ENGL 381: Late Victorian and Edwardian Fiction  
Spring 2021

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Course description:  
Sherlock Holmes, Dracula, Martian invaders, and Tess of the d’Urbervilles: fiction of the 1890s introduced these enduringly popular characters, and this course will focus on this very fiction. Reading fiction by Thomas Hardy, Arthur Conan Doyle, Ella Hepworth Dixon, Bram Stoker, and H.G. Wells, we will ask, where did this fiction first get published? Who read it? What did critics say about it? And why does it remain relevant and popular today?

We will ground our discussion in lectures on narrative form (including illustration), fin-de-siècle movements, late-Victorian publishing, artistic and literary impressionism, the rise of information technology, the New Woman, masculinity, imperial decline, and conflicts between realism and neo-romanticism.

In addition to developing your skills for analyzing fiction in formal and historical terms, this course aims to improve your research and essay-writing skills. We will conduct several classes in the library, including in Special Collections, where you will examine firsthand a sample of 1890s periodicals and first editions. We will also undertake several in-class writing workshops aimed at improving your prose style.

Proposed assignments:  
20%: parody & stylistic analysis assignment  
10%: essay proposal  
30%: essay  
35%: final exam  
5%: class participation, including attendance, quizzes, library, & in-class assignments

Proposed reading list:  