

Fall 2019 Course Descriptions

Instructor: Maura Ives

Course: 303

Title: 904

Description: ENGL 303.904: Christmas in Literature, Film and Culture

In this section of ENGL 303, we will study the depiction of the Christmas holiday in British and American literature and popular culture. While Christmas celebrations have their origin in the Christian Gospels, our focus will be on reinterpretations of the Christmas story that have detached it (more or less) from its sacred origins, and on the literary, cultural, and historical factors at play within them.

Our semester will start with the Biblical texts that depict the birth of Christ and their adaptation of those texts in literature and film. We'll then turn to two of the most influential literary treatments of the Christmas holiday: Clement Clarke Moore's "An Account of a Visit of St. Nicholas" and Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*. We'll situate these works in their immediate literary, historical and cultural context and examine their continuing influence in material and popular culture, but we will also explore less canonical literary and cultural traditions, such as the treatment of Christmas in work by African-American writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, representations of Christmas in American popular culture, including 20th and 21st century film and television ("It's A Wonderful Life" and other films that reference or are strongly associated with the Christmas holiday) and more recent cultural productions and rituals, such as Black Friday, the Elf on the Shelf, the Hallmark Channel's made-for-TV Christmas movies.

Proposed Readings: