

Lent Term 2018

Modern and Contemporary Literature MPhil: Option Course

Victorian Work Ethics: Labour in the Literary Imagination, 1830-1914

Convenor: Dr Marcus Waithe (Magdalene)

Lent Term 2018

Time: TBC

Location: TBC

Introduction: Inspired by recent critical interest in the Victorian period's various 'work ethics', this course examines the troubled relationship between literature and the activity we call 'work'. It first considers the origins of the so-called 'Gospel of Labour' popularized in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s. Attention then turns to Ruskin's idealized portrait of the artisan, and to cases of rebellion from that orthodoxy: notably, the morbid abstention of Herman Melville's *Bartleby* and the 'polite' opt-outs of Dickens's Mr Skimpole. Week 5 considers the discontents of authorship, and the scope for seeing writing itself as an honourable 'labour'. In the last two weeks, we address later re-formulations of work, in particular the idea of 'craft' as a rejuvenated professional, literary, and human value, and the reconciliation of material and transcendent experience in the utopian visions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Students taking this course will develop their understanding of a key Victorian 'value', and will acquire detailed knowledge of work by leading writers and thinkers of the period. It is hoped that the course will also prompt fruitful comparative reflection on the meanings of 'work' in our own economy of values.

Course Structure: 6 x 1.5 hr seminars running Weeks 2-7 of Lent Term. Each week there will be either one or two student-led presentations.

Course Admin: Much of the administration will be carried out through a Moodle site dedicated to the course, to which you will be signed up once your choice of course is confirmed. Some items of core and contextual reading will be posted on the site in PDF format.

Preparation: (i) The 'Core Reading' listed for each seminar is the compulsory minimum, and should be studied in detail in preparation for seminars; (ii) 'Contextual Sources' may be drawn on in discussion, and they may be useful in guiding further research, but you *need not* read them cover-to-cover; (iii) A list of 'Secondary Reading' is supplied for guidance.

Essays: Any essays written for this course must bear a clear relation to its themes and historical scope. You are encouraged to formulate your own question in consultation with me.

Schedule of Topics:

Week 2	Labour Theories of Value
Week 3	The Dignity of (Manual) Labour
Week 4	Sluggards and Slackers
Week 5	Literary Labourers
Week 6	Craft Ethics
Week 7	Utopian Labour and the 'New Life'

Interdisciplinary Research Environment: Event listings, and other important information relating to Nineteenth-Century Studies in the University, will appear on the Faculty's Research Group for Nineteenth-Century Studies:

<<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/research/nineteenth/>>

- For your purposes, the most important listing is 'The Nineteenth Century Graduate Seminar':

<<http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/seminars/nineteenth.htm>>

Week 2. Labour Theories of Value

Thomas Carlyle defended the unemployed masses in *Chartism* (1839), citing the injustice they suffered in being denied work by an 'idle' ruling class. By 1850, his tune had changed – in that year, he launched a notorious attack on those supposedly guilty of refusing work. In this opening seminar, we will consider the origins of Carlyle's 'Gospel of Labour'. Why did 'work' acquire such an overdetermined significance in the period? In what sense was the honouring of work a distinctly Victorian phenomenon? What (if any) criticisms were levelled against this gathering orthodoxy?

Core Reading / Visual Sources

- Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism* (1839) (any edition)
- Extract from Thomas Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850) (PDF supplied)
- J. S. Mill, 'The Negro Question' (January, 1850) (PDF supplied)
- Ford Madox Brown, *Work*, oil, 1852-65, Manchester Art Gallery

<<http://www.manchestergalleries.org/the-collections/search-the-collection/image.php?EMUSESSID=8e9cba927388f00850f814575e2e054d&imageir n=156&r=2129047892>>

Contextual Sources

- Extracts from three labour theorists: Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Karl Marx (PDFs supplied)
- Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help* (1859) (any edition)
- John Ruskin, 'Work', *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866) (PDF supplied)

Secondary Reading

Anthony, P. D., *The Ideology of Work* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977)

Arendt, Hannah, *The Human Condition*, 2nd edn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958)

