The Victorian Gothic

While the eighteenth century is still considered to be the ‘age of reason’, dominated by neo-classical architecture and rational conversation, in which the Gothic could only exist as a dark counterpart to mainstream culture (a reductive enough view of that period), the Victorian Age itself is, to the general public, a Gothic one. The critic Robert Mighall points out that notions of a barbaric past are crucial to cultural understandings of Gothic and for this reason it is not surprising that the Victorians and the Gothic became so closely intertwined to twentieth and twenty-first century audiences. To us, the Victorian age is the Gothic age. Julian Wolfreys points out that for the Victorians themselves, the Gothic was literally everywhere: ‘all that black, all that crepe, all that jet and swirling fog…These and other phenomena, such as the statuary found in Victorian cemeteries like Highgate are discernible as being
fragments and manifestations of a haunting, and, equally, haunted, “Gothicized” sensibility’.

The Victorian period was certainly a particularly fertile time and place for the production of monsters, and these monsters have refused to go away. This one-semester module will provide an introduction to monstrosity as an important part of Victorian culture. We will examine versions of the monstrous which emerged in the Victorian period in a broad historical and cultural context that will allow us to shape an understanding of how these versions of monstrosity have been remade and reproduced in subsequent cultural work. Students will also be offered a critical introduction to the ways in which important developments in literary theory (such as historical, ideological, theological and material culture debates) have influenced a modern understanding of the Gothic and will be encouraged to mobilise and challenge a number of key critical terms and ideas within their textual analysis.

This module will be assessed by one, 5000 word essay.

Students are cautioned that this module involves reading some very long novels.

Dr. Jarlath Killeen
killeej@tcd.ie
Phone extension: 2337
Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of the module a student should be able to:

1. Trace important continuities as well as distinctions between the ways in which these texts mobilise Gothic tropes and structures.
2. Recognise definitions of genre and be able to contribute critically to the debates that have surrounded the extent and the limits of the Gothic.
3. Employ the significant terms, distinguish between the different contexts and take an active part in debates that have surrounded critical discussions of Gothic literature.
4. Examine the historical and literary contexts for the production of monstrosity.
Schedule:

**Week One**: Introduction.

**Week Two**: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

**Week Three**: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847).


**Week Six**: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *Carmilla* (1871-72).

**Week Seven**: Reading Week

**Week Eight**: Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886).


**Week Ten**: H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896)

**Week Eleven**: Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897).

**Week Twelve**: Ghost Stories by Dinah Craik, Amelia Edwards, and Rhoda Broughton (on Blackboard site).
Secondary Reading


Grimes, Hilary, *The Late Victorian Gothic: Mental Science, the Uncanny and Scenes of Writing* (2011).


Grunenberg, Christoph (ed.), *Gothic* (1997).


Haggerty, George E., Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form (1989).

Haggerty, George E., Queer Gothic (2006).


Hoewler, Diane Long, Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës (1998).


Smith, Andrew, *Victorian Demons: Medicine, Masculinity, and the Gothic at the Fin-de-Siècle* (2004).


Watt, James, *Contesting the Gothic* (1999).


