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LIT 355.01: British Romanticism

Louise E. Economides

University of Montana, Missoula, louise.economides@umontana.edu

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LIT 355: **ROMANTIC NATURES** (FALL 2021)

Tues/Thurs.12:30-1:50pm LA 337

Prof. Louise Economides (louise.economides@mso.umt.edu)

Office hours: Tues/Thursday 11-12 noon via zoom (and by appointment)

Required Texts:

Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume D -- The Romantic Period

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* (1818 Text) Norton Critical Edition.

Stoppard, Tom. *Arcadia*

Course Description: In this course, we'll explore the complex (and often contradictory) meanings which the term "nature" had for writers of the Romantic period. We'll examine debates among writers regarding "natural rights" and/or whether there is a universal human subjectivity which should serve a basis for political enfranchisement. Similarly, we'll address the question of whether Romantic writers naturalize political issues (such as poverty, gender or race identity) in potentially problematic ways. We will also expand the scope of our discussion of "natural rights" to include the issue of whether non-human entities could (hypothetically) be included within the scope of such an ethic. We'll see that a range of writers debate the question of whether there should be a firm line drawn between humans and animals on this issue. Finally, we'll address whether Romantic-era writing reflects what could be called a nascent "environmental" consciousness – i.e. an awareness of nature as a web of interconnected ecosystems, concern regarding environmental degradation in the form of pollution and resource exploitation, and a desire to preserve biodiversity. There will be an emphasis on connecting Romantic thought about nature to ongoing, unresolved controversies today over what this term signifies and/or whether it has become "obsolete" in the postmodern era.

Required Work:

1) Two major papers: these essays will focus on developing a close reading of one (or more) literary text(s) and will require you to use secondary sources (criticism) and to conduct research. *Papers must be hard copies – I do not accept e-mailed essays* (if you are unable to turn your paper in during class, put a hard copy in my mailbox in LA 133). Late policy: for each day the paper is late, final mark will be reduced by 1/3 letter grade (i.e. B- paper becomes C+, etc.). Please refer to individual assignment sheets for more information.

2) Group presentation: working with a peer (or peers) you will be presenting literary and/or critical texts on the syllabus for one class period. The major goal of presentations is to foster lively discussion and to engage the class with the material for that day (see "presentation guidelines" for more details). A written overview is also required, to be turned in on the day of the presentation.

3) Class participation: a certain percentage of your final grade will be based upon demonstrated participation throughout the term. This includes: 1) no more than 3 absences (more than 3 will result in a maximum grade of "C" for participation) 2) coming to class with *annotated* reading materials for that day 3) participating regularly in class discussions 4) showing evidence that you have read and thought about texts when instructor asks for your input during class discussions 5) active participation in small group work, presentations and/or breakout sessions online 6) coming to class on time (arriving late may result in an "absence" for that day).

GRADING: Papers 70% (350 points each); Presentation: 20% (200 points); Participation: 10% (100 points)

Course Policies

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism is a violation of trust. According to the Provost, “Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VP/SA/index.cfm/page/1321>.” Violators of the Student Conduct Code will receive an “F” for the offending paper. Each essay you submit must be signed at the bottom of the last page, assuring that the work is your own, except where indicated by proper documentation. Your signature is your word that the essay is free of plagiarism.

Covid-19 Policies: For the safety of students and your instructor, the following university-wide policies will be in place this semester. Please see me if you have questions or concerns about any of these policies.

- Mask use is strongly encouraged within the classroom if you are not vaccinated
- Classrooms may have one-way entrances / exits to minimize crowding
- Students should be discouraged from congregating outside the classroom before and after class
- Specific seating arrangements will be used to ensure social distancing and support contact tracing efforts
- Drinking liquids and eating food is discouraged within the classroom (which requires mask removal)
- If the class is being recorded, students will be notified of the recording
- Stay home if you feel sick and/or if exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms
- If you are sick or displaying symptoms, please contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330
- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana
- UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>
- UM COVID-19 Fall 2020 website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus/fall2020.php>

Accommodation: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.

Learning Outcomes: Some of the major goals of the course we will be working toward include:

1. Acquiring in-depth knowledge of major writers, ideas, history and aesthetic movements associated with British Romanticism.
2. Practicing how to bring works of professional criticism into productive conversation with your own writing. Researching the history of a text’s critical reception and adding your own ideas to received scholarship.
3. Challenging your pre-conceptions about what “nature” means or could mean.
4. Seeing connections between debates surrounding “nature” during the Romantic period and ongoing controversy regarding nature/nurture, determinism/freedom, animal/human rights, revolution/reform, etc.

