Reflexes of Romanticism
First Year Interdisciplinary Seminar
The Gallatin School of Individualized Study, NYU

Professor: Andrew Libby
Office hours: W: 2:00–3:00 and by appt.
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Course: FIRST-UG95, 4 CR, Fall 2015
Time: Monday and Wednesday, 3:30–4:45pm
Location: 7 E. 12, room LL21

What is Romanticism and how, after 200 years, are the Romantics still influencing culture? This course explores the literature, art, music, and thought of the so-called “Romantic era” of Europe during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. We will examine the historical contexts that gave rise to Romantic culture and the intellectual and cultural production of the movement itself: the ways in which the Romantics retooled values associated with the Enlightenment, such as critique, reason, scientific progress, equality, and individual subjectivity, toward new aesthetic, social, and political ends. We will investigate the ways in which the Romantics privileged the imagination and enabled new considerations of liberal education and social revolution. Finally, we will read post-Romantic writers such as Nietzsche, Dickinson, and Freud, for what we will consider as their radicalized romantic reflexes. The seminar will involve discussion, experiential exercises, writing (analytical and creative), and group projects. We will employ methods and theories from an array of disciplines: philosophy, critical theory, gender/queer theory, and art history.

Learning Goals

• Understanding the key social, philosophical, and aesthetic problems Romantics address and theorizing why these questions still animate cultural production.
• Developing a critical vocabulary for discussing texts, art, nature, and theories of representation.
• Using close-reading, attentive viewing, and writing to evolve your ability to discuss and think critically about difficult texts and problems.
• Learning to distinguish different disciplinary approaches to a question and to use these different perspectives to deepen your understanding.
• Synthesizing your historical awareness so that it can inform your own personal life experience and broaden your scope for living in a globalizing world.

Required Texts
Books are on order at Bluestockings, 172 Allen Street (a block and a half below Houston in the Lower East Side) and at the NYU bookstore.

Fitzgerald, Penelope. The Blue Flower. New York: Mariner Books, 1995. 9780544359451
In addition to the works above, I have also placed some required readings on the NYU Classes site for our course. These readings are indicated by an asterisk (*) in the schedule below.

I've also placed the books above as well as the following recommended readings on reserve at Bobst library.


Schlegel, Friedrich. *Philosophical Fragments*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991. Also available via NYU ebrary

**Requirements and Grading**

**Participation.** Your participation consists in attending all sessions, remaining alert and receptive, and engaging actively in the seminar. Seminars offer us an open space to work out our own thoughts and listen to others articulate theirs. In this way we practice critical thinking and expand our perspectives. For a seminar to work, each participant must be present physically and mentally. Your attendance is vitally important. Virtually all of what we do—including close-reading texts and artworks—takes the form of group discussions in seminar style. If you’re not present and alert in class, you aren’t able to participate in the group events. I expect, encourage, and greatly value your active and vocal participation. That is to say, I want to hear each of your voices at least once every class.

You must attend class on a regular basis and arrive on time for each seminar session. If you fall ill or experience an emergency, please contact me right away so that you can be prepared for the next class. Excessive absences (more than two) can jeopardize your course grade.

Turn off your cell phones and put them out of sight during class. You may use laptops, tablets, e-readers for class-related purposes only.

**Question postings.** Thinking begins with questions, attempts to formulate and direct a path of investigation. Critical thinking most often begins with *how* and *why* questions. To give us material to refine our question-asking skills, you will post at least three questions to the Forum (on NY Classes) by 8:00 p.m. the day before each class session. For example, for Monday’s class you must post three questions on the reading by 8:00 p.m. on Sunday. This gives everyone time to read the questions and use them to prepare for our discussion. Each question you post should take the form of a complete sentence. As the semester progresses, we may evolve this activity in various ways.
**Formal Essays.** You will write two formal essays this term. Prompts for each essay will be posted two weeks before the essay is due. Each of the two essays should state an argument clearly, support your contentions with evidence and analysis that uses close-reading, and connect your argument to broader concepts or problems that we have touched on in the course. We’ll discuss the formal essays in greater detail in class. You can rewrite any formal paper handed in on time for a new grade. You must submit the rewrite within two weeks of the day you first received the corrected paper.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and informal writings</td>
<td>30 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Question postings</td>
<td>15 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>First formal essay 6 pages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second formal essay 10-page essay</td>
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**Doing Your Own Work**

I follow the Gallatin policies on academic integrity strictly. Any kind of plagiarism or violation of academic integrity is not tolerated.

