ENGL 424 The Novel: subtitle

Course description (from SUNY Geneseo Bulletin): A study of representative novels emphasizing the development of the Anglophone novel as a literary form. Course topics include The Rise of the Novel; the Picaresque Novel in English; the Nineteenth-Century British Novel; Dandyism and the Novel; the American Civil War Novel; The Novel during the Interwar Period; and the Black British Novel. (May be taken for credit twice under different subtitles.) Offered when demand is sufficient.

In Enemies of Promise (1938), Cyril Connolly posits "the Dandy" as one of the four roles the modern novelist may choose to follow: it demands, he writes, a commitment to "wit and lyricism" resulting in "the most delicate achievements of conscious art." Connolly, however, is not the first critic to conceive of the author (and most frequently a male author) as literary "Dandy"; this course will survey the development of the "Dandy" novel from its roots in the early 18th-century to its reappearance during late 19th-century Aesthetic movement, ending in the mid-twentieth century. Among our readings are works by Wilde, Du Maurier, Waugh, Huxley, MacInnes, and Crisp. Works only available in electronic editions are required.

Learning Outcomes

Students who have completed this particular section of ENGL4xx will:

• understand the major issues concerning the literary and narrative representation of the “Dandy” and, to a lesser extent, the “Aesthete”;
• understand the relationship of those issues to the novel as a genre; and
• understand the British socio-historical significance of these developments during the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, and after.

Students who complete any section of ENGL4xx will:

• be able to identify and negotiate issues and problems related to the interpretation of the novels listed on the syllabus;
• be able to present literary research and analysis collaboratively in a range of written and oral contexts;
• be able to discuss and debate literary texts and issues while respecting the other members of the class and their perspectives;
• be able to demonstrate the understanding and ability described above in an advanced essay of literary analysis that uses and properly acknowledges secondary sources.

ENGL4xx fulfills the following departmental 400-level outcomes.

• ability to “join the conversation” that is always ongoing among critics and scholars regarding texts, authors, and topics by engaging with secondary sources;
• in-depth understanding of a single author, a small group of authors, or a narrowly-defined topic, theme, or issue.

Book list. [Available at the SUNY-Geneseo bookstore & Sundance Books.]
Selections from several "Silver Fork" novels (PDFs available on mycourses) :


Other reading material available on mycourses, with more to be added as the semester progresses.


"Was Byron a Dandy?" *The Academy* (30 July 1898): 113-4.


Sima Godfrey. "The Dandy as Ironic Figure." *SubStance* 11.3 (1982): 21-33.


Course requirements.

One 10-15 page research-based critical paper | 1 grade
One midterm exam | 1 grade
Class presentations ("Silver": 20%, Set 1: 40%, Set 2: 40%) | 1 grade
Class participation | 1 grade
Total | 4 grades

Presentations

During the semester, each student will participate in two group presentations, the topics for which appear below. Each group will create a handout for the class to aid in the presentation. There may be an element of peer-feedback for the group's overall evaluation.

Other work

The midterm exam is a blue-book exam. You will complete one or two essay prompts that deal with the subject matter of the course. The exam is based on class reading, lectures, and discussion. The research-based critical paper is due during our scheduled final exam period, "A2," 12-3PM Wednesday, 14 December. There will be several pre-writing deadlines for that assignment (topic choice, written proposal, working bibliography, etc.), as announced sometime after the midterm. There is no final "exam."

Missing exams, paper, and other assignments will receive a point value of 0% and averaged. Instructor will also consider overall performance and engagement in determining final grade.

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, attend each class, and to arrive prepared. Students must participate in class discussion and will be called upon to respond to class discussion and questions; however, students should demonstrate self-motivated class engagement.

