Description: Steampunk. *Sherlock*. Victoria’s Secret. Popular culture continually reinvents and reimagines Victorian Britain. This upper-level, discussion-based class explores aspects of nineteenth-century art and literature that have proven the most persistent and captivating for contemporary society. Through images and texts we will investigate many of the big ideas, inventions, and events that changed the way we understand our world, including imperialism and the birth of race theory, urbanism, evolution, technology enabling global communication, industrialization, and democratic struggle. Escapism from this turmoil of modernity led in turn to the proliferation of fantastic art and literature, celebrating the unseen world of fairies and ghosts; imagining the future; inventing the marriage plot (and its alternatives); and pondering altered states of consciousness through drug use and mesmerism or spiritualism. Art movements include Pre-Raphaelitism, Social Realism, and Aestheticism. The conclusion of the course will take us into our own current preoccupation with the nineteenth century, covering steampunk, Neo-Victorian literature and projects such as reproducing Victorian food, clothing, or ways of living.

This class will focus not merely on improving skills in critical reading and writing, research, public speaking, and visual/textual analysis, but will also help us think with clarity about how these skills may be useful outside the classroom and in future careers.

Assignments will include two short papers, a response journal, presentations, and class participation.

We will use resources in the city to enhance the experience of reading works written by and about Londoners. Excitingly there will an important retrospective of the works of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Coley Burne-Jones in Spring 2019 at Tate Britain, and we will also visit the Orientalist fantasy home of painter Frederic Leighton House. Highgate cemetery will help us consider Victorian rituals around death, and a tour of Westminster Palace (The Houses of Parliament) will bring to life some of Victorian Britain’s ideas of their own medieval past.

**COURSE TEXTS**

Course Reader: Online/Packet TBD
Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 1886
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890
George Eliot, “The Lifted Veil,” 1859

*course details are subject to change. You will receive a detailed course syllabus in London.*