The Victorian era, uncannily kindred to our own and yet conceived of as impossibly old and distant, is for both these reasons a rich ground for literary and cultural study. Like Vincent Price’s mansion in Edward Scissorhands, it looms over our placid, suburban worldview, appearing only when our rear-view window is askew, and yet like that image, far closer than it seems. We will spend this semester investigating the texts, the images, the sounds, the media, and the mindest of this period, seeking at all times to maintain a broadly panoramic frame (and indeed, as we will see, the very idea of the “panorama” was yet another Victorian invention).

We will read the texts of some of the more distinctive literary writers of the era – Dickens, Carlyle, Morley, Eliot, Hopkins, and Stevenson – alongside visual artists such as Turner, Landseer, Selous, and Cameron. We will also examine the decorative and domestic arts, stroll under the glass arches of the Crystal Palace, take in a balloon ascent at Vauxhall Gardens, and attend lectures at the Royal Polytechnic; we will listen to street ballad-singers, squeeze onto a bench-seat at a ragged school, and thumb through the pages of Punch and the Illustrated London News.

Our journey will be enabled, in part, via our course blog, along with online archives such as the UK’s Public Records Office, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the digitized Carlyle letters at the University of Virginia’s website. We will also read, in their entirety, a selection of novels, essays, and poems, among them Carlyle’s On Heroes and Hero-Worship, Dickens’s Hard Times, Eliot’s The Lifted Veil, and Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. We will also have several clusters of readings around historical events, including the lost Arctic expedition of Sir John Franklin, The Great Exhibition of 1851, and the Whitechapel Murders. There will be weekly responses to our readings and viewings on our blog, along with a formal final research paper on a subject of your choosing from this era.
COURSE BOOKS

Carlyle: *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (free online)
Eliot, *The Lifted Veil and Brother Jacob* (Oxford University Press)
Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde* (Norton Critical Edition)

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week I (Jan. 19, 21). Tuesday: Introduction to class. Thursday: *Frankenstein*, Volume I (pp. 5-60).

Week 2 (Jan. 26, 28). Tuesday: *Frankenstein*, Volumes II and III (pp. 61-161). Thursday: Shelley’s introduction to the 1831 edition (pp. 165-169); reviews by Percy Shelley and John Wilson Croker (pp. 213-219); Hitchcock, “The Monster Lives On” (pp. 263-270).


Week 4 (Feb. 9, 11). The public lecture. Tuesday: Carlyle’s Lectures on Heroism. Readings: Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture 1; Public lectures in London; reviews on OHHW (blog links). Thursday: Lectures 5 and 6; extracts from Carlyle’s letters on the success of his lectures (*Carlyle Letters*).


Week 11 (March 30, April 1). Tuesday and Thursday: Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.


Week 14 **No Tuesday class meeting this week.** Thursday: The Origins of Cinema.