

**City of Dreadful Night:
Cultural Representations of the 19th Century London Slums**
London Term, Fall 2007.
Steve Macek, Instructor

“Hell is a city much like London”—Percy Shelley

London was arguably the first modern metropolis. By the end of the 18th century it was a sprawling city of more than million people. Moreover, it embodied in a single place all the characteristic social contradictions of the newly ascendant capitalist system, boasting an affluent elite of bankers and investors who lived in dazzling luxury side by side with an army of extremely poor casual laborers who worked at the city’s docks, labored in sweat shops, begged and even stole to get by. London’s slums – which housed the growing ranks of the poor-- became notorious around the world for their squalor, viciousness and sheer size. They were a source of concern for the city’s ruling class throughout the 19th century and became something of an obsession for the intellectuals, journalists, writers and artists of the period.

This course will examine the various ways in which British culture attempted to come to terms with what historian Gareth Stedman-Jones has called “Outcast London,” the London of rag pickers, prostitutes, street thugs, serial killers and overcrowded tenements. We will read novels, newspaper articles, government reports as well as polemics written by social reformers, all of which attempted to represent and make sense of the horrors of the slums for their respectable readers. We will also look at the way the slums and the urban poor were rendered visible in the art and photography of the late-Victorian period.

To supplement our classroom discussions and my own lectures, we will hear guest lectures from experts on 19th century slum life, art history, British literature and Victorian culture. We will also take field trips to a number of museums with exhibits relevant to our topic and will take at least one walking tour of London’s East End.

Students will write several short papers about the primary texts, take a midterm and a final, and complete a group research project which they will present to the class during the last two weeks of the term.

Texts:

Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist

Arthur Morrison, A Child of The Jago

Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London

Short excerpts from Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor (online)

Short excerpts from W.T. Stead, The Maiden Tribute of the Modern Babylon (online)

Andrew Mearns, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (online)

Short excerpts from Charles Booth, Inquiry into Life and Labour of the People of London. (online)

Short excerpts from General William Booth, In Darkest England and the Way Out (online).

In addition, students will read contemporary newspaper and magazine articles about the Jack the Ripper case, a short story by Arthur Conan Doyle, and short texts by James Greenwood, Fredrich Engels and Octavia Hill.

Course Format. This course presupposes the active involvement and collaboration of everyone enrolled. I will give no more than one prepared lecture a week. The rest of class time will be given over to field trips and guest lectures or to structured group discussion of issues and questions raised by the lectures, guest speakers, field trips and assigned reading. That means that you'll have to do the required reading for each session, attend class regularly and make an effort to participate. In class discussions, it will be my job to facilitate and to keep the conversation flowing.

Writing Assignments. In this class, you will be asked to complete a total of five short (4-5 page) response papers on aspects of the assigned readings or the field trips. All writing assignments should be machine produced (i.e. typed or printed) double-spaced in 12 point Times or New York font and should be relatively free of mechanical and grammatical error. My grading criteria for your written work are laid out in detail at the end of this syllabus. I'm always willing to look at drafts of anything you've written.

Group Research Project. Finally, as part of your work in this class each of you will take part in a group research project on some issue having to do with the slums and 19th century British society. Depending on enrollment, groups will be made up of anywhere from 3 to 6 people. Each team will be expected to prepare a final (collectively written) report of roughly 8 to 10 pages and to present their research to the class in the last two weeks of the term.

Attendance. It will be extremely difficult for you to do well in this course if you don't come to class. I expect you to attend class regularly, to be on time and to stay for the entire session. I'll allow you three (3) unexcused absences without penalty; after that I will lower your final grade by 5% for each unexcused absence.

Participation. The amount and quality of your contributions to class discussion will determine 10% of your final grade. To receive a high score for your participation, you should not only do the reading for class but also come prepared to say something. It might help if you came to class with a list of questions about the films we've seen or a passage from one of the books you'd like to hear discussed. At the end of the course I will give you a short written evaluation of your participation.

