ENGL 380: Victorian Fiction: Dickens to Eliot
Spring 2022

Instructor: Mary Elizabeth Leighton
Email: mleigho@uvic.ca
Phone: 721-7244

Course description:
The Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Wilkie Collins: the mid-Victorian period was the heyday of these endurably popular authors. Reading fiction by these authors, we will ask, where did these novels first get published? Who read them? What did critics say about them? And why do they remain relevant and popular today?

We will ground our discussion in lectures on narrative form and Victorian print culture (with a focus on the periodical press) as well as occasional hands-on workshops about print forms (in Special Collections) and Victorian artisanal and print practices (e.g. hair art, block printing, scrapbooking).

In addition to developing your skills for analyzing fiction in formal and historical terms, this course aims to improve your research and writing skills. We will conduct several classes in the library, including in Special Collections, where you will examine firsthand a sample of Victorian periodicals and first editions. We will also undertake in-class writing workshops aimed at improving your prose style.

Tentative assignments:
20%: parody & stylistic analysis assignment
10%: essay/project proposal
30%: essay/project
35%: final exam
5%: class participation, including attendance, crafting workshops, library, & in-class assignments

Tentative reading list:
Anne Brontë, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
Elizabeth Gaskell, North and South
Charles Dickens, Great Expectations
Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White
George Eliot, Middlemarch