

Olli at American University

SYLLABUS for STUDY GROUP #630

Spring 2024

- Study Group:** “Little Dorrit is NOT Another Little Nell”
- Day:** Eight Mondays (11:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.)
- Dates:** March 4, 11, 18, 25, April 1,8,15, 22
- Leader:** Dr. Linda R. Freeman
- Phone:** 301-502-0904
- E-Mail:** freeman.lindar@gmail.com
- Text:** Charles Dickens. Little Dorrit. Penguin Classic. Revised Edition. 2003.

Goals:

We will read and discuss chapter by chapter all 860 pages of Dickens’s Little Dorrit, a masterly novel written in his late, mature period. We will consider biographical material and larger, historical context as well the literary artistry of its text to discover how th novel achieves its remarkable effects and what its over-all thematic goal(s) might be.

Format:

Study group meetings will be a mix of informal lectures with group discussions. Active participation by group members will be essential to the success of each meeting.

First Assignment:

To keep the amount of reading per week from getting too heavy, the reading assignments will begin **before** the course starts. So, get yourself a copy of Little Dorrit, find time to do the assigned reading, and then sit down at about 11:30 a.m.to tune in Zoom for our first class on Monday, 4 March ready to discuss Book I, Chapter 1 “Sun and Shadow” through and including, Chapter 8, “The Lock.” During the week of 26 February, I will send out by email study questions covering the first eight chapters. Our discussion on 4 March will be based on these questions. While the reading schedule in this class is heavy, it is by no means impossible for intrepid OLLI participants. The secret to success is in planning for adequate reading times each week. With our 860-page novel, we will be reading sometimes up to120 pages per week.

Schedule:

This part of the syllabus is subject to adjustment.

March 4—Intros; syllabus; class policies; literary genres; Bildungsroman; Kunstlerroman; elements of the novel; Dickens bio; discussion of Little Dorrit Book I, Chapter 1 “Sun and Shadow” through Chapter 8 “The Lock”

March 11—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book I, Chapter 9 “Little Mother” through Chapter 16 “Nobody’s Weakness;” class system; British money

March 18—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book I, Chapter 17 “Nobody’s Rival” through Chapter 25 “Conspirators and Others;” narration and narrators; coincidence; prisons; economics; religion

March 25—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book I, Chapter 26 “Nobody’s State of Mind” through Chapter 34 “A Shoal of Barnacles;” elements of the novel applied; methods of book publication; plot; melodrama

April 1 —Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book I, Chapter 35 “What was behind Mr. Pancks on Little Dorrit’s Hand” through Book II, Chapter 7 “Mostly Prunes and Prism;” literary realism; verisimilitude; villains

April 8—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book II, Chapter 8 “The Dowager Mrs. Gowan is reminded that It Never Does” through Chapter 14 “Taking Advice;” irony; women;

April 15—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book II, Chapter 15 “No Just Cause or Impediment” through Chapter 23 “Mistress Affery makes a Conditional Promise;” elements of the novel applied; filmography and TV

April 22—Discussion of Little Dorrit, Book II, Chapter 24 “The Evening of a Long Day” through Chapter 34 “Gone” (End of novel); themes; summing up; possible future courses; evaluations, etc.