WEEKLY READING SCHEDULE – all readings in Norton Anthology unless otherwise indicated; **M**=Moodle

WEEK ONE: **Literature in the Age of Revolution**

Tues. 8/31: Course Introduction

Thurs. 9/2: “The Revolution Controversy and the ‘Spirit of the Age’”; Burke, from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*; Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication Of the Rights of Men*; Thomas Paine, from *Rights of Man*

WEEK TWO: **Political and Aesthetic Revolution**

- Tues. 9/7: Wordsworth, "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802); Wordsworth, "Nutting"
Thurs. 9/9: Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (close read "The Lamb"/ "The Tyger"; and "The Chimney Sweeper" in both collections)

WEEK THREE: **The Slave Trade and Women's Rights**

- Tues. 9/14: "The Slave Trade and the Literature of Abolition"; Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative*; Barbauld, "Epistle to William Wilberforce"; Blake, "The Little Black Boy"
Thurs. 9/16: Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*; Barbauld, "The Rights of Woman"

WEEK FOUR: **Animal Rights**

- Tues. 9/21: Perkins, "Grounds of Argument" (M); Barbauld, "The Mouse's Petition" and "The Caterpillar";
Thurs. 9/23: Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

WEEK FIVE: **Green Romanticism**

- Tues. 9/28: Levinson, "Insight and Oversight: Reading Tintern Abbey" (M); Bate, "Toward Green Romanticism" (M); Wordsworth, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey"
Thurs. 9/30: Clare, "The Fallen Elm" (online); "The Lament of Swordy Well"; Morton, "John Clare's Dark Ecology" (M)

WEEK SIX: **Romantic Nature and Sexuality**

- Tues. 10/5: Blake, "The Book of Thel"; Lussier, "Blake's Deep Ecology" (M)
Thurs. 10/7: P.B. Shelley, "The Sensitive Plant" (M)

WEEK SEVEN: **Gothic and Sublime Natures**

- Tues. 10/12: Coleridge, *Christabel*; Gaard, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism" (M)
Thurs. 10/14: Wordsworth, Conclusion to *The Prelude* (M)

WEEK EIGHT: **The Romantic Sublime, continued**

- Tues 10/19: P.B. Shelley, "Mont Blanc" - **ESSAY #1 DUE**
Thurs 10/21: Barbauld, "A Summer Evening's Meditation"; Yaeger, "Toward a Female Sublime" (M)

WEEK NINE: **Gender, Sublimity and Promethean Science**

- Tues. 10/26: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Volume One)
Thurs. 10/28: Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Volume Two)

WEEK TEN: Frankenstein: Contemporary Critical Interpretations

Tues. 11/2: *Frankenstein* (Volume Three); Mellor, "Possessing Nature: The Female in *Frankenstein*" (back of Norton Critical edition) – **PRESENTATION GROUP #1**

Thurs. 11/4: Carroll, "Crusades Against Frost: *Frankenstein*, Polar Ice and Climate Change in 1818" (**M**)

WEEK ELEVEN: Climate Change and the "Year Without a Summer"

Tues. 11/9: Byron, "Darkness"; Higgins, "Geohistory, Epistemology and Extinction: Byron and the Shelleys in 1816" (**M**)

Thurs. 11/11: Veteran's Day (NO CLASS)

WEEK TWELVE: Keats, Nature and Romantic Aesthetics

Tues. 11/16: Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"; Brooks, "The Language of Paradox" (**M**)

Thurs. 11/18: Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale"; Letter to George and Thomas Keats ["Negative Capability"]

WEEK THIRTEEN: TBA

Tues. 11/23: TBA

Thurs. 11/25: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)

WEEK FOURTEEN: Nature and Romantic Aesthetics, continued

Tues. 11/30: Smith, *Beachy Head*

Thurs. 12/2: *Arcadia*, ACT I

WEEK FIFTEEN: Stoppard's *Arcadia*

Tues. 12/7: *Arcadia*, ACT II- **PRESENTATION GROUP #2**

Thurs. 12/9: *Arcadia*; course review and evaluations; **ESSAY #2 DUE**