Course title and code: English 383
English Romantic Poets II

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Course description:

English 383 focuses on three important and influential English poets: Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and John Keats. During the term you will get to know these extraordinary second-generation Romantic poets very well.

The course preamble deals with the history of defining the term “Romanticism,” and then a fair amount of historical and cultural background is provided. At the same time, close reading classes will examine the language, style, and themes of the poets. The idea that Romantic poetry celebrates lively flowers and high-flying birds is dispelled, while the philosophical depths and political dimensions of the poetry are opened up—further, we will find that the personal and intriguing interconnections between the poets are irresistible. A sampling of other topics covered: imagination, idealism, associationism, pantheism, republicanism, radicalism, reform, the sublime, the French Revolution and its impact on Romantic thought and poetry, 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, and the Cockney school of poetry.

The course is taught more or less chronologically, beginning with Byron’s “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers” and the Byronic hero and ending with selections from the last cantos of Don Juan.

Proposed assignments:
There will be a close reading exercise; summary of literary criticism exercise; term paper; and final exam. Percentages TBA.

Proposed reading list:
Selected poetry and prose of Keats, Shelley, Byron, and some of their contemporaries.