

**ENGLISH 625  
BRITISH AESTHETICISM**

PROFESSOR JASON R. RUDY

FALL 2019  
W 6:30-9:00PM  
TAWES ROOM 3134

OFFICE HOURS: W 3:00-6:00PM  
AND BY ARRANGEMENT

OFFICE: TAWES 3207  
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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 Amy Levy, Michael Field, and Toru Dutt; and short stories by Henry James, Sarah Grand, Victoria Cross, Aubrey Beardsley, and others.

The ideas we explore this semester were challenging at the turn of the twentieth century, and many of them remain challenging today. Students will be expected to engage enthusiastically with the course materials, but they should not feel compelled either to endorse or to reject the concepts we examine. The expectation is never that a student will either agree or disagree with an idea, but instead that all students will think critically about and engage with the ideas discussed.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

◆ = ELMS / Canvas site  
H = Handout

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

❖ = Course packet

### Week 1 (8/28): Introductions and course overview

Amy Levy, "To Lallie (Outside the British Museum)" (H)

### Week 2 (9/4): New Women

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.



Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler*

Ouida, "The New Woman" ◆

Sarah Grand, "The Undefinable" (H)

Amy Levy, "Xantippe" (H)

Elaine Showalter, from *Daughters of Decadence*, "New Women" ◆

Kate Flint, from *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914*, "'New Woman' Fiction" ◆

Listen: NPR report on Munch's *The Scream* ◆

Listen to: *In Our Time* podcast, Suffragettes ◆

A: Edward Munch, *The Scream*

A: Russell Honeyman, *My Inner Self (Story of an African Farm)* (2015)

### Week 3 (9/11): 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.

Edmund Gosse, "Introductory Memoir" to *Ancient Ballads & Legends of Hindustan* ❖

Toru Dutt, from *Ancient Ballads & Legends of Hindustan*: "Our Casuarina Tree," "Savitri" ❖

Theodore Watts-Duncan, "Preface" to *Flint and Feather* ❖

E. Pauline Johnson, from *Flint and Feather*: "Author's Forward," "Ojistoh," "As Red Men Die," "The Cattle Thief," "A Cry from an Indian Wife," "Wave-Won" ❖

Jane Stafford, introduction to *Colonial Literature and the Native Author* ◆

A: Two photos of Pauline Johnson

#### Week 4 (9/18): Race and Empire (II)

From London to South Africa to Australia, versions of the New Woman proliferated. 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. Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton offer different views of women in the Australian outback: one optimistic, the other notably less so.

Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm*: Part I, Chapters I-VIII

Henry Lawson, "The Drover's Wife" ❖  
Barbara Baynton, "The Chosen Vessel" ❖  
Ethel Castilla, "An Australian Girl" ❖

Duncan Bell, "Introduction: Building Greater Britain," from *The Idea of Greater Britain* ◆

A: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Venus Verticordia*

Essay 1 due Saturday, September 21st



#### Week 5 (9/25): Aesthetic Beginnings

William Morris and Walter Pater were key theorists of the British aesthetic movement. Pater's work pushes back against Matthew Arnold and sets the stage for the *fin de siècle*. Henry James' short stories explore the ideas of art foregrounded in Arnold, Morris, and Pater.

Matthew Arnold, from "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" ❖  
William Morris, "On the Origins of Ornamental Art" ❖  
Walter Pater, from *The Renaissance*: "Preface," "La Gioconda," "Conclusion" ❖  
Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet" and "The Aspern Papers"

Listen: *In Our Time* podcast, William Morris ◆

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "The Beast in the Closet" ◆

A: Frederic Leighton, *Flaming June*

#### Week 6 (10/2): Metaphysics & Feminism

This week we will finish Schreiner's novel; we will also discuss research methods. Conference proposals are due this Saturday, October 5th.

