JUNIOR TUTORIAL: GEORGE ELIOT AND VICTORIAN SCIENCE, SPRING 2016

“Middlemarch is the one of the few English novels written for grown-up people.”

-- Virginia Woolf

This class will read the greatest Victorian novelist in relation to some of the most significant intellectual developments of her age: the rise of the biological, social, and statistical sciences as the fields we know today. In the structure and the content of her novels, George Eliot worked through the questions that defined her age – and that endure in ours: How can we understand human experience, and the human will, in a materialistic world? What is the moral force of scientific representations of the workings of an individual, or of a society? Is there still room for individual freedom in the world of Darwinian evolution, of statistics, and of “chance”? This class will combine historical, aesthetic, and ethical approaches to examine Eliot’s rich and complex novels and her powerful ethics of everyday life. In addition to a selection of Eliot’s novels and critical prose, we will read some major scientific works of the Victorian era (including texts by two of Eliot’s love interests!), recent works in literary and scientific history, and literary criticism.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

Week 1 (29 Jan): Intro: George Eliot/Mary Ann Evans

Week 2 (5 Feb): Origins of Mary Ann Evans and George Eliot

“*The Natural History of German Life*” (1856) in *Selected Critical Writings*

Book II, Chapter 17, “In Which the Story Pauses a Little” from *Adam Bede* (1859) (course website)

Comte, Chapter I: Intellectual Character of Positivism” from *A General View of Positivism* (1848) (course website)

Haight, *George Eliot*, pp. 1-68

Biology and Inheritance

Week 3 (12 Feb): *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)
Darwin, from *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), introduction and chapter 13 (course website)

Gillian Beer, “Introduction,” “Darwin’s Plots,” and “George Eliot: *Middlemarch*” from *Darwin’s Plots* (course website)

**DEPARTMENT-WIDE TUTORIAL MEETING 1 (16 FEB, 4-5, BARKER 133; ATTENDANCE MANDATORY)**


Darwin, from *On the Origin of Species* (1859) chapters 3 and 14 (course website)


Haight pp. 295-342

**Short paper due**

**Social Science and Materialism**

**Week 5 (26 Feb): *Felix Holt* (1866)**

Ludwig Feuerbach, “Introduction” and “Concluding Application” from *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) (trans. Mary Ann Evans), course website

Susan E. Hill, “Translating Feuerbach, Constructing Morality: The Theological and Literary Significance of Translation for George Eliot” (course website)

Haight pp. 68-122

**Week 6 (4 March): *Felix Holt* (1866)**

Comte, “Chapter III: The Action of Positivism Upon the Working Classes” from *A General View of Positivism* (1848) (course website)

Friedrich Engels, “Letters on Historical Materialism” (1890-1894) (course website)

Haight pp. 374-419

**Prospectus and bibliography due**
Victorian Medicine and the Novel as Science Experiment

Week 7 (11 March): *Middlemarch* (1871)

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, “Chapter One: Epistemologies of the Eye,” “Observation and Attention,” and “Knower and Knowledge” from *Objectivity* (course website)

Mary Wilson Carpenter, “Introduction” and “Practitioners and Patients in Victorian England” from *Health, Medicine, and Society in Victorian England* (course website)

Haight, pp 420-454

**DEPARTMENT-WIDE TUTORIAL MEETING 2 (22 MARCH, 4-5, BARKER 133; ATTENDANCE MANDATORY)**

Week 8 (25 March): *Middlemarch* (1871)

G.H. Lewes, “Feeling and Thinking” from *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859) (course website)

Felix Ravaisson, “Of Habit” (course website)

Week 9 (1 April): [Endings, Beginnings, Middles:] *Middlemarch* (1871) / *Daniel Deronda* (1876)

Probability, Statistics, and Sociology

Week 10 (8 April): *Daniel Deronda* (1876)

Ian Hacking, “Chapter I: The argument” from *The Taming of Chance* (course website)

Herbert Spencer, “Chapter II: Is There a Social Science?” and “Conclusion” from *The Study of Sociology* (1873) (course website)

Haight pp. 456-499

**Paper draft due**

Week 11 (15 April): *Daniel Deronda* (1876)

Emile Durkheim, “Introduction,” *Suicide* (1897) (course website)

Paper presentation and workshopping
Week 12 (22 April): Paper presentation and workshopping

3 May: Final essay due, both to English Department and to Rachel

DEPARTMENT-WIDE JUNIOR TUTORIAL CONFERENCE (4 MAY, 4-6:30 PM, THOMPSON ROOM)

*I’d love to hold screenings of at least some of the BBC film adaptations of these texts over the course of the semester if enough of the class is interested!

*You may find it helpful to start reading the novels before the beginning of the semester, if possible.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTS

Selected Critical Writings

Felix Holt: The Radical

The Mill on the Floss

Middlemarch

Daniel Deronda

Gordon Haight, George Eliot: a Biography

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADE BREAKDOWN

20%: Regular attendance and participation, including weekly discussion board postings

20% 5-6 page paper (due Week 4)

15%: Prospectus and bibliography (= one document) for junior paper (due Week 6)

15%: Junior paper draft (due Week 10)

30%: Junior paper