

SU 2026

AP/EN 4573 3.00 (S1)	Course Title: Victorian Ghosts
Course Director:	Name: Peter Paolucci Office: TBD Ext.: TBD e-mail: paolucci@yorku.ca other information: http://www.yorku.ca/paolucci
Time:	Monday, 11:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m. Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. – 2:20 p.m.
Delivery Format:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEMINAR
Description:	<p>The Victorians loved their ghost stories. "Serious" writers like Charles Dickens wrote one ghost a year in the latter years of his career, probably the most famous of which is A Christmas Carol. Ghost stories seemed ubiquitous, especially in the weekly magazines sold at railway stations. In an age driven by literary realism, empirical philosophy, burgeoning medical and scientific knowledge, and the systematic recruitment of scientific knowledge into industry's service, it is both surprising and understandable that ghosts attracted so much attention in the popular imagination.</p> <p>Sometimes, the very idea of the existence of a ghost is the only subject or theme of the story. In those cases, "the problem of belief" appears as a struggle between intuitive conviction and faith on the one hand and skepticism and scientific-philosophical rationalism on the other. In other stories, however, the literary complexity is increased; the problem of belief remains, but the ghost is also a signifier of other things. Occupying the nexus of religion, (para)psychology, literature, culture, and ideology, the ghost story became a destabilizing metaphor for many displaced cultural practices and anxieties. It's not uncommon to encounter themes of gender destabilization and dysphoria, domestic violence, crimes of greed and passion, and erotic fantasies of forbidden pleasures.</p> <p>The Victorian era (1838-1901) was characterized by the birth and rise to prominence of the ghost story. Starting with Dickens, whose Pickwick Papers contained several fragments of ghost stories, the genre grew in popularity until, by the fin de siècle, it matured into a widespread literary phenomenon. This</p>

	<p>course explores the emergence and evolution of the Victorian ghost story both as a literary art form and as a cultural and ideological artifact, with specific attention to Jung and Gothic theorists such as Todorov, Cornwell, Twitchell, and others. Students will be encouraged to approach the texts from their preferred methods of analysis. Writers studied include Charles Dickens, Amelia Edwards, Wilkie Collins, Mary E. Braddon, Elizabeth Gaskell, Margaret Oliphant, R. Murray Gilchrist, E. Bulwer-Lytton, Edgar Allan Poe and Ambrose Bierce.</p>
Category:	C
Historical Requirement:	Period II (1700-1900)
Requirements:	TBD
Reading List:	<p>Collins, Wilkie. Tales Of Terror And The Supernatural. On reserve: PR 4494 T3 1972 or at Amazon. New York: Dover Publications. ISBN: 0486203077</p> <p>Cox, Michael and R. A. Gilbert, Eds. The Oxford Book of Victorian Ghost Stories, ISBN-10: 0192804472 or ISBN-13: 978-0192804471.</p>
Open To:	<p>4th-Year Honours English, Creative Writing, and English & Professional Writing students.</p> <p>*Any remaining seats will open to non-majors/minors in 4th-Year Honours programs on April 3, 2026.</p>