In-class workshop on research and writing  
Olive Schreiner, *Story of an African Farm* (completed)

Anne McClintock, "Olive Schreiner: The Limits of Colonial Feminism"; from *Imperial Leather* ◆

A: Jannie van Heerden, *Olive's Loss* (2013)

Conference proposal due Saturday, October 5th

**Week 7 (10/9): Orientalism**

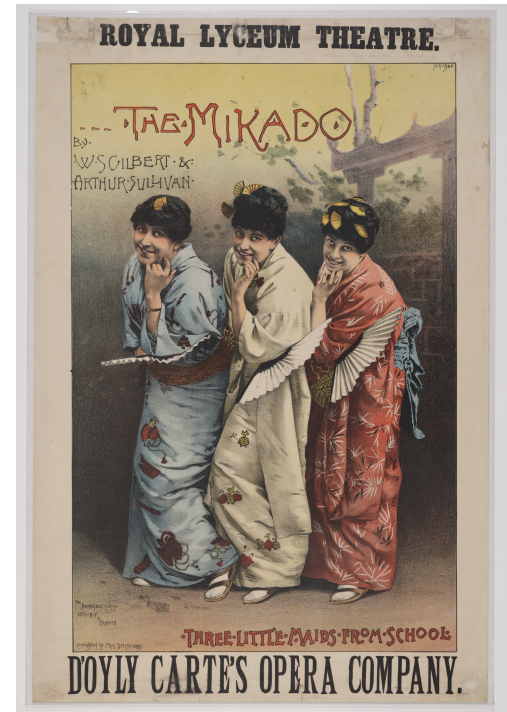
British aestheticism was inspired in part by Britain's contact with the East. Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* imagines a space that is and is not nineteenth-century Japan. Most scholars agree the opera says much more about Britain than it does about Japan. We will consider the aesthetic and political work of the opera, including audio files that should be listened to while reading the libretto.

W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *The Mikado* ❖  
Sound recordings from *The Mikado* ◆

*Topsy Turvy*, dir. Mike Leigh, available for viewing via  
Canvas between 9/23 and 10/7

Carolyn Williams, introduction to *Gilbert & Sullivan:  
Gender, Genre, Parody* ◆  
Grace Lavery, introduction to *Quaint, Exquisite* ◆

A: Louise Jopling, *Blue and White*



**Week 8 (10/16): Fin de siècle Lyric**

Poetry at the turn of the century began to shift toward what would eventually become Modernism. We will explore varieties of late-Victorian poetry, including the aunt-niece duo who wrote under the pseudonym "Michael Field" (Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper) and the later poems of Christina Rossetti and Alfred Tennyson. Cornelia Pearsall will visit at the end of the term to discuss this material.

Michael Field, from *Sight and Song*: "La Gioconda," "The Birth of Venus," "The Sleeping Venus,"  
"A Portrait" ❖  
Christina Rossetti, selections from *Verses* (1893) ❖  
Alfred Tennyson, "Demeter and Persephone" and other poems ❖

Emma Mason, "Green Grace and the End of Time, 1885-1894" ◆  
Cornelia Pearsall, "Blank Verse and the Expansion of England" ◆

A: Phoebe Anna Traquair, *Progress of the Soul II*

**Week 9 (10/23): 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."

Victoria Cross, "Theodora. A Fragment" ❖  
Mathilde Blind, "The Russian Student's Tale" ❖



Oscar Wilde, *Salomé* ❖  
Sounds recordings of Richard Strauss, *Salomé* ◆

Jeff Nunokawa, “Oscar Wilde and the Passion of the Eye”; from *Tame Passions of Wilde* ◆  
Edward Said, “Knowing the Oriental,” from *Orientalism*; chapter begins on page 39 of PDF ◆

A: Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition*



### Week 10 (10/30): 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.

J. K. Huysman, from *Against the Grain* ❖  
Arthur Symons, “The Decadent Movement in Literature” ❖  
Max Nordau, from *Degeneration* ❖  
Aubrey Beardsley, *The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser* (H)

Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying” ❖  
Oscar Wilde, “Symphony in Yellow,” “The Harlot’s House,”  
“Impression du Matin,” “Charmides” ❖  
Lord Alfred Douglas, “The Two Loves” ❖

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

### Week 11 (11/6): *Fin-de-siècle* Dying

We will read Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* from multiple perspectives: as a meditation on the New Women and *fin-de-siècle* sexuality; as a commentary on British xenophobia; and, following Jesse Oak Taylor, as a reflection of late-century ecological anxiety.

Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Jesse Oak Taylor, from *The Sky of Our Manufacture*: “The Death is the Life: *Dracula*, Fossil Fuels, and the Ecology of Undeath” ◆

A: Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*

### Week 12 (11/13): Peer Review

In-class peer-reviewing of final projects. Please bring four copies of a representative sample of your work (3-5 pages) to share with your classmates.

**Week 13 (11/20): The Ends of Aestheticism**

Wilde's novel offers both a seductive invitation to the aesthetic life and a warning of its lurking dangers. After his imprisonment for acts of "gross indecency," *Dorian Gray* has often been read as a cautionary tale, as if Wilde had anticipated his own fall.

Oscar Wilde, *Picture of Dorian Gray*

*Wilde*, dir. Brian Gilbert, available for viewing via Canvas between November 3 and 17

Dustin Friedman, from *Before Queer Theory* ♦

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



**Week 14 (11/27): Thanksgiving**

No class: Thanksgiving holiday

**Week 15 (12/4): Science and Sexuality**

The German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing turned the study of sex into a science. John Addington Symonds was one of his case studies. On this last day of class, students will offer short presentations on their final projects (3-4 minutes only).

Krafft-Ebing, from *Psychopathia Sexualis* ❖

John Addington Symonds, "The Lotus Garland of Antinous" ❖

Constance Naden, "Scientific Wooing" ❖

Presentations on final projects

A: Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of Ambroise Vollard*

*Term paper / final project due Friday, December 15th*

**Friday, December 6<sup>th</sup> – Cornelia Pearsall (Smith College) at 4:00pm, Tawes 2115.** Pearsall will lead a seminar discussion of Tennyson's late-imperial poetry, following from our Week 8 materials. We will also celebrate the end of the semester! Attendance strongly encouraged.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

TEXTS (available at the University Book Center and elsewhere)

Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler* (Dover: 978-0486264691)  
Henry James, *The Aspern Papers and Other Tales* (Penguin: 9780141389790)  
Olive Schreiner, *The Story of an African Farm* (Oxford: 9780199538010)  
Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Penguin: 978-0141439846)  
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Oxford: 9780199535989)

Course packet – to be available at the Marie Mount “Copy Services”

### GRADING

Participation	30%	Artwork Presentation	5%
Final Project (due 12/15)	30%	Conference Proposal (due 10/5)	5%
Essay 1 (due 9/21)	10%	Show-and-Tell	5%
Rev. thesis & biblio (11/13)	5%	Group Work	10%

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned according to the following table, rounding applied:

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	366-383 points	D-	299-318 points
B	417-433 points	C-	349-368 points	F	0-298 points

### WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. The first essay (between 900 and 1200 words) will be a close reading exercise due September 21st.
2. The final project will be due on December 15th. You may choose to write a term paper (between 2800 and 3200 words), or to complete an alternative project mutually agreed upon no later than October 15th. A project proposal (in the form of a conference proposal) is due October 5th and a revised thesis statement and annotated bibliography November 13th (on this day you will present your ideas to each other and workshop your arguments). 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 October 5 proposal. 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 the final project. 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. Papers are due by 11:59pm on the due date; since it often takes a little while to upload, I recommend submitting no later than 11:50pm 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. *Extensions must be requested in advance of the deadline.*

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

Term papers will in addition require engagement with secondary sources, as explained in the assignment; alternate final assignments will have their own rubrics, developed collaboratively.

### PRESENTATION

You will each sign up for a five-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 five-minute window.

- Wikipedia cannot be the primary source for your knowledge and thoughts. I expect you to explore other sources (a minimum of three 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 your sources. This bibliography must include at least one scholarly source found through a peer-reviewed journal. Please remember to upload your bibliography by the end of the day on which you give your presentation.
- See Canvas assignment page for a detailed rubric and construct your presentation accordingly.

### GROUP WORK

You will each 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. Students who participate in the group work assignments will be expected to lead parts of the next class discussion. You will sign up for two prompts at the beginning of the term; specific details of this assignment may be found on ELMS. These group work assignments will count for 10% of the overall course grade; a rubric for assessment is available via the assignment page.

