

MA IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Modules 2009-2010

AUTUMN SEMESTER

EGH6005 Directed Reading: Topics in Postcolonial English Studies

15 credits

This module will allow students to develop knowledge and understanding of a particular topic or area of Anglophone Postcolonial studies relevant to their MA programme. The student will pursue a course of directed reading on a themed topic which will be supported by an individual member of staff, based on his or her own research expertise; participating staff offer topics in advance for students to choose. The directed reading will address key texts, concepts, methodologies and examples from the topic. This will then provide a basis for further specific and targeted reading, agreed in negotiation with the tutor, as the unit progresses.

* Available on the Postcolonial pathway; please note that you may only take one Directed Reading module over the duration of your course.

Contact: a.vandervlies@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6015 Writing the Renaissance I

15 credits

This module explores two key influences on late medieval and early modern literature: the Bible and Ovidian writing. It traces how these were adapted and readapted by authors, working in and for different cultures and contexts. This module is core for all students on the early modern pathway.

* Available on the MA in English Literature and Early Modern pathway (compulsory for Early Modern pathway)

Contact c.shrank@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6016 Writing the Renaissance II

15 credits

This module looks at ways in which scholars of late medieval and early modern literature approach the texts they study, and the issues raised when endeavouring to understand, or categorise, works from a different era. Particular approaches explored include: linguistic analysis, gender/sexuality, periodisation, historicism, and using manuscripts, archives and visual sources. This module is core for all students on the early modern pathway.

* Available on the MA in English Literature and Early Modern pathway (compulsory for Early Modern pathway)

Contact: c.shrank@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6018 Creative Writing: Theory of Writing

30 credits

The module is a team taught series of classes taking student writers through the broad range of topics germane to the history, production and reception of creative writing in the 20th and 21st centuries. The module will ask students to produce a mixture of creative and critical responses to set texts, questions and issues within creative writing, using a range of different exercises and group work problem-solving processes which will enable students to develop awareness of the relevant cultural, aesthetic and socio-political contexts, problems and histories associated with specific genres and forms. Examples of topics may include: Poetry and Song, Genesis of a poem; Poetry, Class, Nation; Poetry, Gender, Form; Fiction and Story; Story development; Narrative theory; Genre fiction; Narrative forms and voices. The theory seminars will begin with poetry leading to a full-scale poetry workshop where students will attempt to ally their own writings to the lessons learnt in the previous poetry seminars; then move on to prose with the same structure. The module is designed to take the principles developed in the practical workshop onto a more demanding intellectual level where the students can situate their own practice within a complex network of traditions and conventions.

* Only available on the Creative Writing pathway

Contact: a.piette@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6007 The Rise of the Gothic, 1790-1890

30 credits

The Rise of the Gothic will examine the transmutations of the Gothic genre in Britain between 1790 and 1900. In the late eighteenth century the Gothic emerged as a powerful discourse well-suited to the tempestuous politics of the time, in such diverse and 'non-literary fields' as aesthetics, political theory and polemic, and science. We will chart the rise of the Gothic in Britain through considering these 'non-literary' areas beside the 'literary' Gothic. We will trace the genre's influence through its early use of terror, to its changing emphasis on vampire and sensation fiction towards the close of the nineteenth century. You will emerge from the course with an understanding of the Gothic genre in relation to contemporary and often conflicting discourses of the time.

* Available on the MAs in English Literature, Eighteenth Century Studies, Nineteenth Century Studies
Contact: h.ifill@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6014 Texts, Politics, Performance

30 credits

This module will examine attempts to use theatre and performance to reflect and influence society (primarily in Britain and Europe) during the 20th and 21st centuries. It will explore theatres, texts and performance forms within their historical, cultural, philosophical and aesthetic contexts, drawing on material rooted in contrasting political and aesthetic agendas. Possible areas for study include: post-revolutionary theatre in the Soviet Union; the Workers' Theatre Movement and Unity Theatre; theatre censorship; Documentary and Verbatim Drama; post-colonial liberation theatres; practitioners such as Boal, Brecht and Littlewood; companies such as Theatre Workshop, Gay Sweatshop and Red Ladder; playwrights such as Sarah Daniels, Tanika Gupta, Kay Adshead and Mark Ravenhill; experimental, avant-garde and Live Art forms.

* Available on the MA in English Literature, Creative Writing, Modern and Contemporary pathway; compulsory for students on the MA in Theatre and Performance

Contact: w.g.mcdonnell@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6017 Theatre Practice I

30 credits

A core aim of this studio-based module is to allow participants to develop as reflexive practitioners and researchers, and to encounter a range of approaches to the making of performances today. To this end, you will participate in a series of practice-based projects led by staff and practitioners who have expertise and research interests in contrasting fields of contemporary performance. Some projects are likely to involve public presentations by the group. Practice will be contextualised, documented, and subject to reflective analysis, and you will be expected to carry out appropriate research into relevant practitioners and their work and, where possible, to witness live or recorded performances. We also aim to develop critical vocabularies appropriate to different kinds of practice, and to explore how far practice itself can be used both as an effective research tool for generating new knowledge, and as a method of disseminating discoveries. Assessment is based on practical contributions to the projects undertaken, and on a reflexive portfolio.

