

WR 150 I2: Dissecting the Nineteenth Century: Science in Victorian Literature and Culture (Writing, Research, and Inquiry)

Instructor: Shannon Draucker (pronouns: she/her/hers)

Course Time and Location: MWF 4:40-5:30 pm; CAS 314

Course Credits: 4 credits + 2 BU Hub Units (Writing; Research and Information Literacy)

Office Location: 236 Bay State Road, #341 (Department of English)

Office Hours: F 2:30-4:30 pm or by appointment

Contact: sdraucke@bu.edu



"Michael Faraday, Lecture in the Theatre at the Royal Institution," c. 1856. The Royal Institution, London, UK / Bridgeman Images. Reproduced with permission from The Royal Institution. License purchased 18 May 2018.

Course Description

Although we are often encouraged to write what we know, research writing is motivated by our interest in the *unknown*: what do we want to discover, how can we discover it, and what are the most effective ways to communicate our discoveries? These questions will drive our work in WR 150. Building on WR 120 or its equivalent, this class will help you cultivate your writing and research skills through a range of assignments, including a scholarly research essay in which you will be responsible for identifying and refining a topic, devising research questions, and answering those questions by finding and using a range of scholarly and non-scholarly sources. You will also translate your academic writing into genres targeted at different audiences. These experiences will help you practice and better understand the ways we produce, disseminate, and use information today.

Ideas about "information" and "discovery" are especially relevant to our particular course topic: science and nineteenth-century literature. Much of what we now think of as "science" – its practices, its disciplines, and even the term "scientist" itself (coined in 1833

by the British polymath William Whewell) – can be traced back to Victorian England (1837-1901). In this course, we will explore Victorian literary responses to this burgeoning scientific world. While we now often think of science and literature as disparate fields, these two disciplines were closely linked in the nineteenth century. Victorian writers found in science exciting new ideas and images to incorporate into their fiction and poetry. By the same token, scientists seeking to reach a wide, public audience used literary techniques (metaphors, images, analogies) to enhance the appeal, readability, and impact of their work. How did Victorian writers absorb, question, critique, or reject the new discoveries that pervaded their world? What did science explain that literature could not – and vice-versa? What might the Victorians tell us about the relationship between the humanities and the sciences – and the possibilities afforded by their intersection – today?

Course Objectives

You will develop your abilities to:

- strategically search for and select both scholarly and non-scholarly sources and read them with understanding, appreciation, and critical judgment
- express yourself orally and converse thoughtfully about complex ideas
- engage a range of sources in order to address research questions and to communicate findings in the form of responsible, considered, and well-structured written arguments
- produce clear, coherent prose in a range of genres and styles, using different media and modes of expression as appropriate
- plan, draft, and revise efficiently and effectively, and help your peers do the same by responding productively to their work
- reflect on how research, reading, writing, and editing practices differ for varied audiences, genres, and purposes

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

Although they differ in their subject content, all WR seminars share common goals and lead you through a sequence of assignments that emphasize a process of planning, drafting, and revising informed by feedback from your classmates and instructor. Seminar activities also give you opportunities to engage in focused scholarly inquiry and discussion.

In WR 150, you will undertake an extended research project related to our course topic. You will conduct individual research, exploring new ways to find, evaluate, and engage with information from different sources and in different formats. You will become better able to select and use information sources strategically to formulate and respond to research questions and to participate in the scholarly conversation about your topic. You will also become a more flexible writer by adapting your inquiry to address different audiences, integrating research into your writing in various ways to create new knowledge. Reflecting on your approach to writing and research will prepare you to adapt it to future occasions.

Books and Other Course Materials

Otis, Laura, ed. *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology*. 2002. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-19-955465-2.

****Readings from this anthology will be marked “[L&S]” on the syllabus.**

Turabian, Kate L., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *Student's Guide to Writing College Papers*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010. (Required in all Writing Program classes; available for sale at the BU Bookstore.)

Our class also has a Blackboard site that contains the syllabus, assignments, and other course-related materials. You can log in to our Blackboard page at: <http://learn.bu.edu/>.

****Readings on Blackboard will be marked “[BB]” on the syllabus.****

Assignments and Grading Criteria

In order to make the most out of WR 150 for you and your classmates, you will do a good deal of reading and writing and engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements are to:

- Develop a sustained research inquiry in which you explore a range of information sources and modes of research to help formulate and engage with research questions
- Communicate about your research in two genres to two distinct audiences
- Prepare reading, drafts, and exercises as assigned so that you are ready to participate in class
- Attend at least one conference with your instructor
- Reflect on your learning throughout the term in a portfolio, including a self-assessment at the beginning of the term and a reassessment at the end of the term

Grading and Evaluation

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

- Annotated Bibliography: 10%
- Class Presentation: 10%
- Research Paper: 40%
- Digital Media (Alternative Genre) Assignment: 20%
- Final Portfolio: 10%
- Participation, Attendance, and Engagement: 10%

Participation, Attendance, and Engagement

Since this course is a seminar, your regular attendance and active participation are essential to your success in the course *and* your classmates' learning experiences. Under ordinary circumstances, missing more than one week of class (more than **three class sessions**) will lower your final grade. **For each additional day missed (day 4 and beyond), your final grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g. B+ → B, C- → D, etc.)** Missing more than two weeks of class may lead to failing grade the course. If you have a special obligation that will require you to miss several classes (e.g., religious observances, varsity athletics), please talk with me at the beginning of the semester. Missed conference appointments will be counted as absences.

