

**Carleton University
Fall 2017
Department of English**

**ENGL 5503: Studies in Nineteenth Century Literature II
“Hidden Worlds: Documenting Victorian London”**

Mondays / 2:30-5:30

Location: *Please confirm location on Carleton Central*

Instructor: Janice Schroeder

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Office: 1924 Dunton Tower

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-2:30 or by appointment

Course themes:

In this course we will read Victorian and contemporary examples of urban documentary produced by “embedded” journalist/researchers who were motivated by a mix of curiosity and ethical responsibility towards the urban poor. Victorian London witnessed rapid growth, industrialization, large-scale public works projects, immigration, homelessness, and the building of the first suburbs amid the constant flow of “human capital” in and out of the city.

Accompanying these changes was the development of popular genres that documented and often sensationalized the “hidden worlds” of slum neighbourhoods, temporary lodging houses, street markets, homeless shelters, and penny theatres where the poor “congregated.” Precarious forms of employment and ingenious survival tactics fascinated middle-class observers, who ventured into the streets and sometimes right into the homes of the poor in order to collect and publish their stories for readers variously figured as oblivious, curious, and frightened.

Our key text will be a mid-Victorian social survey compiled by Henry Mayhew entitled *London Labour and the London Poor*, an illustrated, encyclopedic collection of marginalized urban voices, labour practices, and “vanishing” ways of life. Mayhew’s vast and influential collection, from which we will read a representative sample, bears a strong resemblance to the fiction and journalism of Charles Dickens, who was born the same year as Mayhew. We will begin by examining the work of these two writers before moving on to lesser-known works by other Victorian investigators and explorers, some of whom went undercover, disguising themselves as vagrants in order to arrive at a more “authentic” account of the lives of the poor. The course will conclude with a discussion of a recent example of “slum journalism”: Katherine Boo’s *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* (2012).

Text List (tentative)

Primary

Henry Mayhew, selections from *London Labour and the London Poor* (1850-1862)
Charles Dickens, selections from *Sketches by Boz* (1833-1836) and “Selected Journalism”
Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839)
Hector Gavin, from *Sanitary Ramblings* (1848)
George Godwin, from *London Shadows* (1854)
James Greenwood, “A Night in the Workhouse” (1866)
Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012)

Secondary

David Harvey, from *Rebel Cities* (2013)
Matthew Beaumont and Gregory Dart (eds.), from *Restless Cities* (2010)
Seth Koven, from *Slumming* (2004)
Deborah Epstein Nord, from *Walking the Victorian Streets* (1995)
Ellen Ross, from *Love and Toil* (1993)

Assignments (tentative)

- 3 in-class presentations + written submissions: 20% each (60% total)
- 1 essay (3000 words): 20%
- Participation: 10% (comprised of one 3-minute presentation on the first day of class, one 3-minute presentation on the last day of class, and ongoing in-class participation)
- DIY Documentary, to be shared in class: 10%