

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 609.64-03

FALL 2014

COURSE TITLE: Decadent Materialism

Instructor: S. Forlini

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Office hours: Wednesdays 13:30-14:30

Course description:

Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Punch cartoons invariably depicted the Victorian aesthete as a physically depleted person engrossed in aesthetic contemplation of a beautiful object (a flower, a teapot, etc.) and neglecting other forms of sustenance such as food or contact with the outside world—that is, as one who apparently consumes him/herself in the intense contemplation of beautiful things. By the end of the century, physician Max Nordau solidified the diagnosis in all seriousness in his infamous and widely disseminated study *Degeneration* (English trans. 1895) in which he claimed that the aesthetes (among other artists) were degenerates who suffered from “inattention” and “disinclination to action.” However, when one examines his chapter on “symptoms”—which peculiarly includes a list of objects of personal adornment and interior décor that distract the degenerates—it is clear that Nordau (much like Punch) was concerned about the ways these “degenerates” paid an inordinate amount of attention to the *wrong things*. But what exactly is at stake in aesthetic attention and aesthetic things? What motivates attempts to discipline (through satire and/or diagnosis) the aesthetes’ seemingly queer object choices and practices of intense aesthetic contemplation? In this course, we will attempt to answer such questions by examining a wide-range of works from the British Aesthetic movement, especially those that become increasingly associated with Decadence, degeneration, materialism and undiscerning consumption. In surveying a wide range of Victorian theories of aesthetics, we will also examine their continuing relevance to more recent attempts to theorize aesthetics in what one critic calls the “return to aesthetics” of the last two decades.

Texts and readings:

Available Online (in public domain):

Allen, Grant. *Physiological Aesthetics*

Lee, Vernon. “Beauty and Ugliness”

-- *Belcaro* (selected essays)

-- *Miss Brown*

-- *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics*

Morris, William. *News from Nowhere*.

Pater, Walter. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*

-- *Marius, the Epicurean*

Ruskin, John. *Modern Painters* (excerpts)

-- *The Stones of Venice* (excerpts)
Wilde, Oscar. Selections from his College Notebooks
-- *Intentions*
-- *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
-- *Salome*
Selected secondary readings from U of C library's online collection

From the Bookstore:

Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*
Isobel Armstrong's *The Radical Aesthetic*
Dennis Donoghue's *Speaking of Beauty*
Jacques Rancière's *Aesthetics and its Discontents*

Recommended Readings:

Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics*
Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*

Assignments and Evaluation:

Participation: 20%
Presentation (Victorian Aesthetics): 20%
Presentation (Theory): 20%
Final Essay (15-18 pages): 40%

Participation: Because this is a seminar-style course attendance and participation are essential. Participation grades will be based on attendance and the quality of a student's contributions to class discussions, but will also include performing the role of discussant for at least one student presentation. However, if a student misses more than 3 classes and fails to provide appropriate medical documentation explaining the absences, he/she will receive a grade of zero in this component.

Presentation: Students will prepare two 10-15-minute presentations on specific readings. Presentations should be analytical in nature, constituting a short essay (5-7 pages long). Students will be evaluated based on the quality of the presentation and the student's ability to respond to discussion questions.

Final essay: Students will prepare a final essay (15-18 pages long) on a topic of their choice. Topics must be approved by the instructor. To obtain approval, students must arrange to meet with the instructor and present a brief proposal or research question. Final essays may build upon previous assignments for this course but must be sufficiently different to be approved.

There is no Registrar-scheduled exam for this course.

There will be no extra credit assignments.

Class Policies:

1-Students are expected to come to class having done all required readings (specified in the reading schedule) and to be prepared to participate actively in class discussion.

2-All assignments must be submitted on the specified date and time that they are due. Electronic submissions are not acceptable.

3-Assignments submitted after the deadline will be subject to a late penalty of 5% per day (including weekends). Late assignments should be submitted through the department dropbox. It is the student's responsibility to confirm that the instructor receives it. Assignments that are more than 5 days late will not be accepted without appropriate medical documentation.

4-In order to receive a passing grade in this course, students must complete all assignments.

5-All assignments must adhere to MLA style guidelines (7th edition).

Note: Please make all efforts to take assignments directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so, take your assignment to SS1152 and put it in the dropbox, where your assignment will be date-stamped and placed in the instructor's mailbox. Please keep a copy of your assignment in case of loss by any cause. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the Department office.

Grading system:

Grades are calculated according to the 4 point scale used in the *Graduate Calendar*:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/grad/current/gs-e-1.html>

Grade	Grade Point Value	Graduate Description
A+	4.00	Outstanding
A	4.00	Excellent-superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	Very good performance
B+	3.30	Good performance
B	3.00	Satisfactory performance
B-	2.70	Minimum pass for students in Faculty of Graduate Studies
C+	2.30	All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted towards Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements.
C	2.00	
C-	1.70	
D+	1.30	
D	1.00	
F	0.00	

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

All grades below B- are indicative of failure at the graduate level and cannot be counted toward Faculty of Graduate Studies course requirements. A student who receives a grade of F will normally be required to withdraw unless the program recommends otherwise.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/graduate>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students.
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Library and Research Support:

Melanie Boyd, Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact: maboyd@ucalgary.ca
Find *The English Pages* research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Department of English's graduate website for courses, departmental deadlines, and other related program information at <http://english.ucalgary.ca/node/245>. Consult the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar for university and faculty regulations, dates, deadline, fees, and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the Faculty of Graduate Studies Calendar is <http://grad.ucalgary.ca>.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact the Graduate Office at 403 220 5484 or visit us in Social Sciences Tower 1148 in the first instance.

For program planning and advice, contact the Graduate Administrator at enggrad@ucalgary.ca to make an appointment with Dr. Aruna Srivastava, Graduate Program Director.

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Academic Accommodation:

It is the students’ responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodations and have not registered with Student Accessibility Services, please contact them at 403-220-6019. Students who have not registered with Student Accessibility Services are not eligible for formal academic accommodations. More information about academic accommodations can be found at www.ucalgary.ca/access.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Contact for the Graduate Student Association: <http://gsa.ucalgary.ca/>

Contact for Students Ombudsman’s Office: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>)

“The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community”. The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a “positive and productive learning and working environment.”

This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that “seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff”. Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.