Welcome to the dark side of Victorian literature. From 1837 to 1901, the British Empire stretched its influence across the globe, the metropolitan center of London tripled in population, English workers, women, and children began to enjoy civil rights and political power that they never before had, and the constant influx of scientific discoveries and technological inventions made the lives of even average people longer, healthier, and better. Many Victorians believed that the future promised even more national, social, and personal progress. But at the same time, Victorian authors were obsessed with the dark side of human nature – with the criminal, the insane, the foreign, the ghostly, the bestial, the perverse, and the demonic. To explore this un-progressiv e sense of selfhood, the nineteenth-century writers we will be reading borrowed the Gothic conventions of the previous century – though with distinct and delightful Victorian twists – while anticipating the psychological exploration and narrative techniques that we usually call Modernist and Post-Modern. This course examines how Victorian literature challenged its own era’s rhetoric of progress and improvement in both prescient and retrograde ways. We will be reading some of the weirdest and most wonderful literature ever written – including Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, Charles Dickens’s *Great Expectations*, R. L. Stevenson’s, *Jekyll & Hyde*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* – and exploring how these texts reveal and obscure the reality they ostensibly present, how literature performs the chaos of social, political, and psychological flux, how works of art manipulate both modern and anachronistic ways of thinking and being, and what roles gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class play in what we consider easily known and what remains impossibly unknowable.