



**History of Science in England:
Nature, Frankenstein, and the Age of Wonder
Summer 2013**

Prof. Richard Bellon
bellonr@msu.edu

Prof. Jim Smith
jimsmith@msu.edu

CourseDescription

The Creature in Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* bears no resemblance to Hollywood's mute, shambling monster. The original monster was physically hideous but also startlingly intelligent and aware of his origin and tragic fate. Shelley's novel contemplates our relationships with God, nature, sex, science, death, love, poetry and the soul. This study-abroad program will explore these themes and the world that gave rise to these modern preoccupations.

The turn of the nineteenth century in Britain was an Age of Wonder, a period when science, art, religion and politics mixed in a combustive brew. It was the dawn of industrialization and heralded the beginning of an empire that would rival any the world had ever witnessed. London began its transformation from European capital to the world's greatest center of knowledge, wealth and political power. Not all was splendor. The metropolis also suffered from an unprecedented concentration of poverty.

We will not sit in classrooms while in England. Rather, we will explore the literature,



Humphry Davy, romantic chemist

science, history and philosophy of this exciting historical period using some of England's most iconic settings for our lessons. These will include Kew Gardens, Oxford University, Cambridge University, Stonehenge, London's Natural History Museum, and Westminster Abbey. We will study each place carefully, aided by reading, writing and discussion.

This syllabus sets out the shared academic components of the program. Each student will also receive a supplemental syllabus with individualized assignments.

Required Reading

Everyone in the study-abroad program will read:

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)

Richard Holmes, *The Age of Wonder* (2009)

Laura Snyder, *The Philosophical Breakfast Club* (2009)

Everyone will also read additional primary-source material which we will assign depending on your choice of subtopic.

Bring all reading with you to London, with electronic reading stored on your laptop.

Assignments

Submit all assignments via email, unless told otherwise. You are welcome to turn in any assignment before the due date.

1. Chapter One Assignments [20 pts]

Completed on April 24

2. Frankenstein Assignment [80 pts]

You will answer a series of short questions and write a short essay on Shelley's *Frankenstein* and chapter 7 of Holmes's *Age of Wonder*. We distributed the assignment on May 10. ▶▶ Due: June 10.

3. Primary-source paper [150 pts]

You will write a paper drawing on assigned reading based on your choice of subtopic. We will distribute more information as soon as everyone has chosen their subtopic.

▶▶ Due: June 29.

4. Research paper [400 pts]

You will write an original 12- to 15-page (3,200 to 4,000 word) research paper. You have wide latitude in choosing a topic, but you must address upon some aspect of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century science. This project has three components.

A research proposal, three pages plus preliminary bibliography, will explain your topic and the approach you will take to it. You will complete the proposal in England, drawing upon your experiences for inspiration. ▶ Due: July 16. You then consult individually with us on the proposal between July 17 and 19. Worth 10% of the project grade (or 40 pts).

A completed draft (*not* a “rough draft”) will present your research in polished form. We will review this draft and return it with substantial comments. Worth 50% of the project grade (or 200 pts). ▶ Due: August 1.

You will write a revised draft based on comments on the completed draft. Worth 40% of the project grade (or 160 pts). ▶ Due: August 15.

5. Travel diary [150 pts]

You will record the key features of your three weeks in England. Your travel diary will record your intellectual engagement with both the academic content of the program and life in Britain generally. You should record at least ten entries during the three week program.

Not all of your entries have to be text. For naturalists like Charles Darwin and Joseph Banks, the sketchpad was a crucial record-keeping tool. Today, we have cameras. We encourage you to submit photographs (with some written explanation) as part of entries. (If of an artistic bent, include your own sketches as well).

While we have no strict guidelines on what the journal should include, in general you should make observations (written or photographic) on the cultural life of Britain, on class trips and on the role of science (especially evolutionary theory) in modern British life.

In other words, record interesting observations about our time at Kew Gardens, but don't neglect to reflect upon what you learn about the British by watching TV, reading the tabloids, eating in London or observing a pub full of rabid English football fans.

▶ Due: August 15.

6. Participation [200 pts]

Full and active participation from everyone is crucial to the success of the program.

Attendance is mandatory for all group activities unless you have a serious and unavoidable reason for absence. It is also essential that you show up on time for every activity, since we run a strict schedule. The penalty for a missed daily activity is severe: we will dock you 100 pts for each unexcused absence.

Academic Misconduct

The penalty for academic dishonesty is course failure. Academic dishonesty includes (but not be limited to): cheating on assignments or examinations; fabricating data; plagia-

rizing, which means misrepresenting as your own work any part of work done by another (this includes using substantial chunks of lightly or unmodified text from another source, *even if you cite the source in your paper*); submitting the same paper, or substantially similar papers, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of all instructors concerned; depriving another student of necessary course materials or interfering with his or her work; and facilitating another in academic dishonesty. For more information, consult:

<http://www.lymanbriggs.msu.edu/current/honesty.cfm>
http://www.msu.edu/unit/lbs/academics/academic_honesty.html
<https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>

Course policy

Our policy is to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD) early—preferably before the start of summer semester (May 13)—to discuss their individual needs. We will work with you and RCPD to make sure you can thrive in the course.

Grade Scale

The course will be graded on a 1000-point scale, which translates into a grade on the 4.0 scale as follows:

4.0 900 – 1000 points	3.5 850 – 899	3.0 800 - 849
2.5 750 - 799	2.0 700 - 749	1.5 650 - 699
1.0 600 - 649	0 < 600	

We do not grade on a curve—everyone can earn a 4.0 (or a 2.0)!

Angel site

Important information, including course readings and assignments, are available on the study-abroad program's Angel site:

<https://angel.msu.edu/>

Once at Angel, enter your MSU NetID and password in the log-on window to reach your personal page. From there, click on the course name for access to the course site.

Schedule

The schedule of activities in England is provisional and subject to change.

May 13.—Monday

The official start of Summer semester.

June 10.—Monday

▶▶ Due: *Frankenstein* assignment

June 29.—Saturday

Program begins. Check into the dorms.

▶▶ Due: Subtopic paper

June 30.—Sunday

Short orientation meeting at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park. Welcome dinner in the evening.

July 1.—Monday

Walking tour of scientific London. Royal Institution. Museum of London.

July 2.—Tuesday

Greenwich.

July 3.—Wednesday

Kew Gardens.

July 4.—Thursday

Down House.

July 5.—Friday

University of Oxford

July 8.—Monday

University of Cambridge

July 9.—Tuesday

University of Cambridge

July 10.—Wednesday

University of Cambridge

July 16.—Tuesday

Herschel Museum of Astronomy. The Roman Baths.

▶▶ Due: Research proposal

July 17.—Wednesday

Stonehenge.

July 18.—Thursday

Natural History Museum. Hunterian Museum.

July 19.—Friday

Westminster Abbey. Group dinner in the evening.

July 20.—Saturday

Travel portion of the program ends.

August 1.—Thursday

▶▶ Due: completed draft of the research paper

August 15.—Thursday

Final day of Summer semester

▶▶ Due: revised draft of the research paper

Darwin's Down House

