

Stephanie Wells
OLLI Spring Term 2024
Mondays 10-12
Golden Bear Center 365

Three 19th-c British Novels and the Constructed Self

In this course we will read and discuss Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to explore the ways that the changing ideals of Victorian culture inform the creation of a self--whether that be one's own self, or the metaphorical or literal creation of another! In examining these constructed selves, we'll contextualize them within the social norms of their day with regards to gender, class, sexual identity, education, and religion to trace how these factors inform the characters in their imaginative and self-defining quests.

The following are the editions I'll be using, and the page numbers I've listed below correspond to these versions, though I've also included other markers for where to break the reading up week by week in case you're using a different version that doesn't contain chapter numbers or volume numbers (there are so many versions of these novels out there that some do and some don't). Any publisher is fine, but unless it means buying a second copy, please make sure you choose the 1818 and not the 1831 *Frankenstein*.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818 version). Longman.
Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (1847/8). Oxford.
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890). Penguin.

Please allow yourself ample time to do the course reading, which is quite extensive! You'll enjoy and engage with the texts much more fully if you reserve plenty of time to read them more slowly and in increments. We will be discussing the sections below on the day they are listed, so it's best to come to class having already read that far on that day.

- Week 1: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 5-69 (Volume One)
- Week 2: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 69-186 (Volumes Two and Three)
- Week 3: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 1-231 (Volume 1, or chapters 1-15, or ending with "Too feverish to rest, I rose as soon as day dawned")
- Week 4: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 232-452 (Volume 2, or chapters 16-26, or ending with "the floods overflowed me")
- Week 5: Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* 453-691 (Volume 3, or chapters 27-end)
- Week 6: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*