* Compulsory for MA in Theatre and Performance; only available to suitably qualified students on other programmes by agreement with the module convenor

Contact: s.nicholson@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6026 Early Modern Palaeography

15 credits

No description available.

Contact: c.shrank@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6028 The Eighteenth Century: Research Approaches

30 credits

This module introduces you to the methodological issues raised by the interdisciplinary study of the eighteenth century. Taught jointly by experts from the English Literature and History Departments, it provides an introduction to the latest academic debates and research methods in the field. In the context of wider thematic discussions, you will work with a range of sources, ranging from novels and poetry, through newspapers and letters, to paintings and artefacts. Throughout, you will consider a range of interpretative issues, and will be encouraged to locate your readings of the eighteenth-century within appropriate literary, historiographical or methodological debates.

* Compulsory for MA in Eighteenth Century Studies

Contact: j.bray@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT609 Contemporary African Cultural Texts/Textual Cultures

30 credits

In this module, you will be introduced to a number of themes and practices in the study of cultural production in contemporary Africa. These will be primarily text- and print-based (novels, short stories, poems, pamphlets, comics, newspapers), but also include some film, and possibly other cultural artefacts and oral cultures. You will encounter a range of theoretical frameworks for studying the material, ideological, textual, and institutional mediation of these 'cultural texts' in the context of the history and cultural politics of postcolonial Africa, the African diaspora, the global media, and the field of postcolonial studies.

* Available on the MA in English Literature, Film, Postcolonial and Creative Writing pathways

Contact: a.vandervlies@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6360 Memory and Narrative in Contemporary Literature

30 credits

This module examines a variety of texts about traumatic memory. The texts range widely both generically (testimony and fiction) and thematically (historical and personal trauma). Particular writers include W G Sebald, Georges Perec,

Ian McEwan and Meg Rosoff. The texts will be studied in relation to classic and contemporary theories of trauma, particularly those of Sigmund Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Dominick LaCapra. Attention will be paid to the ways in which narrative form is affected by traumatic content, and the recurrence of certain literary tropes and devices these include the descent to hell, fragmentary or childhood memory, and the photograph.

* Available on the MA in English Literature; American, Creative Writing, Film, Modern and Contemporary pathways
Contacts: s.vice@sheffield.ac.uk, r.falconer@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT638 Directed Reading in Topics in Early Modern Literature

15 credits

Designed to prepare students for dissertations on early modern topics, this module offers the opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about the literature and culture of one of three broadly-defined areas: 'medieval into Renaissance'; 'sixteenth century'; 'early seventeenth century'.

* Available on the Early Modern pathway

Contact: c.shrank@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6390 Interdisciplinary Approaches to Nineteenth Century Studies

30 credits

'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness'. Dickens was ruefully appreciative of his age's superlative contradictions, and this course aims to develop an understanding of such vibrant variety by drawing on a range of interdisciplinary research techniques to consider four revolutions of 'the times': French, industrial, intellectual and gender. The course may also involve sessions at the City Archives and the Ruskin Gallery; authors studied will include Gaskell, Dickens, Tennyson, Ruskin, Kipling, and other literary and visual artists in England and Europe; topics discussed will include political satire, Darwinism, prophecy and progress, imperialism, and men dressing up as women.

This course is designed to widen and deepen your knowledge and understanding of the Nineteenth Century, and to introduce you to the kinds of academic enquiry that are directed it from a range of disciplines. You will learn about, and learn to negotiate, the differences and the links between a range of approaches to this eventful and complex century. The course will develop your research skills; you will be expected to use electronic and library research resources on a regular basis, and to learn about and put into practice a wide range of research methods pertaining to the various disciplines. Most importantly, the course is designed to introduce you to a wide range of possible subject areas, and a wide range of possible methodological approaches to help you develop your own independent lines of enquiry and research.