A word about technology: I welcome laptops in class (and on some days, will request that you bring one), but I do expect students to use them only for course-related activities. *Students who use technology for other purposes during class may be marked absent for the day.* Please close extraneous programs, and please keep your phones silenced and out of sight. Note that there will be times when I specifically request that you close your laptops for discussion, so please be prepared with a pencil/pen and paper for note-taking purposes on those days. Please discuss any specific accessibility needs regarding technology with me at the beginning of the semester (see below).

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you make other arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments (signaled with an **asterisk*** on the syllabus) will be penalized by *one-third of a letter grade* for each day they are late (e.g. B+ → B, C- → D, etc.). Please note too that we will regularly work with our exercises and drafts in class. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to engage fully in the class, and this will affect your participation and attendance grade.

Contacting Me

Our primary mode of communication outside of class will be email, so please check your email regularly. Feel free to email me at sdraucke@bu.edu at any time. I will respond in a timely manner (within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends).

CAS Writing Center

The CAS Center for Writing (100 Bay State Road, 3rd floor, with a satellite location at Mugar Library, 1st floor) offers one-on-one consultations for students to discuss their work for WR courses with well-trained writing consultants. Consultants will work with you at any stage in your writing process, but they will not edit or correct your paper for you. They will work with you to help you do your own best work, so you should expect to be actively involved in your session. The center is a resource for all WR students.

Whether you consider yourself to be a strong writer or a weak one, you can benefit from meeting with a writing consultant.

The CAS Center for Writing is open Monday through Friday. Hours for the current semester are posted on the website below. While the center accepts walk-in visits, you are strongly encouraged to reserve an appointment in advance. Because of the high demand for consultations, students are limited to one reservation per week. You may schedule a session online:

<http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/>

You may also schedule a session in person at the front desk of CAS Center for Writing or by calling 617-358-1500 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Cancellations must be made at least 9 hours in advance.

Research Support from BU Libraries

JD Kotula, Librarian for Chemistry, Computer Science, and Earth & Environment, will provide research support for this class throughout the semester. JD will offer class visits and one-on-one help with your research, including guidance on making the most of the wealth of online and print research resources available to you at BU. JD has kindly invited you to contact him at any time for research support by email at jdkotula@bu.edu.

Students can also get research assistance for any class or project on a walk-in basis at the Mugar Library Research Center or any other library on campus, as well as by phone (617-353-2700), email (ask@bu.edu), FAQs (<http://askalibrarian.bu.edu>), and more. Research appointments for help on any topic can be made at <http://www.bu.edu/common/request-an-appointment/>.

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Boston University's Academic Conduct Code. All WR students are subject to the CAS code, which can be read online:

<http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

I aim to create an inclusive learning community that supports all students, including students of all gender expressions and identities. You are invited to tell me early in the semester which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Accessibility Statement

We all learn in different ways, and I am committed to supporting your learning needs. If you need specific accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that I can help you get the most out of this class.

Disability Services is the office responsible for assisting students with disabilities. If you have a disability that interferes with your learning (whether visible or invisible, physical or mental), you are encouraged to contact this office. Disability Services will work with you to determine appropriate accommodations for your courses, such as additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, or note-taking assistance. This office will give you a letter outlining the accommodations you need that you can share with your teachers; specific information about your disability will remain private. If you have any questions about accommodation, I invite you to speak with me or to Disability Services.

Many difficulties (medical, emotional, financial, cultural, and familial) can affect our abilities to perform academically. BU provides several support services that are available to all students, including Student Health Services (Primary Care and Behavioral Medicine), First Generation Connect, Sargent Choice Nutrition Center, and the Sexual Assault Response and Prevention Center (SARP), among others. The Dean of Students Office is also available as a resource. I am happy to provide more information or connect you with these services throughout the semester. I am committed to supporting your learning in any way I can.

Course Schedule

This schedule is intended as a blueprint and is subject to change based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and communicated via email.

Note: assignments are listed on the day they are **due**. Items in **bold** are assignments you must hand in on the day listed. Items marked with an asterisk (*) are formally graded assignments. Please note, however, that even if an assignment is not officially graded, you must still complete it on time; completing such assignments will be essential to your successful participation in class and thus will ultimately still count towards the “Participation, Attendance, and Engagement” portion of your grade (and, more importantly, your intellectual growth).

