

English 376 Directed Studies—Colonial Romanticism (Instructor: Michelle Levy)

This course explores colonial Canada's place, historically and imaginatively, in the literature of the British Romantic period. The course is divided into four units. The first unit examines exploration during the late eighteenth century, Canada's coastlines and land were charted by British explorers who sought trade routes and resources, bringing explorers, merchants and military personnel into contact with indigenous peoples. Journals and field notes spoke of those encounters, fuelling British literature and indigenous oral storytelling. In the first unit of this course, we read these accounts of exploration and contact from Cook's and Vancouver's voyages to the Pacific Northwest, and from Hearne's to Hudson's Bay, alongside the imaginative literature such accounts inspired, including Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*.

During the same period, Britain was embroiled in global conflicts, instigated by the French Revolution in 1789 and continued by Napoleon's imperial campaigns, conflicts which saw the consolidation of colonial slave plantations in the West Indies, a slave-led rebellion leading to Haitian independence, and rising humanitarian and anti-abolition movements. These topics course through the writing of British and colonial abolitionists as well as that of slaves, who testified passionately about their experiences under the system of colonial slavery.

The period also saw myriad forms of human displacement, immigration, and travel. Soldiers and their families travelled to the Americas and across the globe, and many remained abroad; discharged soldiers wandered the public roads of Britain, and, following the Napoleonic Wars tourism became possible for the first time in decades. War tourism also flourished, as visitors flocked to sites of battlefields like Waterloo. The period also witnessed the beginnings of mass migrations that came with Britain's move into more formal structures of empire. This unit will focus on how women experienced migration, settlement and domesticity within difficult natural environments, as we read a selection of poetry as well as Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.

With these cultural and economic movements between Britain, its empire, and the world, came reflections on the motives, activities, and legacies of this globalisation, as well as a growing awareness of the human and cultural costs of plundering the resources and cultural productions of others. Romantic-era poets like William Blake explore such themes, whereas others like John Keats and Lord Byron wrote poetry about the taking of antiquities from the Athenian Acropolis and elsewhere. In this unit, we cycle back to the beginning of the course, as we examine Anna Barbauld's epic poem prophesizing the fall of the British Empire, and the rise of cultural imperialism, as she predicts that Britain's empire will survive only through the influence of its intellectual and literary history.

Before we leave for London, students will participate in Vancouver-based excursions, to the Museum of Vancouver, The Maritime Museum, the Museum of Anthropology, UBC, and the Vancouver Art Gallery. In London, we will visit a number of sites and exhibits that relate to course readings, including the British Museum, British Library, the Foundling Hospital, Wellington Arch, the homes of Anna Barbauld and John Keats (in Hampstead), and an optional excursion to Jane Austen's house and village, in the Chawton, Hampshire.