Course Description:

“Come, my friends, / ’Tis not too late to seek a newer world” (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses”). Finding new worlds, remaking old ones, and forging communities: Victorian poets such as Tennyson gave themselves prominent social and cultural roles while worrying about an apparent sharp decline in poetry readership. The Victorian period (1837-1901) is, after all, known as the age of prose. But poetry flourished in the Victorian era through a vibrant print culture, as poets grappled with some of the major issues of their time which saw, until our own digital era, the most rapid period of political, social, and technological change in western history. This course introduces you to, or deepens your knowledge of, the major Victorian poets (especially Tennyson, the Brownings, the Brontës, Arnold, the Rossettis, and Hopkins,) as well as lesser known poets (such as working-class, women, and Anglophone writers). We will focus on an exciting breadth of poetic forms and experimentation (particularly the lyric, sonnet and sonnet sequence, verse novel, and dramatic monologue), cover a generous range of topics (e.g. gender and sexuality, industrialization, empire, religion, decadence and aestheticism), and consider the variety of poetry’s print environments (e.g. illustration practices, magazine and newspaper poetry, gift books, poetry for children).

Proposed Assignments:

- Short poetry analyses (30%)
- Research paper proposal (10%)
- Research paper (30%)
- Final exam (30%)

Proposed Texts: