

Heather Anne Wozniak
Course Proposal

Nineteenth-Century British Drama: The Legitimacy of Melodrama

Melodrama has often been understood as a hybrid, counter-discursive form, the appropriate dramatic genre for London's illegitimate theatres and music halls. But melodrama was performed on the stages of London patent theatres and has important connections with romantic closet drama and the late Victorian well-made play. In order to track these connections and develop a full account of nineteenth-century British drama, we will begin by reading several respected romantic tragedies that double as exotic melodramas. At mid-century we will find that melodramas begin to take a more domestic turn and evolve into comedies of manners and modern tragedy. Throughout, we will consider the acting styles, music, and ethical conflicts that drive these plays. Dramatists may include Colman the Younger, Baillie, P. B. Shelley, Peake, Jerrold, Pitt, Robertson, Jones, Pinero, Wilde, Shaw, and Ibsen. Secondary readings may include selections from Jane Moody, David Worrall, Elaine Hadley, Michael Booth, and Peter Brooks.

Students will be responsible for active class participation, a brief presentation on a secondary chapter or article, a group project to plan a staging of a scene, and a longer seminar paper.