By the way: if you are not going to attend class, e-mail me before the class meeting. Also, while I do bring
corrected material to class, if you aren't there to pick it up, I leave it outside my office in a box marked for your section.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading assignment</th>
<th>Other activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29 M</td>
<td>First class meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 M</td>
<td><em>Labor Day. No class meeting.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>7 W</td>
<td>Selections from <em>Tremaine</em>, <em>Vivian Grey</em>, <em>Pelham</em>, and <em>Cecil</em>.</td>
<td>Group presentations and discussion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 M</td>
<td>Du Maurier: <em>Trilby</em>, Part Sixth, Seventh &amp; Eighth (193-302).</td>
<td>Presentation 1A</td>
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<td>21 W</td>
<td>Huysmans, <em>Against the Grain</em>, Ch. 1-6 (15-113).</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 M</td>
<td>Huysmans, <em>Against the Grain</em>, Ch. 7-12 (114-245).</td>
<td>Presentation 2A</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 W</td>
<td>Huysmans, <em>Against the Grain</em>, Ch. 13-16 (246-331).</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>5 W</td>
<td>Wilde, <em>Picture</em>, Ch. 6-11 (110-78).</td>
<td>Presentation 3A</td>
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<td>10 M</td>
<td>Fall Break. No class meeting.</td>
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<td>12 W</td>
<td>No class meeting. Please complete the alternate assignment as noted in mycourses.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 M</td>
<td>Wilde, <em>Picture</em>, Ch. 12-20 (179-251).</td>
<td>Presentation 4A</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 M</td>
<td>Waugh, <em>Brideshead</em>, Prologue, Bk. 1, Ch. 1-4 (3-104).</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 W</td>
<td>Waugh, <em>Brideshead</em>, Bk. 1, Ch. 5-6 (104-78).</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 M</td>
<td>Waugh, <em>Brideshead</em>, Bk. 1, Ch. 7-Book 2, Ch. 1 (178-264).</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 M</td>
<td>MacInnes, &quot;In June,&quot; (9-150).</td>
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<td>23 W</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break. No class meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 M</td>
<td>MacInnes, &quot;In July,&quot; &quot;In August,&quot; (151-230).</td>
<td>Presentation 3B</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 W</td>
<td>MacInnes, &quot;In September&quot; (231-86).</td>
<td>Final essay ad-hoc round-table.</td>
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<td>December</td>
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<td>5 M</td>
<td>Crisp, <em>Naked Civil</em>, Ch. 1-10 (1-68).</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 W</td>
<td>Crisp, <em>Naked Civil</em>, Ch. 11-20 (69-137).</td>
<td>Presentation 4B</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 M</td>
<td>Crisp, <em>Naked Civil</em>, Ch. 21-206 (138-206).</td>
<td>Last class meeting.</td>
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The "Silver Fork" Reading and Presentation Groups, Wednesday, 7 September:
For this class meeting, we will divide the readings into four groups: a quarter of the class will read selections from one of the four "Silver Fork" novels available on mycourses. The titles are as follows:


These are all novels of development more or less, revealing the life of our gentleman protagonist from his childhood to adulthood. Our selections from the works' beginning, often focus on his early development.

For the Wednesday meeting, each group will need to prepare the following as they guide the rest of the class through the reading:

- a summary of the plot of the reading selection (not the entire novel)

"Silver Fork" novels supposedly depict aristocratic life in unusual and entertaining detail

- What kinds of detail does the selection present?
- What may have been (or still is) intriguing about these details?
- Decipher as best you can the novel's attitude to the wealth and privilege it may depict.
- Does that attitude differ with certain characters and in some situations? Why might that be?

"The Dandy" is often a stock character of the "Silver Fork" novels, and each of the novels presents what has often been understood as a dandy for its protagonist. Think about these aspects in terms of connection to both Barey D'Aurevilly and Baudelaire.

- What are the qualities that your dandy presents?
- How does he serve as a definition of the type?
- Does he resist any expectations of the dandy character?

You might think about these aspects in terms of style, wealth, intelligence, morality, gender, or any other factor you find worthwhile.

There must be evidence for these conclusions: refer to specific places in the text--with page numbers. We will go over these sections in class, so be prepared.

If members of your group came to different conclusions, please note that during your presentation and discussion.

**Two Sets of Group Presentations:**

There will be four groups for each set, or round, of this assignment, as noted later. Each group will be responsible, as scheduled, for a ten minute presentation on the assigned topic including a handout distributed (by email and/or mycourses) to the class. Each group will receive written feedback concerning their presentation. There are two "sets," each marked by a separate time by which to sign-up, allowing for changes in group membership.

The presentations often deal with material already available on mycourses. For these presentations, the group should read all the available material (depending on the amount and length of the reading) and provide the connections suggested by the topic. While this material is available to the class as a whole to read and discuss, the group should not assume that everyone will be prepared to do so. A few presentations demand that the group does its own research. For these presentations, the group will have to explain the material without any assumption as to class knowledge. Connections to the novels are appreciated and necessary, as noted by the topics. The group should email the presentation handout to me by 10AM on the day of the presentation at the latest. Please make sure that your handout provides a bibliography or source list for the class's reference.

**Presentation Set A**

1A. Report and Analysis: Two of the readings on Du Maurier's *Trilby* as found in the Du Maurier mycourses folder. Explain their arguments, and evaluate their accuracy and worth as best you can. How do the articles change your reading of the novel (or not)?