* Compulsory for MA in Nineteenth Century Studies

Contact: samantha.matthews@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6700 'Tales of the City' – The Living Space in Contemporary American Fiction

30 credits

San Francisco and New Orleans are perhaps the most atypical cities in the United States. San Francisco emphasises youth culture, choice of sexuality, and freedom, and New Orleans stresses multi-ethnicity, music, history, language, vice, and vampires. What is especially striking in the context of a celebration of the American Metropolis is the interrelation between the images of the city and the literature produced about that city. The features of fragmentation, rootlessness, and lack of structure put forward in much postmodern fiction as a simulacrum of postmodern life (cf. Baudrillard's description of Los Angeles in *America* (1985)) are glorified in the fictions of San Francisco and New Orleans. Do these cities and these fictions contrast with recent immigrant fiction, African-American fiction, and/or Chicano fictions located in Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia? In this course, I would like to explore the literary spaces of these metropolises and investigate the effects of living in this space on its literary inhabitants. In these cities, the apartment building, the mall, downtown, the sports arena, the bar replace the structures of family, gender, and race, predominant in so much other American fiction. Whether these new architectures offer truly liberated conditions will be further examined.

* Available on the MA in English Literature; American, Creative Writing, and Modern and Contemporary pathways

Contact: d.oostrum@sheffield.ac.uk

SPRING SEMESTER

EGH6004 Interpret the Brutes: The Animal in Postcolonial Writing

30 credits

This module studies the literary representation of animals and human-animal relations in contemporary postcolonial writing. Perhaps the most visible legacy of colonialism is its impact on indigenous flora, fauna and landscape. Also, as Gayatri Spivak has pointed out, the colonial project was regularly legitimised by claims that indigenous peoples had not 'graduated into humanhood': they were, more or less, animals. This course studies how postcolonial writing has challenged this logic - not by celebrating 'the human' - but by responding to the fascination of animal life and the ethical complexity of human-animal relations in postcolonial environment. Authors studied will include Atwood, Coetzee, Yann Martel and Alice Walker.

* Available on the MA in English Literature, Creative Writing, Film, Modern and Contemporary, and Postcolonial pathways

Contact: b.mckay@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6005 Directed Reading: Topics in Postcolonial English Studies

15 credits

See Autumn Semester.

Contact: r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6017 Creative Writing: Practical Workshop

30 credits

The module will entail a practical writing workshop where students will read, discuss, analyze and critique their own and other students' writing, as well as learning the fundamentals of close reading, technical analysis and critical judgment of contemporary writers from a practitioner's point of view. The workshopping will be structured according to a programme of topics, exercises and commissions which will encourage and train students in the basics of writing techniques in the main genres and sub-genres, as well as aid them in the development of their own creative writing to an acceptable and potentially publishable standard. Students will study writing through appropriate and writer-centred theoretical frameworks – such as story development, issues of class, race, gender in writing, genre conventions, narrative theory – whilst also being encouraged to critique each others' work, to workshop writing creatively and constructively, and to work with tutors to help prepare work in progress for the main dissertation project later in the year. Students will produce a portfolio of writing based on the workshop commissions as well as a critical essay reflecting on the creative processes involved in their submission.

* Only available on Creative Writing pathway

Contact: a.piette@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6019 White Like Me: Reading Whiteness in American Literature

30 credits

One of the most compelling features of American writing remains its deep engagement with questions of race and identity. This module investigates the literary construction of race by exploring the aesthetic and theoretical design of whiteness. We will consider the relationship between nationalism and whiteness and the significance of class, gender and region in shaping portraits of white identity. We will read key 'white' authors of the American tradition such as Herman Melville and William Faulkner and read their narratives of whiteness against the works of African American and Native American authors like Toni Morrison, James Baldwin and Sherman Alexie.

* Available on MA in English Literature, American, Creative Writing, Film, Modern and Contemporary pathways

Contact: r.van-duyvenbode@sheffield.ac.uk

EGH6070 The Language of Postcolonial Literatures

30 credits

For writers from former British colonies the use of English as a medium for literature can have both advantages and disadvantages. In the end, the reason that English is so widely used in countries as diverse as Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica, Trinidad, India, and Pakistan is that these areas were all once part of the British empire and English was used in all of them as a language of colonial administration and education. On the one hand, this means that it is quite natural for many postcolonial writers to use English – it isn't really 'foreign' to them and it provides a way of communicating with a diverse, international audience. But, on the other hand, to write in English is effectively to embrace the 'language of the coloniser', drawing upon a language and a literary tradition that are closely associated with the former colonising power. Some critics have suggested that to use the language of the coloniser is to remain colonised and submit to the authority of a foreign tradition in an area which is crucial to the establishment and propagation of personal and group identities. Other critics have challenged this viewpoint and asserted that, when African, Asian, and Caribbean writers use English, they are not merely imitating the language and literature of the coloniser but forging a new medium out of the historical materials available to them. In this module we shall explore these questions through a detailed engagement with a range of postcolonial writing and criticism.

