What could be more thrilling than London, and what could be more terrifying? Who can resist the story of a city beyond control, of angry mobs burning effigies and highwaymen transformed into celebrities? Did such a place ever really exist? Or are these stories themselves attempts at control? How do we separate history from story when the history of the city is, to such a large extent, a history of its stories – the stories that were told in the thousands, that floated around the minds of its citizens, at any given moment in any given day?

There is, of course, no one history of London. The widest approach reveals a city of many histories: science and sex, art and empire, royalty and poverty, crime and capitalism. We will focus, in this course, on some of the most heated scholarly debates. We will pivot around the eighteenth century, troubling the relationship between the secret history and the hidden city. Topics will range from deer thieves to Sherlock Holmes, the English Civil War to Jack the Ripper. Beyond the hidden spaces and secret happenings were the deeper rumblings of material transformation, the “secret springs” of capitalism and empire. The secret world of ships was only a secret to those who spent their lives away from the docks. Secrets were relative: what was secret to one person was well-known to others. For all these reasons, the urban secret is both imaginatively exciting and conceptually challenging. Once we are talking about secrets, we are also talking about difference, power, and inequality. The challenge of finding the “secret history” stretches the space of the city in our minds. It forces us to think more carefully about secrets, cities, and history itself.

This course is not an exhaustive survey of London through the ages, nor is it tourism disguised as history. It uses the city, in all its messy, chaotic unpredictability, as a laboratory of historical thinking, a workshop of historical writing, and a practicum in historical questioning. If any of this sounds appealing to you - if you’re fascinated by London and want to become a better writer – then this is the course for you. The readings are all engaging and provocative. I have chosen topics that have inspired generations of historians, which reveal the city as alive to interpretive possibility. We will dissect these works with an eye towards the particularities of their method and conception, asking how historical arguments work, and identifying the building blocks, the analytical mechanisms which historians use to unlock the greatest of all secrets: how change occurs over time. We will spend a lot of time “good questions” and what makes them good. We will devise strategies (and there will always be many) of answering them in interesting ways. You will embark upon original interpretive ventures, based upon our collective exercises, but also on the questions which emerge from your own readings of the evidence. We will make a lot of use of (and have a lot of fun with) the countless databases available to historians of London: the Old Bailey Online, London Lives, 1690-1800, Eighteenth-Century Collections Online, Empire Online, amongst others. My goal is for you all to be struck by inspiration; for your critical energy to be galvanized by your admiration of and/or reaction to scholarly debates; to deepen, expand, and focus the curiosity which brought you to the class, all the while guiding you in the process of becoming better writers.
Assignments
- Two 4-5 page papers, double-spaced, one each due before and after Fall Break, on a week of your choice. (15% each of final grade). These papers will be based on the discussion we have that week of class. In other words, you will not have a lot of time to write them, but they are short, and we will have worked on the paper together as a class the preceding Thursday. Think of it as the flash-fiction of history writing, or as an in-class essay exam. Please don’t turn in more than two papers – I won’t be “averaging” the best grades. (For more on these shorter papers, see “Weekly Structure”).
- A 12-15 page paper due at the end of finals period. (40% of final grade). This paper should expand one of your shorter papers, based on a further and deeper reading of the primary sources and scholarly arguments. By Week 13, you are required to have met with me to discuss your plan for the final paper.
- Peer-reviews of final papers (10%).
- Participation (including reading questions and occasional short Moodle assignments). You are required to either email me the questions right before class, or bring them into class with you. Don’t worry too much at the outset about what makes a “good” question good. It is one of my goals that you will end the class with an instinctually better sense of how to arrive at a good question and answer it well. (20% of final grade).

Weekly Structure
This is a writing seminar and fully dedicated to developing writing skills collectively, as a class. For this reason, it might be different from other history classes that you have taken. You are required to complete all the readings before class on Tuesday. You will come to class with two paper-worthy questions that the readings have raised and one line, passage, or image that you think provides the “kernel”, as it were, for a paper that addresses one or both of these questions. You’ll get better and better at this as the semester proceeds. Over the course of the semester we will learn (from each other) about what constitutes a “good question”. Over the course of each week, we will explore ways of answering two or three of these questions. The questions might change, or generate further questions which are more interesting and answerable. We will try end class on Tuesday with a set of these sharper, more nuanced questions to discuss on Thursday. Often this will require you to go back and look at particular passages more closely or think more explicitly about particular aspects of the readings. You might also want to play around on some of the primary source databases (Old Bailey Online, London Lives). On Thursday, we will spend at least 20 minutes (maybe even more) sketching out an approach to a paper. On two of these weeks (one each before Fall Break you will turn in a short (4-5 page) paper by 5pm that following Sunday. While you won’t have had a lot of time to write the paper, you will have benefited enormously from the workshop experience. In evaluating these papers, I will account for the fact that you won’t have weeks to mull over them. Your final assignment will be to expand one of these papers into a longer (12-15 page) research paper. The class is structured around the assumption that your ideas evolve over time, hence the shorter papers leading to the longer, final one.
Policies
- Absences. The course policy is as unambiguous as the History department policy: “Students are required to attend all classes for the successful completion of the course. Unexcused absences will result in a lower grade.” For an absence to be excused it must be followed by a note from a doctor or a dean. Any unexcused absence will result in a half-letter grade reduction.
- Late work. A half-letter grade docked off for each day that a paper is late.
- Lateness to class: It is fine to be late once or twice a semester, but if you have a prior engagement (another class, practice for an athletic team) that makes the lateness chronic, you might want to reconsider taking this class. Lateness is inconsiderate and disruptive. If you’re late more than twice, that is a half-letter grade reduction.
- Plagiarism: Please familiarize yourselves with the College’s policy on academic honesty and integrity. Papers suspected of containing plagiarized materials will be subjected to the College Judiciary Committee. A useful description of plagiarism can be found here: http://www.swarthmore.edu/academics/english-literature/plagiarism-and-citation.xml
- Office hours: I encourage you all to come visit me during my office hours, especially if you are planning on writing a paper for the following Sunday.

