

How does a writer make a new story out of an old story? And why? Shakespeare did it, and James Joyce, and the author of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*; TV and film studios do it constantly. Adaptations, versions, retellings from a different angle or flavor: what do we learn from watching and thinking about this process, learn about the story, the history of

This course will explore the Americanization of Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) and its two film adaptations, Peter Jackson's 2001 novel *with Jack* (2001) and the Americanized 1998 film of Dickens's novel, which echoes both its source – and the

American (anti)hero Huckleberry Finn. We'll familiarize ourselves generally with Dickens's biography and read a few pieces of his journalism to see what the author "adapts" and transforms in his novels, and what license this gives to other "adapting" artists.

As a seminar, this course will foreground discussion. Writing: some in-class writing to facilitate discussion, two short reflection papers, two take-home assignments, and a final exam. Reading: the novel *Great Expectations*, two film adaptations, and a selection of Dickens's journalism.

Schedule of readings, writing, discussion

Wed. Jan 17: Introduction. Processes and examples of "adaptation" from the class: changing meanings of "expectations." Dickens's story and storytelling: "The Blacking Factory" (pdf to be emailed for advance reading and in-class discussion) and three short sketches from Dickens the journalist (handed out/discussed in class).

Wed. Jan 24: Discussing opening movements in *Great Expectations*: please read up through chapter 19, 'The End of the First Stage of Pip's Expectations.' Think about Mrs. Joe and Pip, Miss Havisham and Estella. **Sign up for get-acquainted conferences next week.**

Wed. Jan 31: *Great Expectations*: country boy in the city: reading/discussing up through chapter 29, the second 'stage.' Think about loggers and Wemmick.

Wed. Feb 7: *Great Expectations*: Mrs. Joe and Miss Havisham: reading/discussing up through chapter 31.

Wed. Feb 14: *Great Expectations*: chapters 33-34, including the two endings. Discussing and First paper due in class. Handouts given for the next class.

Feb 21: Transition to adaptations: *Mansfield Park* and *Mansfield Park*. Discussing the handouts and the first 54 pages of Peter Carey's *Jack Maggs*: 'adapting' Dickens.

Feb. 28: *Jack Maggs* up through p. 179, 'adapting' Estella, and Pip.

Spring break

Mar. 14: Discussing *Jack Maggs* up through p. 204, women bearing children, men writing

Mar 21: Finish *Jack Maggs*, second paper due in class.

Apr 4: Discussing Alfonso Cuarón's film "Great Expectations." 'Adapting' to America.

Some scope for independent work here, unless you do any special adaptation work you

the university's policy on plagiarism, defined as "the act of taking the words, ideas, data

Read with attention, think your own thoughts, write your own reflections. Visit my office

hours for any field you like or aspects of the readings you want to continue to discuss.

Brief timeline for Dickens and *Great Expectations*:

1812: Dickens born in Portsmouth, father a clerk in the Naval Pay Office.

1824: In London, father imprisoned for debt, Charles sent to work in the Blacking Factory

1829-34: Dickens a free-lance reporter on politics and city scenes. "Sketches by Boz."

1836: marries Catherine Hogarth (10 children); sister Mary lives with them. Mary dies 1837.

1838: *Oliver Twist* (his second novel)

1842: a foray into American publishing, somewhat critical travel narrative, *American Notes*

1843: *A Christmas Carol*, the first of a series of regular Christmas-themed short fictions

1850: *David Copperfield*, in David's eyes several of the most remarkable elements

1857-58: *Great Expectations*, the result of his financial predicament, his yearning to escape

publicly, partly from his wife, also begins a lifelong and lucrative habit of giving public

readings of his works.

1860-61: publishes his 13th novel, *Great Expectations*, first as serial in his own magazine

then as book.

1865: *Our Mutual Friend*, a more satirical, cynical, and pessimistic offering, a dejected, unrepentant

1869-70: health worsens during a series of 75 public readings, dies after stroke in the middle

1870: *Great Expectations* his 13th novel, first published in *Edinburgh Review*

different possible intentions behind the act of adaptation: the urge to consume and erase
the memory of the adapted text or to call it into question is as likely as the desire to pay
tribute to the original work. "Ethica hunc est q' i hery di' Adapta' An' Theora' of Adaptation (2000)

"Maybe Dickens would indeed be producing a web sitcom or pilot for HBO or Showtime if he

was 25 years old today, but then he would not be Charles Dickens, and that's the point. The

fear of degradation may be what the film/TV adaptation or the contemporary fictional

rewriting will just become a kind of bad copy. And the still broader concern I suspect is

that we ourselves have more generally become that bad copy... that the 21st century and its

media are degraded, cut off from a past associated with great culture, liberal individualism,

and literacy. That we are degraded, debased, and illiterate..." Ivan Kreikamp, "Television