Briggs, Asa, 'Samuel Smiles and the Gospel of Labour', in *Victorian People: A Reassessment of Persons and Themes 1851-67* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971) (1955), pp. 124-147

Carlisle, Janice, *Picturing Reform in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) (see chapter on 'Representing Labor')

Houghton, Walter, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 242-262 ('4. Work', in Chapter 10 on 'Earnestness')

Lesjak, Carolyn, *Working Fictions: A Genealogy of the Victorian Novel* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006)

Thomas, Keith, *The Oxford Book of Work* (Oxford: OUP, 1999)

Swift, Roger, 'Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, and the Irish in Early Victorian England', *Victorian Literature and Culture* (2001), 67-83

Week 3. The Dignity of (Manual) Labour

In Week 3, we will consider Ruskin's account of the creative free expression supposedly enjoyed by the medieval cathedral builders. Ruskin wanted to rehabilitate manual labour, and he challenged the assumption that 'liberal' occupations were more honourable than those employing the hands. We will consider the legacy of this Romantic labour tradition in Hopkins's 'Harry Ploughman', and in Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1896), a novel that offers a mixture of sympathetic and critical commentary on Ruskin's vision of inspired stonemasons.

Core Reading

- John Ruskin, 'The Nature of Gothic' (from *The Stones of Venice*, Vol. 2) (1853) (PDF supplied)
- Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'Harry Ploughman' (PDF provided)
- Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (1896), ed. by Patricia Ingham (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002)

Contextual Sources

- J. Nash, 'Amateur Navvies at Oxford – Undergraduates Making a Road as Suggested by Mr Ruskin', *The Graphic* in 1874 (PDF Supplied)
- Elliott & Fry studio, 'Gladstone Chopping wood', photograph, (c. 1889) (PDF Supplied)
- Ilya Repin, *Portrait of Leo Tolstoy as a Ploughman on a Field*, 1887, oil on canvas, The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia (viewable via a Google image search)

Secondary Reading

- Anthony, P. D., *John Ruskin's Labour: A Study of Ruskin's Social Theory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983)
- Barringer, Tim, *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)
- Beatty, C. J.P., *The Architectural Notebook of Thomas Hardy* (Dorchester: Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, 1966)
- Bromell, Nicholas Knowles, *By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1993)
- Danahay, Martin, *Gender at Work in Victorian Culture: Literature, Art and Masculinity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)
- Heinzelman, Kurt, 'The Uneducated Imagination: Romantic Representations of Labor', *At the Limits of Romanticism*, ed. by Mary Favret and Nicola Watson (Indiana UP, 1994), 101-124
- Hughes, John, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)
- Waithe, Marcus, 'William Barnes: Views of Field Labour in *Poems of Rural Life*', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Week 4. Sluggards and Slackers

In Week 4, we will consider the scandal and the appeal of the Victorian 'refusenik'. To what extent were sluggards and slackers a necessary function of the 'Gospel of Labour'? Were they simply the reverse side of the coin, or harbingers of a real alternative? What connections form between mid-Victorian portraits of idleness and Aestheticism's later privileging of sensory experience over production?

Core Reading

- Herman Melville, 'Bartleby the Scrivener' (1853) (PDF supplied)
- Extracts from Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853) (PDF supplied)
- Isaac Watts, 'The Sluggard', *The Divine and Moral Songs for the Use of Children* (1715) (PDF supplied)
- Lewis Carroll's spoof of 'The Sluggard' in *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) (PDF supplied)

Contextual Sources

- Tennyson, 'The Lotos-Eaters' (1831 / 1842)
- Last chapter of Walter Pater, *The Renaissance* (1873)
- *Marius the Epicurean* (1885)

Secondary Reading

- * Aldeman, Richard, *Idleness, Contemplation and the Aesthetic, 1750-1830* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011)
- Baudrillard, Jean, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. by Mark Poster (St Louis: Telos Press, 1975)
- Danon, Ruth, *Work in the English Novel: The Myth of Vocation* (London: Croom Helm, 1985)
- Dellamora, Richard, *Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990)
- Dowling, Linda, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994)
- Gagnier, Regenia, *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Stanford University Press, 1986)
- Gleason, William A., *The Leisure Ethic: Work and Play in American Literature, 1840-1940* (Stanford UP, 1999)
- Hibbitt, Richard, *Dilettantism and its Values: From Weimar Classicism to the Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006)
- Weber, Max, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, ed. by Anthony Giddens (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Weisbuch, Robert, 'Dickens, Melville, and a Tale of Two Countries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. by Deirdre David (Cambridge: CUP, pp. 234-254)