2A. Report and Analysis: *Degeneration*. Max Nordau's chapter, "Decadents and Aesthetes," from *Degeneration*, excoriates Huysmans and Wilde, among other folk. Nordau hates this novel, and details the problems that he finds. You should detail how the aesthetic arguments presented in the work help our understanding of the novel, and then evaluate Nordau's position. What does Nordau expect from literature, and why does Huysmans fail his test?

3A. Report and Analysis: "The Decay of Lying." Wilde's 1889 "dialogue, "The Decay of Lying" (found in the Wilde mycourses folder), is not about *Dorian Gray* specifically, but for this presentation your group should try to see how the aesthetic arguments presented in the work help our understanding of the novel. Does the
novel follow a similar paradigm? Is it removed from Nature and Life? Does the essay change your reading of the novel (or not)?

4A. Report and Analysis: Selections from Cyril Connolly, *Enemies of Promise*. In this section Connolly tries to present a sweeping classification of the twentieth-century novel. Explain this classification, and analyze how the concept of the Dandy is reflected in the material. How does the Dandy help us understand the novels and novelists discussed? Why does Connolly use this concept in this way?

*Presentation Set B*

1B. Report and Analysis: Reviews of *These Barren Leaves* in Huxley: *The Critical Heritage*. What did people say about Huxley's book when it was published? Are there patterns to the praise or criticism? Does history grant you a different or similar perspective?

2B. Report and Analysis: Reviews of *Brideshead Revisited* in Waugh: *The Critical Heritage*. What did people say about Waugh's book when it was published? Are there patterns to the praise or criticism? Does history grant you a different or similar perspective?

3B. Report and Analysis: Two of the readings on MacInnes's *Absolute Beginners* as found in the MacInnes *mycourses* folder. Explain their arguments, and evaluate their accuracy and worth as best you can. How do the articles change your reading of the novel (or not)?

4B. Report and Analysis: Two of the readings on Crisp's *Naked Civil Servant* as found in the Crisp *mycourses* folder. Explain their arguments, and evaluate their accuracy and worth as best you can. How do the articles change your reading of the novel (or not)?

*On Class Participation*

Class participation includes attendance and preparation, along with active participation in class and in small group work. Class participation means that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually; by doing so you work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement. Ideally, over time, we all will move from merely stating a position during class discussion to striving to promote dialogue between everyone in the class.

The following criteria help to determine your participation grade. The criteria focus on what you demonstrate and do not presume to guess at what you necessarily know. Why? Because part of what discussion can produce is a different method of understanding the material--that is the process itself leads to a pedagogical end. Generally, the average level of participation satisfies the criteria for a "C+.”

A. Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed reading exceptionally well, relating it to other material (e.g., readings, lecture, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).
  - Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of reading, e.g., puts together pieces of discussion and lecture to develop new approaches that take the class further.
  - Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students comments, contributes to the cooperative argument building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.
  - Demonstrates active involvement, ideally at every class meeting.

B. Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading well, has thought through implications of reading.
  - Offers interpretations and analysis of the reading (more than just the facts) to class.
  - Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students’ points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.
  - Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

C. Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret, analyze, or connect them to other aspects of the class.
  - Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on.
  - Demonstrates sporadic involvement.

D. Present, not disruptive.
  - Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much.
  - Demonstrates infrequent involvement in discussion.
F or E. Not present.

Frequently stated, but generally unsatisfactory, reasons for your lack of participation:
- “Shyness.”
  If this is you, feel free to come see me so we can work out strategies for getting you involved.
- Thinking that “this conversation is shallow/obvious/stupid.”
  If you think the conversation needs more depth, redirect it.
- Fearing that you’ll offend someone because of their gender/race/ethnicity/sexuality/religion/etc.
  It’s good to be sensitive to others’ feelings. But silence is not an option. You must learn to voice your thoughts.
- Thinking, “I can’t say anything profound, so I’ll be quiet.”
  If this is you, start small. Answer a factual question I ask, or add on to someone else’s comment, e.g. “I agree with Sarah and there’s another example of that on page 67.”
- Thinking that “I just like to listen.”
  Being actively involved can profoundly change your experience of a class. The rest of us are working hard to build readings of these texts and would love your help. Carry your weight.

Some students will sometimes attempt to shield themselves with these claims and ruses to mask a general lack of preparedness or engagement with the material. That is, of course, unacceptable, and it is usually obvious when one does so.