

English 329: Selected Figures in English Literature: Novels of Charles Dickens

Professor: Jan Susina

Credit Hours: 3

Tuesday & Thursdays 2:00- 3:15 p.m. in STV

Course Description:

Since this year is the two hundredth anniversary of Charles Dickens's birth, it is appropriate to study some of the major novels written by one of the most influential and popular English authors. This course will examine the relationship between Dickens's fiction and the social, political, and cultural issues of the Victorian Era. Dickens was one of the most successful novelists of the Victorian Age who was able to bridge the gap between popular entertainer and serious novelist and social critic. The course will examine Dickens's social criticism and his critique of industrialization, the rise of the Victorian city, recognition and attempts to improve the conditions of the urban poor, Empire and imperialism, the role of the child in the nineteenth century, as well as the changing status of women in the second half of the nineteenth century. Dickens's use of humor, melodrama, and the grotesque as well as the illustrations and serialization of his novels will be examined. Since the popularity of Dickens's novels transcended his own period, the course will also look at some of the film adaptations of his novels and address how contemporary writers and filmmakers have re-appropriated Dickens and his novels. Students will read six Dickens's novels: *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Hard Times*, and *Our Mutual Friend*. In addition to the novels the class will also read a selection of Dickens's nonfiction and critical essays on his work.

Required Texts:

Charles Dickens. *Oliver Twist*. ed. Fred Kaplan. Norton Critical Edition.

Charles Dickens. *David Copperfield*. ed. Jerome Buckley. Norton Critical Edition.

Charles Dickens. *Hard Times*. ed. Fred Kaplan. Norton Critical Edition.

Charles Dickens. *Great Expectations*. ed. Edgar Rosenberg. Norton Critical Edition.

Charles Dickens. *Our Mutual Friend*. ed. Adrian Poole. Penguin Classics.

Charles Dickens. *A Christmas Carol*. ed. Richard Kelly. Broadview Critical Edition.

Course Format:

Students will give an in-class presentation; write a short paper on a contemporary film or book adaptation of a Dickens's novel, and write a longer critical paper dealing with Dickens and Victorian culture. There will be additional short writing assignments linked to the readings throughout the semester.