



COURSE DESCRIPTION

2016 Winter Session (2016-2017 Academic Year)

ENGL 535A-001 - The Cultural Production of Popular Victorian Fiction -
Pamela Dalziel

Studies in the Victorian Period Term 1

This seminar will examine the cultural production from publication to the present of four popular canonical works of Victorian fiction: Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*. All of these works have inspired generations of authors and artists of every description, and have been appropriated for a variety of commercial and (often contradictory) political purposes. *A Christmas Carol* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* currently occupy such prominent places in the popular imagination that they have become what Paul Davis defines as culture-texts, texts that are collectively known and "remembered" even when the original works have never been read.

Questions focusing on issues of cultural production and the politics of adaptation will inform our study of these works and a selection of their adaptations and transformations, including film versions that have themselves become culture-texts (e.g., the 1951 *A Christmas Carol* starring Alastair Sim and the 1951 Disney *Alice in Wonderland*). Our discussions will be wide ranging: from *A Christmas Carol* as an 1843 affirmation of rural Christmas traditions in the face of urbanization to the 2010 Sony commercial featuring Derek Jacobi and music by Ilan Eshkeri; from *Jane Eyre* as Victorian stage melodrama to Paula Rego's lithographs; from Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* to Stephanie Bolster's *White Stone: The Alice Poems*; from Helen Paterson's *Far from the Madding Crowd* illustrations to Posy Simmonds's graphic novel *Tamara Drewe*. While issues of cultural production will be central to our discussions, we will explore other aspects of the Victorian texts and their adaptations/transformations. Students will be encouraged to give presentations and to write papers on topics of interest raised by any of the works on the reading/viewing list (available in May).