

According to Max Nordau, the 1890s led to “the unchaining of the beast in man.” This “degeneration” of the human race was apparent in everything from women’s fashion to literary style. We will explore these various forms of “degeneration” (homosexuality, the assertion of women’s rights, an interest in foreign spaces and cultures) through the literature of the British *fin de siècle*, including the novels of Olive Schreiner and Oscar Wilde; the poetry of Rudyard Kipling, Mathilde Blind, Michael Field, and Toru Dutt; and short stories by Henry James, Sarah Grand, Victoria Cross, Aubrey Beardsley, Rudyard Kipling, and others.

CLASS SCHEDULE

◆ = ELMS / Canvas site
H = Handout

L = Electronic link
A = Artwork (via Canvas/ELMS)

❖ = Course packet

Week 1 (1/28 and 1/30): New Women (I)

They rode bicycles and smoked cigarettes. They fought for women's access to a university education and for the right to vote. They were widely demonized and accused of degrading civilization. With Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* (1891), the New Woman roared onto the European stage.

- I. Introduction and course overview
- II. Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*
Ouida, "The New Woman" ◆
Listen to: NPR report on Munch's *The Scream* ◆
A: Edward Munch, *The Scream*



Week 2 (2/4 and 2/6): New Women (II)

From London to South Africa, versions of the New Woman proliferated. Irish author Sarah Grand urged women to live meaningful lives and to avoid loveless marriages. Olive Schreiner's *Story of an African Farm* (1883), a radical novel for its time, remains a powerful depiction of turn-of-the-century feminism.

- I. Sarah Grand, "The Undefinable" (H)
Elaine Showalter, "New Women" ◆
A: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*
- II. *Group Work #1*
Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm*: Part I, Chapters I-VIII
A: Charles Davidson Bell, *Trekboers crossing the Karoo*

Week 3 (2/11 and 2/13): Race and Empire (I)

Born to a Mohawk father and an English mother, Pauline Johnson performed her cultural hybridity with dramatic readings of her poems. The Bengali poet Toru Dutt was fluent in several languages, including English, and her poems navigate among multiple cultural and political perspectives. Each offers a compelling view of a "new woman" from across the British Empire.

- I. E. Pauline Johnson, "Ojistoh," "As Red Men Die," "The Cattle Thief," "A Cry from an Indian Wife," "Wave-Won" ❖
Theodore Watts-Duncan, "Preface" to *Flint and Feather* ❖
A: Two photos of Pauline Johnson

- II. *Group Work #2*
 Edmund Gosse, “Introductory Memoir” to *Ancient Ballads & Legends of Hindustan* ❖
 Toru Dutt, “Savitri”
 A: Jean-Leon Gerome, *The Slave Market*

Week 4 (2/18 and 2/20): Race and Empire (II)

Rudyard Kipling was born in Mumbai and considered himself a “native” of the Indian subcontinent. “The Man who would be King” is a parable of Empire, written at a time when Britain was reconsidering its global reach. Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton offer different views of women in the Australian outback: one optimistic, the other notably less so.

- I. *Group Work #3*
 Rudyard Kipling, “The Man who would be King”
 Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden” ❖
 Henry Labouchère, “The Brown Man’s Burden” ❖
 A: Thomas Jones Barker, *The Secret of England’s Greatness*
- II. Henry Lawson, “The Drover’s Wife” ❖
 Barbara Baynton, “The Chosen Vessel” ❖
 A: Russell Drysdale, *The Drover’s Wife*



Essay #1 due Friday, February 22nd

Week 5 (2/25 and 2/27): Aestheticism

William Morris and Walter Pater were key theorists of the British aesthetic movement. The essays we’re reading for this week are foundation to the ways other writers on this syllabus thought about art.

- I. William Morris, “On the Origins of Ornamental Art” and “The Defense of Guenevere” (H)
 Naomi Levine, “Trebled Beauty: William Morris’s Terza Rima” ◆
 A: William Morris, *Pomegranate* wallpaper design
- II. Walter Pater, from *The Renaissance*: “Preface,” “La Gioconda,” “Conclusion” (AD)
 A: Frederic Leighton, *Flaming June*

Week 6 (3/4 and 3/6): Outsiders

We will continue with *Story of an African Farm* while thinking additionally about the Jewish lesbian poet Amy Levy. Both Levy and Schreiner imagine feminists as outsiders to established culture.

