

HIS 309

**Victorian Britain and Monsters:
A Particular History of Empire**

Satisfies SBS+

Thematic Categories: "Arts, Ideas & Culture,"
"Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities"

M/W: 2:00-3:20pm

Professor Kathleen Wilson

This course examines the cultural politics of empire and their impact on British life in the Victorian period (1837-1901.) At war with indigenous peoples in its empire for almost the entire century, and faced with restive and even revolutionary laborers, Irish Home Rulers and suffragettes on the domestic front, Victorians formulated imaginary solutions to the real social and political problems faced at home and in the colonies, and these formulations—of monsters, social or supernatural—impacted nothing less than western conceptions of modernity itself. National and imperial developments across hemispheric and transoceanic space provide the larger contexts for the two assigned novels (about monsters) and historical narratives and primary sources (about Victorian society). Finally, the course also teaches historians how to use literary fiction as historical sources (a methodology distinct from but linked to that of literature departments), in conjunction with primary and secondary historical works. Written assignments: three in-class papers, on topics to be given out the week before they are due.