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Issues in Contemporary Humanities 2020/2021 (Sem II)

Victorian Short Story

Although there have always been stories — simple, straightforward narratives in prose or verse — to be found in the folktales, ballads, fables, myths and legends of all nations and cultures -- they saw their true boom in the Victorian era, popularized and transformed into art by such giants of the times as Charles Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, or Robert Louis Stevenson.

Through a close engagement with a selection of texts (to be provided either in pdf format or available online), this course will trace the development of a number of genres, including detective fiction, fairy- and political tale as well as the Gothic and will cover a number of key issues such as class, gender, and empire, tolerance, quest for power or love.

Assessment will be based on students' in-class participation and individual presentations discussing aspects of literary works or the achievement of their authors.

An indicative selection of some of the course reading includes:

- Rhoda Broughton, *The Truth, The Whole Truth And Nothing But The Truth*
- John Ruskin, *The King of the Golden River*
- Alfred Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*
- Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Sister Helen* and
- Charles Dickens, *The Signalman/ Sketches by Boz*
- Elizabeth Gaskell, *Curious, if True*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *Markheim*
- Kenneth Graham, *The Reluctant Dragon*
- Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Mazarin Stone*
- Oscar Wilde, *The Selfish Giant*

Working on Sarah Hall's suggestion that "the short story is the perfect form for our year of Covid." (The Guardian , 24 Dec 2020) and that it's "very satisfying to complete a reading in a single sitting (or few) and enjoy the rich effect,"¹ I invite all students willing to explore the world of Victorian ideas and adventures.

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/dec/24/this-christmas-read-a-story-aloud-youll-be-surprised-by-the-joy-it-brings>