

LT155 Romanticism Then and Now

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Generally recognized as one of the most important and influential historical periods of Western literary, cultural, and political thought, Romanticism is primarily known as a literary movement (roughly 1790-1830) that emphasized individualism and emotions while promoting new visions of Nature. More recently, we can observe a rising interest in similar topics: Romantic individualism finds its reflection in more recent theories of subjectivity, Romantic emotions return within the field of affect theory, and a revision of conceptualization of Nature is underway in environmental humanities. Various Romantic writers were taking a step away from the imperative of science and refused to look at the human being through the lens of the Industrial Revolution. Estrangement from society and a consequent turning inward mark the Romantic era as much as our own. Seeking means of self-expression was considered imperative in a profit-oriented world of industrial capitalism then and now. At the same time, Nature and mysticism often become avenues of escape. In this class, we will first learn what commonly defines Romanticism. We will explore key concepts that organized eighteenth-century thinking on transatlantic Romanticism: for example, the “beautiful,” the “sublime,” Gothic motifs, the centrality of personification etc. The second half of this course will be dedicated to the afterlife of Romanticism. How does Romanticism continue to shape the current sense of aesthetic, political, and cultural possibilities? How did racialized and gendered representations of Nature during Romanticism shape ways in which the nonhuman is perceived and represented? We will explore ways in which Romanticism has been reframing and reorganizing itself for the last 200 years. Readings will include works by Olaudah Equiano, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Friedrich Schlegel, Henry David Thoreau, and for more recent examples Jeanette Winterson, Elizabeth Nunez, and Maureen McLane among others.

Requirements

Attendance

One-paragraph reading responses

Active participation in group discussions

One in-class presentation

Two term papers (total 5000-7000 words)

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR FALL 2022: Some students may need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assignments

Midterm paper ca. 3000 words

Final paper ca. 4000 words

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation and participation 30 % (15% for weeks 1-7 and 15% for weeks 8-14)
Essay assignments 50 %
In-class presentation 20 %

Schedule

A: THE SUBLIME

1. Aug. 30, 2022

Olaudah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*

Jean-Jacque Rousseau, *Reveries of a Solitary Walker*

2. Sept. 6, 2022

William Wordsworth and Charlotte Smith (selected poems)

Immanuel Kant, selections from *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, tr. Paul Guyer (Cambridge UP, 2001).

3. Sept. 13, 2022

Friedrich Schiller, *On the Sublime* (Über das Erhabene)
Friedrich Schiller, *Of the Sublime* (Vom Erhabenen)

J.-F. Lyotard, "Aesthetics and Ethics in the Beautiful and the Sublime," *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, tr. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford UP, 1994).

B: THE GOTHIC

4. Sept. 20, 2022

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (please buy the 1818 edition)

5. Sept. 27, 2022

Conference – online class on Henry David Thoreau, Excerpts from *Walden*

6. Oct. 4, 2022

Friedrich Schelling, Naturphilosophie

Museum Visit - Alte Nationalgalerie

Midterm paper due Oct. 9, 2022

7. Oct. 11, 2022

Teaching L&T at BSA

Watch: Maya Deren's *The Divine Horseman* and discuss online (padlet)

8. Oct. 18, 2022

Frankenstein Still

- Maya Deren's *The Divine Horseman*
- Reading: "The Visualization of Knowledge", from *Body Criticism*, Barbara Maria Stafford
- Excerpt: *Frankenstein in Baghdad* by Ahmed Saadawi

Fall Break

C: RECLAIMING ROMANTICISM

9. Nov. 1, 2022

Kate Rigby, *Reclaiming Romanticism: Towards an Eco-poetics of Decolonization*, Ch. 5

10. Nov. 8, 2022

Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion*

11. Nov. 15, 2022

Elizabeth Nunez, *Prospero's Daughter*

12. Nov. 22, 2022

Maureen N. McLane, *Romanticism and the Human Sciences*, Ch. 5

13. Nov. 29, 2022

Maureen N. McLane, selected poems

14. Dec. 6, 2022

Poems for the Millennium Vol. 3: The University of California Book of Romantic and Postromantic Poetry. ed. Jerome Rothenberg and Jeffrey C. Robinson (University of California Press, 2009)

15. Dec. 13 – Completion Week

BYO current example of Romanticism

Essay Deadlines

Midterm: Oct. 9, 2022

Final Essay: Dec. 8, 2022 for graduating students and Dec. 18, 2022 for non-graduating students

Please note: all assignments will be posted on and should be submitted through our course-website on brightspace (where you can also find all the assignments)