The kaleidoscope, said one commenter in 1817, the year of its invention, “presents to the view an endless variety of forms.” The same might be said of Romanticism, which has been reframing and reorganizing itself for the last two hundred years. This course uses Romantic-era texts to introduce critical and theoretical methodologies such as Romantic Theory, Formalism and Close Reading, New Historicism, Narrative Theory, Psychoanalysis, Deconstruction and Queer Theory. Works include: Sterne’s Tristram Shandy; Mary Wollstonecraft’s Letters Written in Sweden, Norway and Denmark (1796); de Quincey’s Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Suspiria de Profundis; Mary Shelley’s The Last Man; and poetry by Wordsworth, Blake, Shelley, and Keats.

Those are our critical, historical and literary goals; our practical goal is to teach you how to develop, formally propose, craft and deliver a conference paper. We will hold a class conference—replete with paper abstracts, panels, Q&A, limitless coffee and a post-panel drink—during Reading Period. Conferences are laboratories in which scholars develop a concrete idea into the beginnings of an article or book chapter. By the end of the class you will have proposal and talk ready to go, as well as notes (your own, and your peers’, and mine) towards an article.

Seven Core Methods

Close Reading
  Keats’s Odes and Hyperion poems (1819)

Romantic Theory
  Keats’s Endymion, Wordsworth & Coleridge’s Lyrics, Kant’s & Hegel’s Aesthetics

New Historicism
  Shelley’s The Cenci: a Tragedy in Five Acts (1819) & Frances Burney, “Description of a Surgery” (1812)

Narrative Theory
  Sterne’s Tristram Shandy (1759)

Psychoanalysis
  de Quincey’s Confessions of an English Opium Eater & Suspiria de Profundis (1821, 1845)

Deconstruction
  Shelley’s The Triumph of Life (1822), Wollstonecraft’s Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (1796)

Biopolitics, Bare Life & Queer Theory
  Mary Shelley’s The Last Man (1824)

Schedule

I. Introduction: John Keats

Week 0 – W Jan. 25: Introduction
Pick Your Panel – or, Opening a Romanticism Conference Program Schedule (NASSR 2016)
A close reading of Keats’s “Sleep & Poetry” (1817) & Schlegel, Atheneum Fragments §116 (1800)

Week 1 – W Feb. 1: A Survey of Critical Methods
Keats, the Great Odes, Hyperion & The Fall of Hyperion (1819-20)
Close Reading – Helen Vendler, “Ode to a Nightingale” from The Odes of John Keats (1983)
Historicism – Michael O’Neill, “Writing & History in Hyperion and The Fall of Hyperion: Keats (2)”
Name that Method – Jonathan Mulrooney, “How Keats Falls” (2011)

II. Romantic Aesthetics

Week 2 – W Feb. 8: The Kantian Settlement, or, Thanks for Nothing
Keats: “I Stood Tip-toe” (1817), Endymion (1818)
Kant, from The Critique of the Power of Judgment (1790)—§1-15 (on the Beautiful), §23-29 (on the Sublime), §36-49 (on Nature & Genius), §64-65 & §75-77 (on Organic Nature & Teleology)
Friedlander, Expressions of Judgment (2015), 1-78
Breakdown: Chaouli, “Nature,” from Thinking with Kant’s Critique of Judgment (2017), 199-267

Week 3 – W Feb. 15: Form & the Real Language of Men
Wordsworth: “Preface” to Lyrical Ballads (1800), “Expostulation and Reply,” “The Tables Turned,” “The Thorn,” “We Are Seven”; “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey,” “Immortality Ode,” Lucy Poems (i.e. “Strange Fits of Passion”; “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways”; “A Slumber did my spirit seal”; “Three Years She Grew”)
Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, chapters 13-20 and 22; “The Aeolian Harp” (1795); “This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison”; “Kubla Khan” (1799); “Dejection: An Ode” (1802)

Week 4 – W Feb. 22: A Clear Consciousness of Infinite Agility
Wordsworth, 1799 – the Two-Book Prelude (1799), Book V of the Prelude (1805)
Hegel, Introduction to The Aesthetics (1820’s), 1-91

