

Our Victorians, Ourselves: Rethinking Victorian Texts & Contexts

A virtual student conference hosted by the Undergraduate and Graduate Student Victorian Association (UGSVA)

Conference on April 28th, 2026 and Abstracts due March 31st, 2026

Hosted by Queen's University, Canada

Please see the next page for a more detailed conference description and list of possible topics.

Keynote:

Sarah Bliss, Florida State University

“Reading the Forest with the Trees: Victorian Fiction and Periodicals”

Interactive Closing Session:

Sabarno Sinha, University of Texas at Austin

“UnConferencing (v. 1860): The Black-Out Victorian Poetry Edition”

Organizers:

- Brooke Cameron, Associate Professor, Queen's University
- Sydney Wildman, Graduate Co-Organizer, Queen's University
- Queen's University undergraduate students. This conference is being organized by my undergraduate class (ENGL 451) on Victorian literature. My students helped decide the conference theme, took the lead on writing this CFP, decided the keynote speaker and “interactive” topics, and will be vetting abstracts and organizing speakers into panels.

We welcome participation from any and all interested undergraduate and graduate students. We purposely wrote the CFP and selected our Keynote Speaker so that the conference may be of interest to students from beyond the field of Victorian Studies. So please, share with your students and encourage them to join us!

Conference date: April 28, 9:00am-5:00pm EST

Note: The conference will occur over Zoom. Links will be provided after the schedule is finalized.

Conference fees: It is free to present at and attend this conference. We only ask that all participants try to attend as many panels as possible.

Abstract submission date:

Please submit abstracts to UGSVA.conference@gmail.com by **March 31st, 2026**.

Note: panel applications are welcome as long as there is cross-institutional representation on the panel. It is expected that students will present on their work for about ten minutes. Abstracts should include the following information:

- Name
- Institution and university e-mail
- Presentation time zone
- Paper title
- Paper abstract (100-150 word summation of essay)

CFP: Our Victorians, Ourselves: Rethinking Victorian Texts & Contexts

Despite the Victorian era reaching its end 125 years ago, the cultural, political, and intellectual legacies of the period continue to fascinate and inform our current moment. As a result, this conference asks: what do the Victorians mean to students today, and what can we gain from continuing to engage with these nineteenth-century texts? We invite undergraduate and graduate students to answer that question for us by sharing their work on Victorian themes and narratives that still speak to us today. In particular, we invite students to share their research on nineteenth-century literature in the interest of sparking conversations around the enduring relevance or reinterpretation of these stories in the twenty-first century – for, as Nina Auerbach once famously wrote in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, “Every era gets the [Victorians] it deserves.”

Our conference will therefore explore the meaning of the Victorians (to ourselves) by asking students what it is about the Victorians that endure in popularity or cultural relevance. We invite a range of perspectives, including analyses on and beyond the Victorian canon and its inheritances in neo-Victorian rewritings or critiques. We are also interested in thinking about how innovations in literary studies or cultural trends might shape our interest in this historical moment.

Below, you will find a suggested list of possible essay topics. Other topics are enthusiastically welcomed!

Possible topics:

- Victorians in the popular imagination
- Victorian print culture
- Victorians and literary genres (Gothic, realism, adventure fiction, sensation fiction, etc.)
- Intersectional approaches to the Victorians
- Victorians and forms of cultivation (the garden, constructed wilderness, etc.)
- Victorian tourism
- Victorians and videogames
- Victorian natures and ecocriticism
- Nonhuman lives and agencies
- Neo-Victorian aesthetics, literatures, and cultures
- Imperialism and Empire
- Decolonial and anti-colonial perspectives
- Queerness and constructions of sexuality
- Victorian gender norms
- Victorian domesticity
- Victorian social hierarchies (class and status)
- Victorian poverty (the new poor laws, the workhouse, slumming, etc.)
- Victorian labour history (Chartism, unions, casualized labour and home industries)
- Industrial Revolution
- Victorian monsters (vampires, werewolves, witches, and all the other “Others”)
- Victorian fashion and dress
- Neo-Victorianism in non-Western cultures
- Victorian countercultures and taboos
- Victorians and food (fasting, gastronomy, and diet culture)
- Victorians and the Occult
- Victorian science and pseudoscience