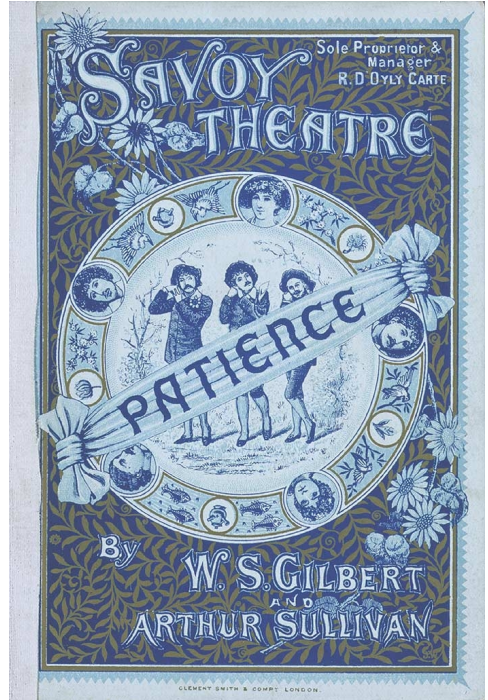
- I. Amy Levy, “Xantippe,” “To Lallie (Outside the British Museum),” “At a Dinner Party” (H)
 A: Frederick Sandys, *Medea*
- II. *Group Work #4*
 Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* II: Part I, Chapter IX to Part II, Chapter V
 A: Jannie van Heerden, *Olive’s Loss* (2013)

Project proposal due Friday, March 8th

Week 7 (3/11 and 3/13): Parody

Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Patience* (1881) is a parody of British aestheticism. Oscar Wilde – having recently graduated from Oxford – was hired to tour the United States and give lectures on aestheticism so American audiences would know what the Gilbert and Sullivan opera was making fun of.

- I. Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray* I: Chapters I-X
Wilde, dir. Brian Gilbert, available for viewing via ELMS
between 2/24 and 3/10
A: Frederic Leighton, *Daedalus and Icarus*
- II. *Group Work #5*
W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *Patience* ❖
Listen: audio files from *Patience* ◆
Carolyn Williams, from *Gilbert and Sullivan: Gender, Genre, and Parody* ◆
A: Sir Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs*



SPRING BREAK

Week 8 (3/25 and 3/27): Art and Desire

“Michael Field” was the pseudonym for a collaboration between aunt and niece Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper. The two were also lovers. They traveled around Europe visiting art galleries and composing ekphrastic poems in response to what they saw. The American-born Henry James was among the most well-regarded authors of the *fin-de-siècle*.

- I. Michael Field, from *Sight and Song* ❖
A: Phoebe Anna Traquair, *Progress of the Soul II*
- II. Henry James, *The Aspern Papers*

Week 9 (4/1 and 4/3): The Chickens Were Wiser

We'll discuss the conclusion to Schreiner's *African Farm* – a much-debated *dénouement*. The more effort you put into your theses for Wednesday, the more you'll get out of the peer-reviewing exercise.

- I. *Group Work #6*
Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* III: completed
A: Russell Honeyman, *My Inner Self (Story of an African Farm)* (2015)
- II. *In-class work shopping of thesis statements and bibliographies: bring 4 copies with you to share and additionally upload a copy to ELMS*

Week 10 (4/8 and 4/10): Ends of the New Women

Why do so many New Woman narratives end in tragedy? We will consider this question while discussing Wilde's drama *Salomé* and Victoria Cross' short story "Theodora. A Fragment."

- I. Victoria Cross, "Theodora. A Fragment" ❖
Mathilde Blind, "The Russian Student's Tale" ❖
A: Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys, *Love's Shadow*

- II. Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* (AD)
Richard Strauss, audio files from *Salomé* ◆
Jeff Nunokawa, "Oscar Wilde and the Passion of the Eye" ◆
A: Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition*



Week 11 (4/15 and 4/17): Decadence

Decadence might be considered the demonic reverse-image of aestheticism. Those who thought the Aesthetic movement a dangerous phenomenon were more likely to characterize it as "decadent." Max Nordau's *Degeneration* is the best-known critique of the Aesthetic movement; Beardsley's *Venus and Tannhäuser* is a brilliant and disturbing parody of it.

- I. *Group Work #7*
J. K. Huysman, from *Against the Grain* (AD)
Arthur Symons, "The Decadent Movement in Literature" (AD)
Max Nordau, from *Degeneration* ❖
Aubrey Beardsley, *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser* (AD)
A: Aubrey Beardsley, *Venus at Her Toilet*

- II. Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet"
A: John William Waterhouse, *The Awakening of Adonis*

Week 12 (4/22 and 4/24): Empathy

Violet Page, who wrote on the pseudonym Vernon Lee, developed a theory of what she called "psychological aesthetics." A lesbian whose lovers included Amy Levy, she spent the 1890s as an expatriate outside Florence, Italy. *Amour Dure* was published first in *Murray's Magazine* (1887) and then in the collection *Hauntings, Fantastic Stories* (1890).

