Course Rationale
William Morris (1834-1896), the legendary British arts and crafts activist, was a prolific writer and doer. At various points in his life he was celebrated as a writer, painter, designer, craftsman, socialist, preservationist, and historian. He wrote prose and essays throughout his life, but he also became an accomplished dyer, weaver, printer, and designer. In the late nineteenth century, his influence was substantial but his stature has fragmented or even declined over the course of the twentieth. His designs for wallpaper, textiles, and books have been most enduring. Arts and Crafts enthusiasts always cite him but have rarely read much of his writings or have a full command of his activities. Some subsequent scholars, such as Nikolaus Pevsner, have celebrated him as a proto-modernist, while others, such as Jackson Lears, portray him as an antimodernist. Yet familiarity with the full range of Morris’s activities reveals that his influence has been considerable in the subsequent practice and theorizing of the decorative arts. It was Morris who articulated the view that craft, the act of pleasurable skilled work, could be both a form of art and a form of political activism. Taking full advantage of resources in the London and Oxford area, this seminar will consider the full measure of Morris, provide a sense of his context, and explore his influence in the twentieth century.

Course Requirements
The seminar will require weekly reading, a short reading response for each week, active discussion and participation in class and on field trips, a short 3-5 page paper on a specific Morris object at the V & A, and a research paper. The latter is a 10-12 page research paper, using original source material, on some aspect of Morris or his influence. Please consult with me during the third week to talk about this.

Course Readings
The PMC Library has a good selection of Morris’s writings, but I would encourage you to purchase four books: Linda Parry, ed., William Morris (New York: Abrams, 1996), Diane Waggoner, ed., The Beauty of Life: William Morris & The Art of Design (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2003), Imogen Hart, Arts and Crafts Objects (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); and Clive Wilmer, ed., William Morris, News From Nowhere and Other Writings (New York: Penguin, 1994). All of the important article length readings can be found on e-reserve through the classesv2 page for the class; these readings are marked with a [~].

**June 14**

**Introduction**


**June 15**

**Design Reform in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century**

**Field Trip:** Victoria & Albert Museum (10 to noon in the British Galleries; noon to 1:00 lunch on your own; 1:00-2:30 tour of the special exhibition “The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement, 1860-1900”)


**Topics of Focus:** Henry Cole, Owen Jones, Gothic Court, Green Dining Room

**June 21**

**Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite Circle**

**Readings:** Parry, pp. 32-48 and 89-105; Timothy Barringer, *Reading the Pre-Raphaelites* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 6-53 [-].

**Topics of Focus:** Thomas Malory, *Morte d’Arthur* (ca. 1470), Dante Rossetti

**June 23**

**The Pre-Raphaelite Life Style**

**Field Trip:** Red House


**Topics of Focus:** Philip Webb, Edward Burne-Jones

**Short Paper due**

**June 28**

**The High Game and the Business**

**Field Trip:** Cambridge University
Readings: Parry, pp. 49-57 and 106-295; Waggoner, pp. 33-87; and Hart, pp. 112-47.

Topics of Focus: Morris stained glass; Morris tiles

June 30       Morris on Craft

Readings: William Morris, “The Lesser Arts” (1877) and “Some Hints on Pattern Designing” (1881) in Wilmer, pp. 233-83; “Lesser Arts of Life” (1882) [~]; “Textile Fabrics” (1884) [~]; “Art and Industry in the 14th Century” (1890) [~]; “The Arts and Crafts of Today” (1889) [~]; “Revival of Handicraft” (1888) [~]; and “Art and Its Producers” (1888) [~].

Topics of Focus: Morris textiles, Morris wallpapers

July 5       Ornament and Story: The Book Arts

Field Trip: Emery Walker House, Kelmscott House


Topics of Focus: Emery Walker, Doves Press, T. J. Cobden Sanderson

July 7       Morris and Artisanal Socialism

Field Trip: William Morris Gallery


July 13-15   Long Field Trip--Utopian Crafts: News From Nowhere

Field Trip: Kelmscott Manor, St. John the Baptist in Inglesham, Buscot Park, Oxford, Rodmarton Manor, Chipping Camden.

Readings: William Morris, News From Nowhere: or, an Epoch of Rest (1891) in Wilmer, William Morris, News From Nowhere and Other Writings.

Topics of Focus: C. R. Ashbee; Ernest Gimson, Oxford Union Debating Hall

July 19     Morris’s Legacy: Preservation


Topics of Focus: Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

July 21   Morris’s Legacy: Exhibitions and Education

**Topics of Focus:** Walter Crane, W. R. Lethaby, Omega Workshops

**July 22**  
**Final Papers Due electronically or at PMC by 5 pm**
Grading will be based on the following means of assessment

1. Class participation, meaning your verbal engagement either in class or on field visits, giving evidence of background reading and intelligent observation.
2. Reading responses
3. A short observational paper on a specific Morris object in the V & A.
4. A research paper of about 10-12 pages on a subject you choose in discussion with Professor Cooke.