### SHOW-AND-TELL

The *fin de siècle* is filled with bizarre and fascinating objects. For your show-and-tell you will bring one (or, more likely, an image of one) to share with the class, and you will speak briefly (no more than three minutes) about its significance. Examples might include a teapot made in the form of an aesthete, a magazine with an innovative layout, a new kind of fashion (like Oscar Wilde's cello-shaped coat) or a commodity that every late-Victorian *just had to have*. The choices are limitless. Please come speak with me if you're having trouble finding an object. The presentation should 1.) explain how you found the object; 2.) communicate to the class what you find especially compelling about your choice; and 3.) suggest the relevance of the object to our course materials.



## EXCUSED ABSENCES

Students will on *rare* occasion miss class for good reasons. It is your responsibility to inform me of any intended excused absences, including religious observations, in advance of those absences. *In graduate coursework, the expectation is that all students will attend all classes.*

## SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please talk to me immediately. If you have a disability and have not yet registered it with Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Building (4-7682 or 5-7683 TTY/TDD), you should do so immediately.

## 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.
- communicate these ideas both orally and in writing.

## ETIQUETTE AND EXPECTATIONS

- Readings for each class must be brought with you.
- Laptop computers are to be used minimally in class, and not for note-taking. You may refer to your screens for course PDFs and for discussing the Group Work exercises, but not for browsing the internet or transcribing class conversation. When we are not discussing either the course PDFs or the Group Work exercises, laptop computers must be closed; please come speak with me if you have a special need that requires use of technology in the classroom.
- Digital texts may *not* be used as substitutes for any of the Course Packet readings or for any of the novels on the syllabus. If you are unable to purchase the novels for this class, please find a copy at McKeldin Library or, if necessary, recall a copy through Interlibrary Loan (this will require advance planning). *I expect you to have physical book objects in hand for all our class discussions.*
- Cellphones must be turned off for class; smart watches must be silenced and placed out of sight. Text messaging and any other use of electronic devices is absolutely prohibited.
- You are expected to be *active listeners* in this class. Show your engagement with the course material by *contributing regularly to the conversation, looking interested, taking notes, and asking questions*. 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 our ELMS/Canvas messaging system – in place of email – to contact me. I will always respond to messages sent via ELMS/Canvas. Messages sent via email may get lost amidst the slew of email I receive daily.

## PARTICIPATION

Your participation grade (30% 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:

	A	U	S	I	N
Participated actively in class discussion	5	4	3	2	1
Came to class prepared (with books, notebook, pen, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1
Arrived on time for class	5	4	3	2	1
Was present for all class activities	5	4	3	2	1
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 cellphone and other technology use in classroom</i>	5	4	3	2	1
Actively showed interest and paid attention during class activities; did not leave regularly in the middle of discussion	5	4	3	2	1

Total / 30

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

UMD English considers the diversity of its students, faculty, and staff to be critical to its educational mission and expects every member of the community to contribute to an inclusive and respectful culture in the classroom, work environment, and at campus events. It is my intent that students from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and learning needs will be well served by this course and that the diversity students bring to class will be viewed as a resource and strength. Dimensions of diversity include intersections of sex, race, age, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, intellectual and physical ability, primary language, faith and non-faith perspectives, income, political affiliation, marital or family status, education, and any other legally protected class. I endeavor to present materials and activities that foster a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Please let me know of ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other students or student groups.

If you experience issues related to diversity and inclusion in your English courses or as part of the English department community—or if you have suggestions for improving diversity, inclusion, equity, and access in the department—please contact our Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Committee at: [englishidea@umd.edu](mailto:englishidea@umd.edu).

## PLAGIARISM

I will adhere strictly to University policy with respect to plagiarism. Students who plagiarize will be referred directly to the University's Honor Council. Follow MLA guidelines for citation when quoting passages and when paraphrasing ideas. Do not hesitate to speak with me if you have any questions regarding this matter. Please also keep in mind:

- Any source consulted must be included in a “works consulted” list at the end of your written work. This includes Wikipedia or any other online site, even if you have not quoted it directly.
- Paraphrased ideas must be cited, even if you have not quoted directly from the source.

- Most of what can be found easily online will not qualify as a reputable source for an academic essay. If you have questions about the validity of a source, please ask me directly.

The University Code of Academic Integrity may be found here:

<http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf>

### 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.

### CAVEAT PARTICIPES

This course readings and discussion will deal regularly with graphic material regarding race, colonialism, gender, sexuality, and various forms of violence.