Week 5. Literary Labourers

Isaac D'Israeli wrote that 'to meditate, to compose, to read and to be tranquil, should be called *working*.' How have writers projected and problematised their labours against a changing understanding of what it means to 'work'? Have they operated at a remove from dominant modes and measures of productivity or sought an accommodation? In what sense is literary activity poised between labour and idleness? We will consider Carlyle's attempt to cast the Sheffield poet, Ebenezer Elliot (author of *Corn Law Rhymes*), as a kind of literary artisan; we will also address the forms of morbidity that George Eliot explores in her portrait of Mr Casaubon, and that George Gissing associates with the trials of authorship in *The New Grub Street* (1891).

Core Reading

- Thomas Carlyle, 'Corn-Law Rhymes' (essay from *The Edinburgh Review*) (1832) (PDF provided)
- Extracts from George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (1871-2) (PDF provided)
- George Gissing, *The New Grub Street* (1891), ed. by John Goode (Oxford: OUP, 2008)

Contextual Sources

- Extracts from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (1856) (PDF provided)
- Isaac D'Israeli, *The Literary Character, Illustrated by The History of Men of Genius, Drawn from their own Feelings and Confessions* (1795) (1818 edition) (see *Google Books* <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=cm-daCKOZg8C&dq=Isaac%20D%E2%80%99Israeli%2C%20The%20Literary%20Character&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false>)
- Philip Hammerton, *The Intellectual Life* (1873) (available in the UL rare books room, or on Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/32151>)

Secondary Reading

- Heyck, T. W., *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (Croom Helm, 1982)
- Pettitt, Clare, *Patent Inventions: Intellectual Property and the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: OUP, 2004)
- Nuttall, A. D., *Dead from the Waist Down: Scholars and Scholarship in the Popular Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003)
- Salmon, Richard, *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)
- , 'Authorship' in *Henry James in Context*, ed. David McWhirter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 105-114
- Waithe, Marcus, 'The Pen and the Hammer: Thomas Carlyle, Ebenezer Elliott, and the "active poet"', in *Class and the Canon: Constructing Labouring-Class Poetry and Poetics, 1780-1900*, ed. by Mina Gorjii and Kirstie Blair (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013)
- , "'Another sort of writing'? Invalidism and Poetic Labour in the Letters of Elizabeth Barrett', in *Letter Writing Among Poets: From William Wordsworth to Elizabeth Bishop*, ed. Jonathan Ellis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 126-140
- , and Claire White, eds, *The Labour of Literature in Britain and France, 1830-1910: Authorial Work Ethics* (London: Palgrave, 2017) [forthcoming at time of writing]

Week 6. Craft Ethics

Richard Sennett writes that “‘Craftsmanship’ may suggest a way of life that waned with the advent of industrial society – but this is misleading.’ ‘Craftsmanship’, he contends, ‘names an enduring, basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake’. The origins of this hesitation between ‘craft’ understood as a redundant working practice, and ‘craft’ as a human virtue or moral standard, can be traced to its self-conscious revival as a ‘complex word’ in the late nineteenth century. This revival is most obvious in William Morris’s championing of the applied arts; it also informed the values that Charles Dickens and George Eliot invested in the life of the forge and the workshop. Was the return to ‘craft’ merely a nostalgic impulse, or a viable path to social transformation?

