGIVING BREAK, November 21-29

- Dec. 1 Degeneration anxiety (booklet 108-119). Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, pages 1-35.
- Dec. 3 Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, pages 36-54. **Second major essay due.**
- Dec. 8 Wells, *The Time Machine*.
- Dec. 10 Wells, *The Time Machine*, concluded.

FINAL EXAM: Friday, December 18, 7:30 am – 10:00 am
(Plan accordingly! The exam will be given at this time, not earlier.)