II. Violence & History

Week 5 – W March 1: History as Archaeology
Frances Burney, “Journal Letter” (a description of a surgery, 1812)
Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception (1964)
Karen Barad, from Meeting the Universe Halfway (2007), 39-70

Houghton Library Visit: Illuminated Prints from Blake’s Book of Urizen (1794)

Week 6 – W March 8: The Critique of Violence
Hegel, “the Master-Slave Dialectic” & “Unhappy Consciousness” in The Phenomenology of Spirit (1807, online – Hollis Past Masters) §178-230
**Week 7:** – W March 15 – **No Class** – **Spring Break**

**III. Narrative Theory: Laurence Sterne**

**Week 8 – W March 22:** **Irony, Irony, & More Irony**
Sterne, *Tristram Shandy* (1759)


**IV. Psychoanalysis: Thomas De Quincey**

**Week 9 – W March 29:** **Beyond Pleasure: Addiction & the Death Drive**
De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821)
Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)


**Week 10 – W April 5:** **Understanding Absolute Ruin**
De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis* (1845)
Derrida, “Resistances of Psychoanalysis” (1993)

*Breakdown:* Terada, “Living a Ruined Life: De Quincey’s Damage” (2014)

**V. Deconstruction: Percy Shelley & Mary Wollstonecraft**

**Week 11 – W April 12:** **What Is Life?**


**Week 12 – W April 19:** **Autoimmunity**
Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796)

**VI Biopolitics, Bare Life & Queer Theory: Mary Shelley**

**Week 13 – W April 26:** **What Life Isn’t**
Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (1824)
Agamben, from *Homo Sacer: Politics and Bare Life* (1996)


*Reading Period* – W May 3: Romanticism Conference
Assignments

Presentations: There are a dozen or so “breakdowns” scattered through the term. These are critical articles that I encourage you to read, because they will help you understand and frame the week’s official readings, but which you do not have to read—unless you are signed up for that week’s presentation. Your job in the presentation is to break down the article’s basic argument, and provide us with three important quotations that we can discuss as a group. Breakdown summaries should last no more than five minutes (= about 500 words), though the discussion of the quotations may last longer. Also, there’s a catch – presentations must be written using only the “ten hundred” most common words in the style of Randall Munroe’s Thing Explainer: Complicated Stuff in Simple Words (2015).

Project: Part A - Choose a work of Romantic literature that we did not read1 and, using the critical models we have examined, write five two-page readings of it. “Close reading” or “New Criticism” is not considered a critical model here, but should be built into all of your readings. If your chosen text resists a critical model so much as to break and incapacitate that kind of reading, that’s also interesting—a two-page section could be written about how that breakdown happens. Please also include a two-page introduction reflecting on how your chosen work reflects, refracts, and resists your chosen models.

Part B – Write a 300-word conference proposal, to be vetted by the conference committee (= me, and maybe the Long C18 & Romanticism Colloquium).

Part C – Craft and deliver a 20min conference paper (= fewer than 2,750 words) on the work you have chosen. Your paper should quickly introduce that work to an audience who may be unfamiliar with it, giving a précis of its critical heritage, before making your own intervention.

Textbooks:

- Sterne, Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (Modern Library, 978-0375761195)
- Wordsworth’s Poetry and Prose (Norton 2013, 978-0-393-92478-7)
- De Quincey, Confessions of an English Opium Eater and Other Writings (Oxford, 9780199600618)
- Mary Shelley, The Last Man (Oxford, 9780199552351)
- Wollstonecraft, Letters Written in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (OUP, 9780199230631)
- Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (Norton, 978-0393007695)
- Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception (978-0679753346)
- Derrida, Rogues: Two Essays on Reason (SUP, 9780804749510)

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1 Meet with me early on to choose a text. Some suggested works: Charlotte Smith, Beachy Head (1807); James Hogg, Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824); a book or canto from Wordsworth’s Prelude (1805) or Byron’s Don Juan (1819-24); a novel by Walter Scott; anything else written in the C18-C19!