

English

The London Underworlds & Otherworlds of Neil Gaiman & Alan Moore ~

Charles Sligh

UD (Upper Division 300-400)/G (Graduate 500 and above)

3 credit hours

In this course, students will explore how two pre-eminent British authors of the early twenty-first century—the urban fantasist Neil Gaiman (1960-) and the graphic novelist Alan Moore (1953-)—have verbally and visually re-cast the geography of London into a cityscape at once darkly forbidding and fantastically alluring, thereby transforming an entire generation's perception of the storied metropolis. In a series of cutting-edge and critically celebrated works—including *Neverwhere*, *From Hell*, *V for Vendetta*, and *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*—Gaiman and Moore have borrowed generously from the long, rich literary tradition of writing about London, re-casting the dark urban underworlds first imagined by late nineteenth-century writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker to suit their own decidedly twenty-first century preoccupations with the rise of the surveillance state, economic inequality, globalization, terrorism, multiculturalism, and mass communications.

Course Goals ? Locating, researching, and exploring source sites for the various secret, fantastic, and dystopic cityscapes imagined by Gaiman and Moore. Students will read a generous sampling of the literary works of Gaiman and Moore, mapping out the imagined cityscapes from the fiction within the geography of the "real" London of July 2014. Assigned readings will include: ? Gaiman, *Neverwhere* (1996) ? Gaiman, *Sandman* (1989-1996) ? Moore, *V for Vendetta* (1982-1989) ? Moore, *From Hell* (1989-1996) ? Moore, *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (1999-2013)

Students will also be assigned readings from Peter Ackroyd's history, *London Under: The Secret History Underneath the Streets* (2012). The following London landmarks serve as significant settings in the fictional works and will be scheduled for on-site exploration: ? The Museum of London (*Neverwhere*; *V for Vendetta*; *From Hell*; *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*) ? St. Paul's Cathedral (*Neverwhere*; *V for Vendetta*; *From Hell*) ? The Roman Amphitheatre at Guildhall (*From Hell*) ? Spitalfields Market, Christ Church (Spitalfields), and the East End (*From Hell*) ? The London Transport Museum (*Neverwhere*; *V for Vendetta*; *From Hell*) ? The Brunel Museum & Thames Tunnel (*Neverwhere*; *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*) ? The London Underground (*Neverwhere*; *V for Vendetta*; *From Hell*) ? The British Museum (*Neverwhere*; *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*) ? The British Library (*Neverwhere*; *League of Extraordinary Gentleman*) ? Westminster Abbey and Westminster Cathedral (*Neverwhere*; *V for Vendetta*) ? Developing the student's ability to read, think, discuss, and write critically about the literature, history, and culture of London through a close examination of the literary works of Moore and Gaiman. This analytical, classroom-based component will include an exploration of the how Gaiman and Moore have worked as innovators within their respective genres—including graphic novels, comic books, and urban fantasies. Attention will also be given to the two writers' biographies, literary influences, and reception histories. Additional emphasis will be placed upon how readings dramatize twenty-first century London social and political realities such as the rise of the surveillance

state, economic inequality, globalization, terrorism, multiculturalism, and mass communications. Finally, the course will include some consideration of films seeking to translate the print works of Gaiman and Moore to the cinema. ? Gaining practical, on-site knowledge of how Londoners live, work, and play in the modern metropolis. Students will develop a working facility with London transportation (including bus schedules and routes; underground lines; and cab fares), while also exploring how to shop and dine in different London neighborhoods and districts. By the end of the four-week course, students will be thinking of London as their workplace, as their home, and as their most uncommon cultural inheritance.

Can the course be taken to fulfill major and minor requirements? YES

Can the course be taken to fulfill general elective credits? NO

Are there prerequisites for this course?

Undergraduate Prerequisite: completion of Lower Division Composition Requirements. Graduate Prerequisite: acceptance into a graduate program in English or Course-related Discipline.

Assessment Methods:

Assignments will include in-class discussion (10%); a London Journal (30%); an in-class presentation (20%); and an end-of-term final exam (40%).

In addition, for graduate credit, graduate students will work one-on-one with me to produce a formal essay that pursues connections between their particular research interests and the opportunities made available by our course readings and various London-bases resources. (This formal essay will replace the end-of-term final exam.)

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For graduate credit, graduate students will work one-on-one with me to produce a formal essay that pursues connections between their particular research interests and the opportunities made available by our course readings and various London-bases resources. I will expect graduate students to make some use of the British

Library, gaining a reader's card and familiarizing themselves with the procedures and practice of the main reading room.