

Weekend Courses 2024-25

Decadence and dread: *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Wormwood*, *Dracula* and *Salome*

Start date: 1 November 2024 **End date:** 3 November 2024

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Jenny Bavidge **Course Code:** 2425NRX005

Tutor biography

Jenny Bavidge is University Associate Professor and Academic Director for English at ICE and is a member of the English Faculty. She is a Fellow of Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge and was elected a Fellow of the English Academy in 2017. She has published on a range of topics including ecocriticism, contemporary literature, children's literature, and rats.

Jenny's approach to teaching is always to begin with close reading and to encourage students to develop and understand their own responses to the literature they encounter. Classes then aim to include a wide variety of critical, theoretical and contextual material to broaden potential approaches to literary study.

Summary of content

This course will introduce you to some of the artists and writers at work during the last years of the 19th century as you explore how they produced a rich stew of aesthetic and literary innovation, often daring in tone, style and subject matter. The cultural movements which are combined under the general heading of the 'fin-de-siècle', such as symbolism and decadence, contributed to the development of modernism and reset literary style for the modern world. Through deep readings of our selected texts, you will discover how the literature of the fin-de-siècle is often gothic, mordant and melodramatic; it may seem to be symptomatic of a hysterical and anxious period, full of images of split selves, monstrous doubles, infection, and disintegration of all kinds, undoubtedly influenced by the scientific and pseudo-scientific theories of the time. However, the texts which will form the focus of our course also experiment with complex and contested ideas about the self and society, about race and empire, and about gender roles and sexual identity. Our aim will be to attend to the literary representation of these complicated and intertwining contexts and to notice how our authors created characters who spoke not only to their own times but have survived and persisted into our own era.

Aims:

This course aims to

- introduce you to selected texts and the cultural and historical contexts of the late 19th century and to explore the themes and concerns of fin-de-siècle literature
- develop your understanding of the nature of the narrative structure and style of the selected works and how the form of the novels reflects their themes and content
- create an informed, enjoyable atmosphere for you to discuss and debate the issues raised by the course

Course sessions

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	'Fin du monde': Introduction to the atmosphere and context of the fin-de-siècle
22:00	Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast (for residents only)
09:00 – 10:30	Doubles: Robert Louis Stevenson's <i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> (1880) Mysteries, doubles and a multiple, layered narrative form make Stevenson's original novella a much stranger text than the much-parodied Hollywood version of the story would suggest. We'll examine the novella's setting in a gothicised London and think about Stevenson's dramatisation of tensions between science and the supernatural in the fin-de-siècle imagination.
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> cont...
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free time
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	The female fin-de-siècle: Marie Corelli's <i>Wormwood</i> (1890) Marie Corelli is no longer widely read but her novels, including <i>Wormwood: A Tale of Paris</i> and <i>The Sorrows of Satan</i> (1895) with their lurid tales of absinthe, the urban underworld and Faustian bargains, were tremendously popular in the 1880s and 90s. We'll examine Corelli's style and the morality at work in her writing and draw in the names of other female writers of the period.
18:00 – 18:30	Free time
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Decadence: <i>Salome</i> (1892), Oscar Wilde and the fin-de-siècle Wilde's play <i>Salome</i> was first written in French (as <i>Salomé</i>). He composed it between 1891-2 but it was barred from performance in Britain and Wilde was imprisoned at the time of the play's only staging in his lifetime. We will look at extracts from the play and view some filmed performances as we think more broadly about Wilde's crucial role in the flowering of fin-de-siècle literature.

21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30 Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897)

Dracula is one of the most persistent characters in literary history and Bram Stoker's creation continues to be read and reinvented to this day. Gathering everything we've covered so far about the concerns and anxieties of the period, we'll think about *Dracula* as a fin-de-siècle text and probe the eccentricities of this always surprising novel.

10:30 Coffee

11:00 – 12:30 *Dracula* cont...
and the 'fin' of the fin-de-siècle

12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course

The course will be taught through short lectures which outline key terms and contexts followed by seminar style-discussion. Reading the **two key texts** *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *Dracula* before the class is encouraged so you can make the most of the course and students will be invited to share their opinions of the works in class. If possible, please bring a copy of the two key texts with you to class, in book or e-reader format.

Learning outcomes

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- demonstrate extended knowledge of the literature of the period
- analyse and describe the narrative form and style of the works covered by the course
- develop your own readings of the works, aided by the evaluation of literary criticism of the novels
- better understand the complex and artistic contexts of the fin-de-siècle period

Reading and resources list

Required reading

Please read *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and My Hyde* and *Dracula* in full, if possible.

Your tutor will be using Oxford World's Classics editions, recommended below, but you are welcome to use any edition in book form or on e-reader. Norton Critical Editions are particularly good scholarly editions if you would like to have access to the accompanying criticism they provide.

***Stoker, Bram, *Dracula*, ed. Roger Luckhurst, (Oxford World's Classics, 2011)**

***Stevenson, Robert Louis, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Tales*, ed. Roger Luckhurst (Oxford World's Classics, 2008)**

We will also look at two other texts, Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* and Marie Corelli's strange novel *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris*. We will look at extracts from these works in class so **you do not need to buy a copy** or read them in full for the class but if you would like to read them, suggested editions are listed below.

Wilde, Oscar, *Salome You can read *Salome* online, at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42704/42704-h/42704-h.htm>, in the 1907 Bodley Head edition, which reproduces the illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley and includes a moving introduction by Wilde's supporter and friend Robert Ross. If you would prefer to read in book form, you can find *Salome* in the Oxford World's Classics collection of Wilde's plays ed. Peter Raby *The Importance of Being Earnest and Other Plays: Lady Windermere's Fan; Salome...* (Oxford World's Classics 2008)

Corelli, Marie, *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris is trickier to find. There are cheap editions for Kindle, and it is available to read online or download as a PDF for free at the Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/wormwoodadramap00coreqooq/page/n29/mode/2up>). Mint Editions have a paperback edition (2021) and there are second-hand editions available on Abe Books or Amazon. Again, **you do not need to buy or read it in full** for the course unless you find yourself irresistibly drawn to it...

You may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

If you would like to read more of Wilde's works, the obvious choice would be *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Oxford World's Classics 2008)

Booth, William. *In Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890) (Cambridge University Press 2014)

Ledger, Sally, and Scott McCracken, eds. *The Fin de Siècle: A Reader in Cultural History, c. 1880–1900*. (Cambridge University Press 1995)

Ledger, Sally, and Roger Luckhurst, eds. *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*. (Oxford University Press 2000)

Marshall, Gail, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Fin de Siècle*. (Cambridge University Press 2007)

Pykett, Lyn, ed. *Reading Fin-de-Siècle Fictions*. (Longman 1996)

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno 1980)

Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (Virago 1992)

Online Resources

You may also wish to read some of Oscar Wilde's other prose, which will be relevant to our discussions. 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' is available in various formats at <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1017> and 'The Decay of Lying' can be found here: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/wilde/decay.html>.

See also

The Yellow Nineties Online: <http://www.1890s.ca>

The Oscholars: <http://www.oscholars.com>

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)