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.
Course Schedule

You should read each assigned text by the dates indicated below. For instance, you have to finish reading all of Kant and Mendelsohn before coming to class on Sept. 9.

Week 1

2 Sept.
Introductions.

Week 2

7 Sept.: No Class: Labor Day.

9 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Kant, “What Is Enlightenment?”*
Suggested reading:
- Horkheimer, “Reason against Itself: Some Remarks on Enlightenment”* (6 pp.).
Topics: Enlightenment and idealism: repetition and aftermath.

Week 3

14 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* *
- Ferber, “The Meaning of the Word,” (pp. 1–13)
Topic: The invention of rights.

16 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Burke, Wollstonecraft on the French Revolution*
- Burke, Wollstonecraft on the sublime*
- Ferber, “Sensibility” (pp. 14–30)
Topics: Zeitgeist, the sublime.

Week 4

21 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement* (excerpts)*
- Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* *
- Ferber, “The Poet” (pp. 32–62).
Topics: What the imagination does; fancy; genius.

23 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Gates, “Phillis Wheatley on Trial”*
- Ferber, “The Social Vision of Romanticism” (93–120)
- Suggested reading: Shields, “Phillis Wheatley and the Sublime.”*
Topics: Self-realization; negative space.
Week 5

28 Sept.
Readings for discussion:
- Ferber, “Religion, Philosophy, Science” (pp. 63–92)
Topics: Exploitation/exploration, the sublime, race.

30 Sept.
Readings for discussion:

Week 6

5 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
- Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, “Tintern Abbey,” “Resolution and Independence”
Topics: Counterfeiting the colloquial; place and memory.

7 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
- Keats, odes, sonnets, and selected letters
Topics: The art of unselving, negative space.

Week 7

12 Oct. M: No classes, Fall recess.
13 Oct. T: Monday schedule (Legislative Day)
Art for discussion:
- F. J. Turner, Delacroix, Ingres, Blake
Readings for discussion:
- Ruskin, “The Stones of Venice”
First Formal Essay Due.

14 Oct. W
Readings for discussion:
- Film for discussion: *Mr. Turner* (dir. Mike Leigh).

Week 8

19 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
- Dickinson, selected poems and letters.
- Higginson “Emily Dickinson’s Letters”

21 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
- Dickinson, selected poems and letters.
- Rich, “Vesuvius at Home”
- Werner, “Editorial Decisions Affect Dickinson Collections”
- Bervin, browse website of her projects
Suggested reading:
- Blackmur, “Dickinson’s Poems Lack Essential Elements”
Week 9

26 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
  o Fitzgerald, *The Blue Flower.*
  Topic: Romantic realism.

28 Oct.
Readings for discussion:
  o Fitzgerald, *The Blue Flower.*

Week 10

2 Nov.
Readings for discussion:
  o Novalis, *The Novices of Sais.*
  Topic: Orientalism 1; vision.

4 Nov.
Readings for discussion:
  o Novalis and Schlegel, fragments*
  o Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, “The Fragment”*
  Topics: Incomprehensibility; irony.

Week 11

9 Nov.
Readings for discussion:
  o Marx, “Alienated Labour,”* “Commodity Fetishism”*
  Topics: Imaginary values; forgetting.

11 Nov.
Visit to the Met.

Week 12

16 Nov.
Readings for discussion:
  o Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (14 pp.)*
  o “Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense”* (6 pp.)

18 Nov.
Prof. Paul North, guest lecturer.
Readings for discussion:
  o Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra.*

Week 13

23 Nov.
Musical interlude.

Second Formal Essay Due.

25–27 Nov.  T H A N K S G I V I N G  R E C E S S.
Week 14

30 Nov.
Readings for discussion:
  o Nerval, “Aurelia”*
Topic: Orientalism 2; dream.

2 Dec.
Readings for discussion:
  o Cornell, misc. boxes, films.
  o Moon, “Oralia.”*

Week 15

7 Dec.
Readings for discussion:
  o Freud, “Dora” from *The Interpretation of Dreams,* “The Wolf Man”*
  o Phillips, “Freud”*
Topics: Narrative; science; mastery.

9 Dec.
Readings for discussion:
  o Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double.*
Topics: Cruelty.

Week 16

14 Dec.
Concluding conversation.