English 382 The Romantic Period I

Instructor: Dr. G. Kim Blank
Email: gkblank@uvic.ca

Course description:

English 382 focuses on two of the greatest and most influential English poets, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who, in the most formative point in their writing careers, also happened to be very close friends and collaborators. You will get to know these two poets pretty well. Significant time is also spent discussing the language, style, and themes of the two poets, and in the case of Wordsworth, his “use” of subjects from the lower classes. The idea that Romantic poetry merely celebrates lively flowers, lovely rainbows, and rustic ideals is dispelled, while the philosophical depths and political dimensions of the poetry are opened up. A sampling of other topics covered: the usefulness (or not!) of the term “Romanticism”; the importance of Wordsworth’s sister, Dorothy; idealism, associationism, pantheism, republicanism, radicalism, the sublime; the French Revolution and its impact on Romantic poems; human rights (e.g., abolition, women’s rights, child labor laws); literacy rates, publishing practices; the movement toward an industrial economy and the shift in population to urban centers.

Proposed assignments:
There will be a close reading short paper; summary of literary criticism short paper; a term paper; and final exam. We will also have some fun with peer editing small-group presentations. Percentages TBA.

Proposed reading list:
Selected poetry and prose of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and some contemporaries.