Grades. Your grade for the course will be based on your midterm, your response papers, your group research project and your participation in class discussions. The response papers and group research project will each be worth fifteen (15) percent of your final grade. The mid-term exam will count for fifteen (15) percent. The group research project will be worth twenty (20) percent. And your class participation will count for (10) ten percent. To make it easier for me to calculate final grades, each assignment or grade component will receive both a letter grade and a corresponding point score. On my grading scale, an A is 93% to 100% of the possible points, 90 to 92% is an A-, 87% to 89% is a B+, 83% to 86% is a B, 80% to 82% is a B-, 77% to 79% is a C +, 73% to 76% is a C, 70% to 72% is a C-, 67% to 69% is a D+, 60% to 68% is a D and anything less than 59% is an F. Below is a breakdown of the points for each assignment or final grade component:

4 short papers @ 150 points each=	600 points
Reading questions @ 100 points=	100 points
1 group research project @ 200 points=	200 points
Class participation=	100 points

1000 total points possible

If you want to figure out how you are doing in the class at any time during the semester, simply divide the points you've earned so far by the number of points you could've earned.

Late Work. The due dates for each of the writing assignments are clearly listed on the schedule below. All written work will be docked half a grade for each week it is overdue.

Plagiarism. I expect you to do your own work in this class. Anyone caught plagiarizing-- representing the work of others as his or her own-- will fail the course.

Tentative 14-Week Schedule

Week 1. Imagining the City, Imagining the Slums; A Brief History of London

Reading:

Judith Walkowitz, "Introduction" and "Chapter 1: Urban Spectatorship" in City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London

Week 2. Conditions in the Slums: Crowding, Poverty, Crime, Filth, Disease ; Victorian attitudes toward the Poor; Mayhew and the London Poor

Reading:

Fredrich Engels, "The Great Towns" (only the first few pages on London are required; you may stop reading when he turns his attention to other cities in England) in The Condition of the Working Class in England (1844) (online)

John Hollingshead, "The East" in Ragged London in 1861 (1861) (online)

James Greenwood, "Of Professional Thieves: Chapter VI: Their Number and Difficulties" in The Seven Curses of London (1869) (online)

Henry Mayhew, "Chapter 1:

- * Section OF THE LONDON STREET-FOLK.
- * Section OF THE NUMBER OF COSTERMONGERS AND OTHER STREET-FOLK.
- * Section OF THE VARIETIES OF STREET-FOLK IN GENERAL, AND

COSTERMONGERS IN PARTICULAR."

and

"Chapter 2:

- * Section THE LONDON FLOWER GIRLS.
- * Section OF TWO ORPHAN FLOWER GIRLS.
- * Section OF THE LIFE OF A FLOWER GIRL."

in London Labour and the London Poor Vol 1. (online)

Week 3. Mayhew and the London Poor

Field Trip: Museum of the Docklands

Reading:

Henry Mayhew, "Of the Street Finders or Collectors:

- *OF THE MUDLARKS.
- *OF THE LONDON DUSTMEN, NIGHTMEN, SWEEPS AND SCAVENGERS"

London Labour and the London Poor Vol 2. (online)

Assignment Due: Response paper #1

Week 4. The Literary Response to the Slums: Dickens

Field Trip: Dickens walking tour or Dickens Museum

Reading:

Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (read roughly the first half of the novel, up through Book 2, Chapter 9)

Week 5. The Literary Response to the Slums: Dickens

Field Trip: Dickens walking tour or Dickens Museum

Reading:

Charles Dickens, Oliver Twist (finish the novel)

Week 6. Into the East End: Morrison's A Child of The Jago

Field Trip: Walking tour of the East End

Reading:

Arthur Morrison, A Child of The Jago

Assignment Due: Response Paper #2

Week 7. **Midterm Break******

Week 8. Race and Ethnicity in Outcast London

Field Trip: Jewish Museum

***** No Reading; Begin work on group research project*****

Week 9. Modern Babylon: Sexual Anarchy in the Great City

Field Trip: Walking tour of Jack the Ripper murder sites (tentative)

Reading:

W. T. Stead, "Notice to Our Readers", "We bid You be of Hope," "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon I," *The Pall Mall Gazette* July 4-8, 1885. (online)