Disability Accommodations Statement
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services (Parrish 113) or email lhempli1@swarthmore.edu to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs. As appropriate, she will issue students with documented disabilities a formal Accommodations Letter. Since accommodations require early planning and are not retroactive, please contact her as soon as possible. For details about the accommodations process, visit the Student Disability Service website at http://www.swarthmore.edu/student-life/academic-advising-and-support/student-disability-service.xml. You are also welcome to contact me to discuss your academic needs. However, all disability-related accommodations must be arranged through Leslie Hempling in the Office of Student Disability Services. Note that some material covered in this course may have challenging content (e.g., depictions of violence). If you have a disability related to the content, take steps to arrange an appointment and Accommodations Letter with the Office of Student Disability Services.

Books to Purchase*
Required:
Optional:

*If you cannot afford these books, let me know. There are multiple means of access (lending, interlibrary loan).
Week One (9/2, 9/4): History as (Deep) Voyeurism
- “The Secret City of London”,
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrObZ_HZZUc
- Dan Cruickshanks: *London: A Tale of Two Cities* (DVD)

Week Two (9/9, 9/11): Nights Past
- Frank Rexroth, *Deviance and Power in Late Medieval London* (2007), chapters 1, 2, 7 and 8 [Moodle]

Week Three (9/16, 9/18): Incontrollable Words
- Moodle exercise with EEBO (Early English Books Online).

Week Four (9/23, 9/25): What Happens in the Coffeehouse (never) Stays in the Coffeehouse
- Jurgen Habermas, Chapters 6-8 in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962, trans. 1991) [Moodle]
- Moodle Exercise with Burney Collection of 17th and 18th Century Newspapers

Week Five (9/30, 10/2): Molly House Dreams
- Selections from James Dalton, *A genuine narrative of all the street robberies committed since October last, by James Dalton, and his accomplices, who are now in Newgate, ... To which is added a key to the canting language, ... Taken from the mouth of James Dalton* (1728) [ECCO]
- “The Bishop of London’s Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury” [Moodle]
- Old Bailey and London Lives search for sodomy prosecutions in the 1720s

Week Six (10/7, 10/9): Hidden Cities of Sex

**FALL BREAK**

**Week Seven (10/21, 10/23): Deer Thieves and Fighting Historians**

**Week Eight (10/28, 10/30): Dying Legally**
Thomas Laqueur talk on Monday the 27th - required attendance
- Ordinary’s Account of Criminals Condemned to Death at Tyburn, http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Ordinaries-accounts.jsp

**Film: Where’s Jack?**

**Week Nine (11/04, 11/06): African London**
- Peter Linebaugh, “Charters of Liberty in Black Face and White Face: Race, Slavery, and the Commons,” [Moodle]

**Week Ten (11/11, 11/13): The Secret Lives of Ships**
- *Museum Highlights* (Museum of Docklands Tourist brochure), 42-45
Week Eleven (11/18, 11/20): Jack the Ripper as History and Tourism
- Judith Walkowitz, City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late Victorian London (1992), chapters 1-3
- Jack the Ripper at the London Dungeon, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1VQgX7sku0

Week Twelve (11/25): Sherlock Holmes and Gender Trouble
- Video: “A Scandal in Bohemia,” “The Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle” from the TV show Sherlock

Week Thirteen (12/2, 12/4): The Queer Essence of “Victorian” London

Meetings to discuss final papers

Week Fourteen (12/9): Bridge, Booze, and VCR: Or the Post-colonial Past
Film: My Beautiful Laundrette (1986)

12/15: Rough drafts due to your peers and to me (via email)

12/17: Rough drafts due back to your peers and me (via email)

12/22: Final Papers due