

Marriage, Murder, and the Madhouse: Victorian Sensation Fiction, or, 19th Century Bestsellers You May Have Missed (Curt Herr, Kutztown University)
6 meetings, Saturdays 2-4 pm, September-February: 9/14, 10/12, 11/16, 12/14, 1/11, 2/8
Tuition: \$300

The bestselling novels of the Victorian era are not what you think they are. Beneath the appearance of public respectability, the Victorians devoured novels of mystery, bigamy, madness, the supernatural, seductions, arsonists, and addicts. These now-forgotten novels kept the Victorians reading far into the night, too terrified to blow out the bedside candle. This genre, known as Sensation Fiction, became the best-selling, blockbuster novels of the 19th Century and outsold Dickens, Trollope, and the Brontes. We'll discuss Victorian pop culture, gender, class, the 'New Woman author' and the Victorians' obsession with good people behaving badly. We'll end the semester with Sarah Waters new Sensation novel, *Fingersmith*, to examine Sensation Fiction's legacy in contemporary fiction. If you register, please read the first half of *The Woman in White* for our first meeting.

Required books (*Broadview Press* editions of these novels are recommended).

The Woman in White, by Wilkie Collins

East Lynne, by Mrs Henry Wood

Lady Audley's Secret, by Mary Elizabeth Braddon

Fingersmith, by Sarah Waters

Reading Schedule

9/14 *The Woman in White*, please read the first half

10/12 *The Woman in White*, second half

11/16 *East Lynne*, first half

12/4 *East Lynne*, second half

1/11 *Lady Audley's Secret*

2/8 *Fingersmith*

Curt Herr, PhD, teaches Victorian literature at Kutztown University and is the co-editor of *The Journal of Dracula Studies*.