

ENG 504 English Literature and Culture at the *Fin-de-Siècle*

Tue, Fri 12.00-1.30 pm, Room A007, Central (Old Campus)

Dr. Antonis Balasopoulos

Office Hrs: Tue 2:00-3:00 pm, Fri 3.00-4.00 pm (and by appointment)

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Course Syllabus

I. Course Description

This course aims to explore the complex relationships between literature, society and culture in the transitional context of the late nineteenth century. Viewing the period as one shaped by the crisis of the belief in a stable, normative and self-evident “nature,” the course will examine the ways in which *fin-de-siècle* literary and cultural texts revise, reinforce or deconstruct the Victorian legacy of naturalized class, gender and sexual boundaries and hierarchies. We will begin by briefly discussing the cultural, historical, and political implications (and contradictions) of turn-of-the century “decadence,” while focusing on the decadent movement’s crucial emphasis on artifice, construction, malleability and transgression. We will continue our investigation by discussing the late nineteenth-century conjunction of aesthetic decadence and nervous/biological “degeneration,” particularly as regards their implications for (pseudo)scientific and literary constructions of urban crime, deviance and delinquency. We will then concentrate on the import for popular literature of the confluence between late British imperialism and the rise of national anxieties of invasion and reverse colonization. The course will subsequently address the deployments of Orientalism in the development of a continental decadent aesthetics and in the construction of both misogynist and feminist visions of “transgressive” white femininity. Next, we will attempt to map the relations between *fin-de-siècle* fiction and the exploration of “unnatural” or “deviant” sexualities, focusing on the emerging grammar and poetics of a distinct male homoerotic desire in an era synonymous with the modern medical, psychoanalytic and legal definition of “homosexuality.” Finally, we will think through the implications of the crisis of nature and the natural from the perspective of visions of radical political transformation, as these expressed themselves in utopian speculation concerning the possibilities of a socialist future.

II. Course Grading and Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of a **mid-term written assignment** (30%), an **oral presentation** (20%), and a **final, longer research paper** (50%). Oral presentations will be conducted individually or in groups, depending on the total number of students in the class. They must be approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes long and must address the text(s) of your choice, on the basis of the presentation schedule that will be handed out by the instructor. You are strongly encouraged to discuss your presentation plans with me ahead of time. The mid-term written assignment must be approximately 1,000-1,250 words long (@ 4-5 pages) and deal with one of the questions that will be given to you in advance. You must use at least one secondary source for this assignment; you will have two weeks to hand it in. For your final project, you will have to write a 8-10 page research paper (between 2,000 and 2,500 words). Topics for investigation (but *not* specifically formulated questions) for this project will be handed out to you in advance. The final paper must conform to MLA format and must make use of at least three critical sources. Both the shorter and the longer paper must be typed. Please bear in mind that plagiarism is a very serious form of academic misconduct and will be dealt with formally if identified. You must therefore make sure that you properly cite and acknowledge your critical sources, following the guidelines of the MLA Style Manual.

III. Class Policies

Though some introductory sessions may rely heavily on lecture, the nature and level of the course as a whole demands your active and informed participation, which in turn requires keeping pace with each session's reading assignments. Failure to do so will negatively affect your participation grade. Class attendance is required according to university policy. If you miss above a certain number of classes, you may be advised to withdraw or be told to expect a failing grade in the course. All work for the course must be handed in within the deadlines provided. Do not assume that papers, exams or other assignments handed in late will be accepted.

IV. Required Texts

a) Books:

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands*. Oxford UP, ISBN: 0199549710, Price 7.90 euro with free shipping at Book Depository.

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Penguin, ISBN: 0141439734, Price 5.79 euro with free shipping at Book Depository.

William Morris, *News from Nowhere*. Penguin, ISBN: 0140433309, Price 11.18 euro with free shipping at Book Depository.

b) Course packet

Coursepackets are available at Unique Copy Center, 127 Larnacos Ave., Phone#: 22462932, email: savvia@mmprintings.com.cy.

V. List of Primary Texts

Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature" (1893)

J.-K. Huysmans *Against Nature* Preface, chapters 1-3, chapter 5 (1884)

Max Beerbohm "A Defense of Cosmetics" (1894)

Arthur Symons, "Being a Word on Behalf of Patchouli" (1896)

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1892)

Max Nordau "Fin-de-Siècle", *Degeneration* (1892)

Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903)

Oscar Wilde "The Harlot's House" (1885)

Olive Custance, "The Masquerade" (1902)

Charlotte Mew, "A White Night" (1903)

Richard Le Gallienne "The Boom in Yellow" (1896)

Kate Chopin "An Egyptian Cigarette" (1900)

Victoria Cross "Theodora: A Fragment" (1895)

J.A Symonds *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* (1889-)

Robert Louis Stevenson *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)

Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle" (1902)

Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" (1891)

William Morris, *News From Nowhere* (1890)

VI. Secondary Sources Ordered for Short-Term Loan

Baccolini, Raffaella and Tom Moylan ed. *Utopia Method Vision: The Use and Value of Social Dreaming*. Peter Lang, 2007.

Beckson, Karl. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's*. Academy Chicago Publications, 1992.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *Rule of Darkness*. Cornell University Press, 1988.

Bristow, Joseph. *Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885*. Columbia University Press, 1995.

Gay, Peter. *The Cultivation of Hatred. The Bourgeois Experience, Vol. 3*. Norton, 1993.

- Greenslade, William. *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Ledger and Luckhurst (eds) *The Fin-de-Siecle*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Ledger and McCracken (eds). *Cultural Politics at the Fin-de-Siècle*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Levine, George. *Darwin and the Novelists*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather*. Routledge, 1995.
- Richards, Thomas. *The Imperial Archive*. Verso, 1993.
- Sedgwick, Kosofsky Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press, 1992.
- Showalter, Elaine. *Sexual Anarchy*. Virago Press, 1992.
- Walkowitz, Judith. *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Weir, David. *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1995.

VII. Class Schedule

Unit I Introduction: *Fin-de-Siècle* Decadence and the Attack on “Nature”

Jan. 15

Introduction and Course Logistics

Jan. 18

Matei Callinescu, “The Idea of Decadence.” *Five Faces of Modernity* pp. 151-178

Arthur Symons, “The Decadent Movement in Literature” (1893), *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's*, pp. 134-151.

Jan. 22

Elaine Showalter, “Borderlines” pp. 1-18

Karl Beckson, “Introduction.” *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's: An Anthology of British Poetry and Prose* pp. xxi-xliv.

Jan. 25

Extracts from, J.-K. Huysmans *Against Nature* (*A Rebours*, 1884) pp. 17-52

Jan. 29

Hysmans cont'd

Feb. 1

Max Beerbohm, “A Defense of Cosmetics” (1894) pp. 47-63.

Arthur Symons, “Being a Word on Behalf of Patchouli” (1896), pp. 161-164.

Unit II Policing Late Victorian Society: Crime, Degeneration and Detection

Feb. 5

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle “The Man with the Twisted Lip.” (1892) pp. 123-148

Audrey Jaffe “Detecting the Beggar: Arthur Conal Doyle, Henry Mayhew and ‘The Man with the Twisted Lip’” pp.96-117

Feb. 8

Doyle “The Man with the Twisted Lip” cont'd

Judith Walkowitz "Urban Spectatorship" pp. 15-39

Feb. 12

William Greenslade "Criminal Degeneracy" pp. 88-106

Max Nordau "Fin-de-Siècle" (1892). pp. 1-44

Feb. 15

Nordau cont'd

Friedrich Nietzsche *The Gay Science* 96-98, 176-177 *Ecce Homo* 222-223

Unit III Late Imperial Anxieties: Invasion, Detection, and Empire

Feb. 19

Peter Burroughs, "Defense and Imperial Disunity" pp. 333-345

Avner Offer, "Costs and Benefits" 1870-1914, pp. 690-711

Feb. 22

Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* (1903)

Caroline Reitz "Imperial Detection", pp. xiii-xxv

Feb. 26

Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* cont'd

Matthew Graves, "Maps and Texts" (non paginated)

Mar. 1

Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* cont'd

Mar. 5

Childers, *The Riddle of the Sands* cont'd

Thomas Richards, "The Archive and its Double" pp. 123-141

Mid-term Assignment Topics Handed Out

Unit IV Decadence, The "New Woman" and the Fetish of the Orient

Mar. 8

J.-K. Huysmans *From Against Nature* pp. 63-68

Oscar Wilde "The Harlot's House" pp. 241-242

Olive Custance, "The Masquerade" (1902), p. 75

Charles Bernheimer "Fetishism and Decadence: Salome's Severed Heads" pp. 62-83

Mar. 12

Charlotte Mew "A White Night" (1903) pp. 118-138

Malek Alloula *The Colonial Harem* 7-15

Mar. 15

Richard Le Gallienne "The Boom in Yellow" (1896) pp. 128-133

Kate Chopin "An Egyptian Cigarette" (1900) pp. 1-5

Mar. 19

Victoria Cross "Theodora: A Fragment" (1895) pp. 6-37

Anne McClintock "Cross-Dressing and Female Fetishism" *Imperial Leather* 173-176

Mid-term Assignment Due

Mar. 22

Unit V The Figure in the Closet: The Queer *Fin-de-Siècle*

Michel Foucault “The Perverse Implantation” pp. 36-49

J.A Symonds, From *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds* (1889-) pp. 61-65, 271-283, 284-288

Mar. 26

Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle” (1902)

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “The Beast in the Closet” pp. 195-212

Mar. 29

James, “The Beast in the Jungle” cont’d

Kaja Silverman, “Male Subjectivity and the Primal Scene”

Apr. 2

Robert Louis Stevenson *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886)

Ed Cohen “The Double Lives of Man” pp. 85-114

Apr. 5

Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* cont’d.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick “Toward the Gothic: Terrorism and Homosexual Panic” pp. 83-96

Apr. 9*

Robert Louis Stevenson *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* cont’ d.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Some Binarisms (II)” pp. 157-163, 167-178

- There is a chance this session will be missed due to absence at a conference and will need to be remade.

Apr. 12

Unit VI Nowhere at the End: The *Fin-de-Siècle* and Utopian Socialism

Oscar Wilde, “The Soul of Man Under Socialism” (1891)

William Morris *News from Nowhere* (1890)

E.P. Thompson, *William Morris*, 673-698

Apr. 16

William Morris *News from Nowhere*

Matthew Beaumont, “*News from Nowhere* and the Here and Now: Reification and the Representation of the Present in Utopian Fiction”, 33-54

Apr. 19

William Morris *News from Nowhere*

Final Research Paper according to University exam schedule.