Core Reading

- Essays by William Morris: ‘The Revival of Handicraft’ (1888); ‘Art and its Producers’ (1888); ‘The Arts and Crafts Today’ (1889) (PDFs provided)
- Gerard Manley Hopkins, ‘Felix Randal’ (PDF provided)

Contextual Sources

- Extracts from Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861) (PDF provided)
- Oscar Wilde, ‘Mr Morris on Tapestry’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 2 November 1888 (PDF provided)
- George Eliot, *Adam Bede* (1859)

Secondary Reading

- Blakesley, Rosalind, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon Press, 2009)
- Chambers, Susan, ‘Gerard Manley Hopkins and the Kinesthetics of Conviction’, *Victorian Studies*, 51.1 (Autumn, 2008), 7-35
- Crawford, Matthew B., *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (London: Penguin, 2010)
- Droth, Martina, ‘The Ethics of Making: Craft and English Sculptural Aesthetics, c. 1851-1900’, *Journal of Design History*, 17.3 (2004)
- Hughes, John, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)
- Humiliata, Mary, ‘Hopkins and the Prometheus Myth’, *PMLA*, 70.1 (1955), 58-68
- Kaplan, Wendy and Elizabeth Cumming, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1991)
- Leslie, Esther, ‘Walter Benjamin: Traces of Craft’, *Journal of Design History*, 11.1 (1998), 5-13
- MacCarthy, Fiona, *The Simple Life: C. R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (University of California Press, 1981)
- Muthesius, Stefan, ‘Hankwerk/Kunsth Handwerk’, *Journal of Design History*, 11.1 (1998), 85-95
- Osteen, Mark, ‘The Great Expectations of Stephen Dedalus’, *James Joyce Quarterly*, 41.1/2 (Fall, 2003), 169-183
- Schaffer, Talia, *Novel Craft: Victorian Domestic Handicraft & Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: OUP, 2011)
- Sennett, Richard, *The Craftsman* (London: Penguin, 2008)
- Waithe, Marcus, *Ruskin and Craftsmanship* (The Ruskin Lecture, 2015) (York: Guild of St George, 2015)
- , ‘Ruskin’s Cultural Legacies’, in *The Cambridge Companion to John Ruskin*, ed. Francis O’Gorman (Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 263-278

Week 7. Utopian Labour and ‘the New Life’

William Morris followed Ruskin in regarding fulfilling work as a necessary component of human happiness. His vision of the utopian future – like that of Henry Thoreau before him, and Edward Carpenter after – placed a reformed labour process centre-stage. Olive Schreiner champions a related logic in *Woman and Labour* (1911), advancing work-based claims to contentment for her own sex. We will consider an alternative view in Oscar Wilde’s ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ (1891). Wilde’s essay makes a case for the inspired leisure made possible by machines. What assumptions are at stake in these differing conceptions of the relationship between work and human welfare?

Core Reading

- Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890), in Clive Wilmer, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2004)
- Oscar Wilde, ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’ (1891) (PDF supplied)
- Extracts from Olive Schreiner, *Woman and Labour* (1911) (PDF supplied)

Contextual Sources

- Extracts from Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (1883-1902) (PDF supplied); *My Days and Dreams: Being Autobiographical Notes* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1916)
- Henry Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (1854)

Secondary Reading

Armeytage, W.H.G., *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961)

Beevers, Robert, *The Garden City Utopia: A Critical Biography of Ebenezer Howard* (London: Macmillan, 1988)

Brown, Tony, *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism* (London: Cass, 1990)

Cary, John, ed., *The Faber Book of Utopias* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999)

Rowbothan, Sheila, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London: Pluto Press, 1977)

Faulkner, Peter, *Against the Age: An Introduction to William Morris* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980)

Glass, Stanley Thomas, *The Responsible Society: The Ideas of the English Guild Socialist* (London: Longmans, 1966)

Goodwin, Barbara, *Social Science and Utopia: Nineteenth-Century Models of Social Harmony* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978)

Grennan, Margaret R., *William Morris: Medievalist and Revolutionary* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1945)

Hutchinson, Frances, *The Political Economy of Social Credit and Guild Socialism* (Jon Carpenter, 2005)

Kumar, Krishan, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

Marsh, J., *Back to the Land: The Pastoral Impulse in Victorian England from 1880-1914* (London: Quartet Books, 1982)

Thompson, E. P., *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, rev. edn (London: Merlin Press, 1977)

Waithe, Marcus, *William Morris’s Utopia of Strangers: Victorian Medievalism and the Ideal of Hospitality* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2006)