The Northeast Victorian Studies Association seeks proposals on the theme “Labor” for its annual conference at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. At a moment of heightened conflict over working conditions and mechanization across a range of industries (including higher education), this conference will examine labor and its representations across the nineteenth century.

For Uriah Heep of *David Copperfield*, labor means a cluster of things: “they used to teach at school from nine o’clock to eleven, that labour was a curse; and from eleven o’clock to one, that it was a blessing and a cheerfulness, and a dignity, and I don’t know what all.” We welcome submissions that explore such contradictions in Victorian culture: labor as a source of wealth, enrichment and moral value on the one hand, and of unprecedented suffering and immiseration on the other.

The Victorians taxonomized different kinds of labor as productive or reproductive, masculine or feminine, organic or mechanized, physical or emotional, free or enslaved, beautiful or ugly. Controlling these distinctions was central to the administration of the British Empire, allowing it to bring domestic and colonial populations under the sway of structures whose exploitative impact persists to this day. Despite the hard-won victory of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833, indentureship and slavery continued around the world by means of dehumanizing and lethal force.

In laboring to represent and understand these conflicts, how did Victorian writers, artists, and thinkers help to produce and structure them, and to assess the value of labor in the first place? How did they diagnose and reshape it on moral, philosophical, political, and even aesthetic grounds? And how did they conceive their own aesthetic, political and philosophical efforts in the wider world of work?
THEMES AND TOPICS

Theories
Utilitarianism & philosophic radicalism
Marx & Marxisms
The “Protestant Ethic”
The “Gospel of Work” (Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris)
The division of labor

Culture
Industrialization
Rural Labor
Working-class education
Working-class culture
Labor vs. leisure

Politics
Organized & disorganized labor
Trade unions & unionization
Origins of the Labour Party
Reform & revolution
Working-class political movements
Chartism
Child labor

Gender
Domestic vs. public labor
Pregnancy and childbirth
Emotional labor
Sex Work
Nursing, philanthropy, and health care

Empire
The exploitation of indigenous labor
Colonial administration as labor
Slavery and emancipation
Indentureship and migration
Intersections of race & class

Ecologies
Urbanization & demographic change
Environmental impacts of labor
Disabilities caused by working conditions
Plant and animal commodities

Writing and art
Victorian publishing & the book trade
Industrial culture and mass entertainment
Literary professionalism
Labor vs. “craft”
Factory verse

Academic work
Intellectual vs. administrative labor
Adjunctification & casualization
Unionization in higher education
Artificial Intelligence
Proposals (no more than 300 words) are due by Oct. 22, 2023 (email only, in Word format). Submit them to Mark Taylor, Chair, Program Committee: mtaylor@vassar.edu

Please note: all submissions to NVSA are evaluated anonymously. Successful proposals will stay within the 300-word limit and make a compelling case for the talk and its relation to the conference topic. Please do not send complete papers, and do not include your name on the proposal.

Include your name, institution, email address, and proposal title in the body of the email. Papers should be 15 minutes long.

The Coral Lansbury Travel Grant ($100.00) and George Ford Travel Grant ($100.00), given in memory of key founding members of NVSA, are awarded annually to a graduate student, adjunct instructor, or independent scholar in need of travel support to deliver a paper at our conference. Apply by indicating in your paper submission email that you wish to be considered. Please indicate from where you will be traveling, your projected expenses, and the extent of your funding from other sources.

NVSA relies upon donations to support its Mentorship Program, Graduate Student Essay Prize, keynote panels, and other endeavors. Please donate: https://nvsa.org/giving-to-nvsa/

To join NVSA, or renew your membership for 2023–24, please visit our website at http://nvsa.org/ and click on “Membership.”

Simon Reader, NVSA President
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Graduate Student Essay Prize
The Northeast Victorian Studies Association invites submissions for our annual prize for essays that expand the geographic, ethnic, racial, and methodological diversity of scholarship in the field. The award will recognize work that foregrounds nineteenth-century perspectives, texts, and contexts by or about British colonial subjects residing outside the metropole, or by or about immigrants and their descendants residing within it. We also welcome papers speaking more broadly to the centrality of race, ethnicity, and imperialism in global Victorian literature and culture. Essays should be 20–30 pages long and authors must be graduate students at the time of submission. Winners will receive registration to the annual NVSA conference and a $250 check, and the prize committee will offer help, if wanted, in placing the essay with a journal. Essays may be published or unpublished at the time of submission. Submit them by February 15, 2024 to Sophia Hsu at sophia.hsu@lehman.cuny.edu

Graduate Mentorship Program
The Northeast Victorian Studies Association offers a Mentorship Program for 2023–24 that seeks to enrich the field of Victorian studies by paving the way for a more inclusive professoriate that is representative of the populations we teach and serve. The program is especially geared towards graduate students from groups underrepresented in the discipline and who make a compelling case for why they would benefit from having a NVSA faculty mentor. This may include graduate students of color, first-generation college students, students with disabilities, and trans/non-binary scholars, particularly those whose work engages with critical race theory, postcolonial and circumatlantic scholarship, disabilities studies, or related topics and approaches. Each cohort of mentors and mentees will provide a mutual support network while offering a platform to discuss professionalization issues and working towards equality in the field. More information and application available at: https://nvsa.org/mentorship/. Applications for 2023–24 are due October 1, 2023 to Mary Mullen at mary.l.mullen@villanova.edu