Judith Walkowitz, "Chapter 2: Contested Terrain: New Social Actors," "Chapter 3: 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon' and 'Chapter 4: 'The Maiden Tribute': Cultural Consequences," in **City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London**

Week 10. The Detective, the Killer and the Metropolis: Jack the Ripper and Sherlock Holmes

Field Trip: Sherlock Holmes Museum

Reading:

Judith Walkowitz, "Chapter 7: Jack the Ripper" and "Epilogue: The Yorkshire Ripper" in **City of Dreadful Delights: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London**

Jack the Ripper articles from the *London Times*, August-November 1888 (online)

Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Man with the Twisted Lip" in **Adventures of Sherlock Holmes** (1892) (online)

Assignment Due: Response Paper #3.

Week 11. Reforming the Rookeries

Reading:

Andrew Mearns, **The Bitter Cry of Outcast London** (1883) (online)

Octavia Hill, "Space for the People" in **Homes of the London Poor** (1883) (online)

General William Booth, "Part1. Chapter 1: Why 'Darkest England'? and Chapter 2: the Submerged Tenth" and "Part 2: Chapter 1. A Stupendous Undertaking" in **In Darkest England and the Way Out** (online)

Week 12. Social Scientific Investigation of the Slums: Charles Booth's Mapping of the London Poor

Reading:

Charles Booth, "Concerning the Whole District Under Review" in **Life and Labour of the People in London**. (1892) (online)

Browse Booth's Poverty Maps (online)

Read about how Booth conducted his research (online)

Week 13. Dr. Barnardo Homes and Ragged Schools

Field Trip: Ragged School Museum

Reading:

Seth Koven, "Chapter Two: Dr. Barnardo's Artistic Fictions: Photography, Sexuality and the Ragged Child" in **Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London** (To be distributed)

Week 14. Research Presentations.

Assignment Due: Response Paper #4

Guidelines and Standards for Written Work

- All written work must be typed or printed in dark ink, double-spaced, stapled (not paper clipped) together, in 12 point Times or New York font with one inch margins and should have a title page. It must be responsive to all aspects of the assignment, including length, and should use the Modern Language Association (MLA) system of documentation and style.

- Written work should be relatively free of mechanical and grammatical error.

- Document every reference, including page numbers whenever possible. Refer to a writer's manual if you need guidance about how to do this.

- Support claims not common knowledge with evidence and conclusions with argument.

Take time to plan your papers and devote some time to rewriting them. Always keep a second copy of your work.

- Assume your reader has not taken this course. Define all terms whose definitions are controversial or obscure. Take time to explain the theories you are using. Include as much detail as you need to support your argument. Illustrations (diagrams, storyboards, photographs, photos of still frames, etc.) are always welcome.

- Avoid racist or sexist language and cliches.

- Grades: Failure to follow any of the above guidelines will result in a lower grade.

Otherwise, here are my standards:

An "A" paper demonstrates that the writer has not only mastered the concepts of the course, but has applied them in an original, imaginative and incisive manner. The paper shows a command of the language that allows the writer to express ideas and observations clearly, effectively, in detail and with virtually no mechanical errors. The paper includes adequate documentation. "A"s are reserved for exceptional essays.

A "B" paper demonstrates that the writer has understood the concepts of the course and has applied them with some originality. The paper shows the writer can organize a coherent essay with few errors. The paper for the most part includes adequate documentation.

A "C" paper demonstrates that the writer has understood most of the concepts of the course but needs to pay more attention to reading or writing. Documentation is erratic.

A "D" paper demonstrates that the writer has only a minimal understanding of the concepts of the course. Significant gaps in the writer's comprehension indicate the need for more study. The paper shows the writer's basic compositional skills are below satisfactory. Documentation is unsatisfactory.

A "F" paper demonstrates that the writer has little, if any, understanding of the concepts of the course. Because of the writer's lack of skill or concern, the work includes gross errors as well as a lack of content. Documentation is negligible. The paper may also fail to address parts of the assignment.

A paper may combine characteristics of different levels of work. In that case, the grade will depend on the paper's overall demonstration of knowledge of the material and of college writing skills.

Please see me if you have questions about my standards or about any of your grades for the course.