Module 1: Course Foundations

Week 1:

W 1/23: Introductions and syllabus

F 1/25: Read syllabus carefully and bring any questions to class; Emily Martin, “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles” [BB]

Week 2:

M 1/28: **Self-assessment due (by class, via email)**; Laura Otis, “Introduction” [L&S xvii-xxviii]; James Crichton-Browne, “Dreamy Mental States” (to top of p. 12) [BB]

W 1/30: Charles Darwin, from *On the Origin of Species* [L&S 258-267]

F 2/1: Gillian Beer, from *Darwin’s Plots* [BB]; in-class reading of George Eliot, from *Middlemarch*

Week 3:

M 2/4: **Close reading due (bring hard copy to class)**; in-class peer review of close readings

W 2/6: Luigi Galvani, from *De Virbus Electricitatis* [L&S 135-140]; Mary Shelley, from *Frankenstein* [L&S 144-148]

F 2/8: Thomas Hardy, from *Two on a Tower* [L&S 81-84]; Anna Henchman, “Hardy’s Stargazers” (pp. 37-44, 54-end) [BB]

Week 4:

M 2/11: Charles Lyell, from *Principles of Geology* [L&S 246-252]; William Dyce, “Pegwell Bay” [BB]; J.M.W. Turner, “Vesuvius in Eruption” [BB]

W 2/13: Wolfgang Schivelbusch, from *The Railway Journey* [BB]; Charles Dickens, from *Dombey and Son* [L&S 116-121]; Walt Whitman, “To a Locomotive in Winter” [L&S 128-9]

F 2/15: Robert Knox, from *The Races of Men* [L&S 475-478]; Sir Francis Galton, from *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* [L&S 478-482]; Arthur Conan Doyle, from *The Yellow Face* [L&S 483-488]

Module 2: Research as Exploration

Week 5:

M: no class

T 2/19 (*M schedule*): Begin topic exploration

W 2/20: Class visit from Professor Glynn Holt, BU College of Engineering

F 2/22: **Come to class with topic chosen**; class visit from librarian JD Kotula

Week 6:

M 2/25: Turabian, chs. 2 (“Finding a Research Question”) and 3 (“Planning for an Answer”); **Research question due to peer review partner (by class, via email, CC me)**

[T 2/26: Last day to drop standard courses without a ‘W’ grade]

W 2/27: read BU Academic Conduct policy [BB]; Turabian, chs. 9 (“Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing Sources”) and 10 (“Preventing Plagiarism”)

F 3/1: **Revised research question due**

Week 7:

M 3/4: View “Climate Feedback” website [BB]; Turabian, Chapter 5 (“Engaging Sources”); in-class group source annotation

W 3/6: **Bring first paragraph to class (paper copy)**

F: 3/8: **Annotated bibliography due* (by class, via email)**

Module 3: Writing for an Academic Audience

Week 8:

SPRING BREAK; NO CLASSES

Week 9:

M 3/18: Continue drafting research paper

W 3/20: **Bring two body paragraphs to class (paper copies) for peer review**

F 3/22: **Draft of research paper due (by class, via email); “Tweet your thesis” exercise**

Week 10:

****individual conferences with me this week (M and W) – sign up in class****

M 3/25: Turabian, Ch. 12 (“Revising Your Draft”); in-class work day

W 3/27: **Prepare “elevator speech” for in-class elevator exercise**

F 3/29: NO CLASS – work on your research papers

Week 11:

M 4/1: **Paper presentations***

W 4/3: **Paper presentations***

F 4/5: **Research paper due* (by class, via email)**; in-class reflection on research paper for portfolio

Module 4: Writing for a Non-Academic Audience

Week 12:

M 4/8: Gregory Tate, "The Poetry of Victorian Science" [BB]; Maria Pilar Queralt, "How a Teenage Girl Became the Mother of Horror" [BB]; Audrey Shafer, "Why issues raised in *Frankenstein* still matter 200 years later" [BB]

W 4/10: *Guardian* "Books" podcast, "Questions of science and media" [BB]; **bring digital media example to class**

F 4/12: Digital Media Law Project, "Fair Use" [BB]; **"Comments on Comments" for research paper due**

Week 13:

M 4/15: *no class*

W 4/17: **Draft of digital media project due to peer-review partner (by class, via email, CC me);** in-class peer review

F 4/19: in-class work day (bring laptop to class); **bring two questions about your project to class**

Week 14:

M 4/22: **Digital media project due***; in-class reflection on digital media assignment

W 4/24: Revise digital media for WordPress site; in-class WordPress uploads and descriptions

F 4/26: In-class portfolio workshop

Week 15:

M 4/29: Patricia Cohen, "Next Big Thing in English: Knowing They Know that You Know" [BB]; William M. Chace et al., "Can Neuro Lit Crit Save the Humanities?" [BB]

W 5/1: **Final portfolio due* (by class, via email)**