- I. *Group Work #8*
Vernon Lee, *Amour Dure* ❖
Benjamin Morgan, "Critical Empathy: Vernon Lee's Aesthetics and the Origins of Close Reading" ◆
A: John Singer Sargent, *Vernon Lee*

- II. *In-class work shopping 3-4 page drafts of your term paper: bring 4 copies to share and additionally upload a copy to ELMS*

Week 13 (4/29 and 5/1): Truth and Lies

Wilde famously claimed that “lying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of Art.” His contemporary, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, invented a character whose keen sensibilities allowed him to discern the truth. This week we will examine these two seemingly opposite approaches to perception.

I. *Group Work #9*

Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” (AD)

Oscar Wilde, “Symphony in Yellow,” “The Harlot’s House,” “Impression du Matin” (AD)

Dennis Denisoff, “‘A Disembodied Voice’: The Posthuman Formlessness of Decadence” ♦

A: James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold; The Falling Rocket*

II. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of the Four*



Week 14 (5/6 and 5/8): Pathologies

The German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing turned the study of sex into a science. John Addington Symonds was one of his case studies.

I. *Group Work #10*

John Addington Symonds, “The Lotus Garland of Antinous” ❖

Lord Alfred Douglas, “The Two Loves” (AD)

Krafft-Ebing, from *Psychopathia Sexualis* ❖

A: Simeon Solomon, *Bacchus*

II. Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray II* (completed)

A: Henry Scott Tuke, *Ruby, Gold and Malachite*

Term paper due Friday, May 10th

Week 15 (5/13): Conclusions

On our final day of class, we will review the ideas we’ve traced throughout the semester and discuss strategies for doing well on the final exam. Please take some time in advance of this discuss to review your notes from the semester, so we can have a robust and meaningful conversation!

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Books

→ *Physical books are required for class discussion. Copies are available to borrow at McKeldin library if you wish to avoid purchasing your own. Alternate editions are acceptable so long as you have the full text.*

Course packet (not for sale at the University book store; details TBA)

Karl Beckson, ed. *Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890s* (Academy Chicago Publ.: 9780897330442)
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four* (Dover: 9780486431666)
Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler* (Dover: 9780486264691)
Henry James, *The Aspern Papers and Other Tales* (Penguin: 9780141389790)
Rudyard Kipling, *The Man who would be King and Other Stories* (Dover: 9780486280516)
Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Oxford: 9780199538010)
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford 9780199535989)

Grading (out of 500 possible points)

First essay: 50 points (10%)

Term paper: 110 points + 40 points for bibliography, meeting, proposal, thesis, and drafts (30%)

Artwork Presentation: 25 points (5%)

Participation and group work: 165 points (33%)

Final Exam: 75 points (15%)

Quizzes: 35 points (7%)

A	469-500 points	B-	397-416 points	D+	334-348 points
A-	449-468 points	C+	384-396 points	D	319-333 points
B+	434-448 points	C	369-383 points	D-	299-318 points
B	417-433 points	C-	349-368 points	F	0-298 points

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. The first essay, due Friday, February 22nd, will be an 800- to 900-word writing exercise.

2. The term paper (between 2200 and 2800 words) will be due May 10th. A project proposal is due March 8th and a revised thesis statement and annotated bibliography is due April 3rd (you will workshop one another's papers on this day). On April 24th you will workshop in class a 3-4 page version of the term paper. The details of these assignments will be elaborated separately.

Each of you will schedule a one-on-one meeting with me *after* you have submitted the project proposal for your term paper. In our meeting, we will discuss your project; we also might take time to look at your first essay, and to strategize for doing well on your term paper. You will sign up for this meeting early in the semester.

Submitting Your Work

Unless otherwise noted, papers are to be submitted via Canvas. On the assignment page, look for the place to upload your Word doc or docx file. Late papers will be downgraded by 25% for each 24-hour period following the deadline. Unless otherwise noted, all papers are due by 11:59pm on the due date. For students unable to turn in papers because of illness or dire emergency, a written note is required, and essays must be turned in as soon as possible.

All written work for this class will be graded by the following criteria:

- Strength of argument (have you articulated a clear and forceful position?)
- Clarity of writing (grammar, syntax, eloquence, directness)
- Persuasive use of materials to support argument (quotes from text, etc.)
- Relevance of topic to this course
- Focused attention to argument (avoidance of tangential space-filling)
- Appropriate use of citations for both quotes and materials consulted

Presentation

You will each sign up for a three-minute presentation on a work of art. The aim of the presentation will be to introduce the work of art to the class: who created it, how we might understand the composition, and how we might begin to understand its meanings. You may use notes for your presentation, but you should not read from a script. Practice your presentation to make sure you stay within the three-minute window.

- Wikipedia should not be the primary source for your knowledge and thoughts. I expect you to explore other sources (a minimum of 3 in all), even if the painting and/or artist is not well known. If you need help with this research, please come ask for it!
- Important: on the day of your presentation, *you will submit on Canvas* (on the assignment page for the Artwork Presentation) *a bibliography of works consulted*. This bibliography must include at least one scholarly source from a peer-reviewed journal. Please remember to upload your bibliography by the end of the day on which you give your presentation.

Group Work

You will participate in two group work projects, to be completed online via Google Docs by specific deadlines. The group work assignments will involve answering prompts and then engaging with your classmates' responses (two steps, both required). The group work exercises are opportunities for you to engage with one another in more complex ways than are generally available in the classroom.

Quizzes

There will be a syllabus quiz plus weekly online quizzes, to be completed via Canvas before the start of Monday's class. The quiz will include questions on the reading for that Monday *and also* questions on the previous week's readings and class discussion. Each quiz is designed to be easy for those students who are keeping up with the reading and attending all class discussions. Once you start a quiz, it cannot be retaken, no matter what the circumstances (the technology doesn't allow for it). The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this class, students will be able to:

- understand the most significant historical, political, and literary developments of the late nineteenth-century in Britain.
- think critically about the intersection of British aestheticism with the women's rights movement, the expansion of the British empire, and shifting ideas of sex and gender.
- interpret literary texts using the skills of close reading; and
- communicate these ideas both orally and in writing.

Final Exam

The final exam will be a combination of multiple choice questions and essays. You will be asked to identify passages from texts on the syllabus, and to put different texts in conversation with each other. We will discuss the exam, and strategies for doing well on it, on our last day of class.

Course Related Policies

I will adhere to University of Maryland policies with regard to excused absences, registered disabilities, incidents of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, and student conduct. [Please refer to this website](#) for more detailed information: *really, please do click over and review the university's guidelines*. Our course policies will rigorously follow those outlined on the linked page.

Participation

Your participation grade (33% of total course grade) will be determined according to the following table, wherein A = almost always; U = usually; S = sometimes; I = infrequently; and N = never. You will earn 5 points for participation when you sign up for your Group Work assignments and Artwork presentation before the start of class on Monday, February 4th.

	A	U	S	I	N
Participated actively and thoughtfully in class discussion	5	4	3	2	0
Came to class prepared (with books, notebook, pen, etc.)	5	4	3	2	0
Arrived on time for class	5	4	3	2	0
Was present for all class activities	5	4	3	2	0
Respected fellow students, instructor, and others involved with our class: listened while others spoke, responded constructively, did not try to dominate the conversation, <i>avoided cellphones and other technology in the classroom</i>	5	4	3	2	0
Completed all group work exercises in a timely fashion	5	4	3	2	0
Participated in group work thoughtfully and constructively	5	4	3	2	0
Actively showed interest and paid attention during class activities	5	4	3	2	0

Total / 40

Etiquette and Expectations (please read carefully)

- Readings for each class must be brought with you. Many of the course materials are in the course packet, so that will be especially important to have in class on most days.
- Laptop computers, iPhones, and other digital devices are not permitted in class unless you provide written documentation showing that they are necessary (e.g. for medical reasons).
- Cellphones must be turned off for class and placed out of sight. Use of cellphones during class will result in immediate downgrading for your participation grade. The same goes for Apple Watches and similar devices.
- You are expected to be *active listeners* in this class. Show your engagement with the course material by *looking interested, taking notes, and, when appropriate, asking questions and engaging in conversation*. Even if you are not completely interested in the material, it is never acceptable to show your disinterest.
- If you are ill, please stay home. If you cannot keep your eyes open due to exhaustion, please stay home.
- Please use the restroom before class to minimize disruptions to our discussion.
- Please use our ELMS/Canvas messaging to contact me (rather than email). Consider all communication directed to me – or any professor – as a *professional correspondence*. Compose them accordingly:
 - ▶▶ They should not look like text messages or informal emails to friends (substitute “Hey!” for a more professional greeting, and avoid abbreviations like “ttyl”).
 - ▶▶ Write in full sentences.
 - ▶▶ Proofread, checking both spelling and punctuation.
 - ▶▶ Remember that tone can be a real problem with emails. They almost always come across as brusquer than the writer intended. Adjust your writing to allow for this.

Caveat Participes

This course contains materials on sensitive subjects, including issues having to do with race, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, and gender.