* Available on the MA in English Literature, Creative Writing, Film, Modern and Contemporary, and Postcolonial pathways

Contact: r.d.steadman-jones@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6008 The English Civil War

30 credits

On this module students will interrogate a wide variety of texts written in England between 1640 and 1660 in order to develop their understanding of the major literary genres of early modern England. In particular we will examine the manner in which the social and political upheavals of the revolutionary decades affected generic development. Thus, alongside lyric and epic poetry, biography, autobiography, drama, prose romance and prose polemic, students will also consider the emergence of supposedly more 'ephemeral' forms such as the pamphlet and newsbook. This will feed into a sustained examination of the way in which radical elite and non-elite writers could express and disseminate their ideas in times of political crisis.

* Available on the MA in English Literature, the Early Modern pathway, MA in Eighteenth Century Studies
Contact: m.nevitt@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6011 Fiction and Reality, 1848-1859

30 credits

This unit treats selected fictions by some of the greatest novelists of the 'long' nineteenth century, such as Austen, Dickens, Balzac, Flaubert, Tolstoy, James, Eliot, Hardy and Conrad. It considers the importance of the realist mode in these works, examining what realism in art meant to the writers, and the ways it influenced their representation of their world. It will discuss how attitudes to history, conceptions of truth, and views on the purposes of fiction are filtered through notions of realism and embodied in the period's fiction. Discussion of the novels is supplemented by examination of contemporary debates about fiction and reality and more recent critical perspectives on the topic. The emphasis will be on the English realist tradition, informed by some comparative work on American novels and European novels read in translation.

* Available on the MAs in English Literature and Nineteenth Century Studies

Contact: samantha.matthews@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6015 Theatre Practice 2

30 credits

This studio-based module centres on theatre practice. Students on the module participate in the preparation and presentation of two performance projects. The first is staff-led but involves a high degree of creative input from all participants. Examples might include: devising an original documentary drama; juxtaposing conflicting texts on stage; testing theories through creation of a particular theatrical product. The second project is student-initiated, and will involve creating a performance or practical process which may choose to build on or interrogate ideas explored in the first project or in Theatre Practice1., or may pursue a new creative direction agreed with the tutor. In both cases, students are assessed on their contribution to and understanding of the work created. The first project is normally a whole group piece. The second project may be another whole group piece, if appropriate, but students are also encouraged to initiate separate or small group projects in pursuit of areas of individual interest.

* Compulsory for MA in Theatre and Performance; only available to suitably qualified students on other programmes by agreement with the module convenor

Contact: f.babbage@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6024 The City in Nineteenth-Century English Literature

30 credits

Shelley's vision of nineteenth-century London – metropolis and capital of empire – as a hellish 'populous and smoky city', could also describe the new industrial cities of the midlands. Yet these polluted and problematic urban centres were also cradles of culture, innovation and imagination, and inspired a rich body of urban writing that represents and invents the heterogeneous and uncontainable modern city, and the diverse lives of its visitors and inhabitants. This module covers texts by a range of Romantic and Victorian authors, considering a range of genres and literary traditions, city types, urban spaces and motifs.

* Available on the MAs in English Literature and Nineteenth Century Studies

Contact: samantha.matthews@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6036 Issues in Contemporary Performance

30 credits

This seminar-based module will allow students to explore and engage with current and on-going debates in different fields of contemporary theatre practice, and in theatre historiography. They will be encouraged to consider the relationship between theatre and performance and the society/culture they inhabit. Students will attend and contribute to a series of seminars, short lectures and other provocations, and may also be expected to attend performances, workshops or other external events. Video and sound recordings may also be used, and students will carry out and present research through focusing on the printed word, the internet and live or recorded performances and/or workshops.

* Compulsory for MA in Theatre and Performance; available on the MA in English Literature, and Creative Writing, and Modern and Contemporary pathways

Contact: s.nicholson@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6150 Contemporary British Poetry

30 credits

This module examines the work of a number of British poets from the 1950s to the present day. It aims to explore the formal and ideological diversity, and conflict, at work in the poetry of the period. A particular feature of this module is the opportunity to use the Peter Redgrove Archive, which holds all his working papers from the 1970s and 80s.

* Available on MA in English Literature, Creative Writing, Modern and Contemporary pathways

Contact: n.j.roberts@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6330 The Analysis of Film

30 credits

This module has two basic premises. First, it is designed to be used as a refresher course for students experienced in film study, introducing unfamiliar films whose form and content ramify outwards to others in (or using) similar modes. Thus, a viewing of 'Tales of Hoffman', for instance, would introduce an exploration of music and the operatic in other films. Second, for students unused to film analysis, it will provide some training in detailed interpretation, and introduce film as reportage. The course aims to give some training in preparing programme notes and in writing considered criticism of newly issued films. Video extracts are frequently used in seminars, and students are expected to bring video extracts for discussion, both to illustrate personal commentary and to fulfil the weekly requirement to submit one self-chosen extract to illustrate a point in film history.

* Available on MA in English Literature; American, Creative Writing, Film, Modern and Contemporary pathways
Contact: j.r.rayner@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6340 Eighteenth-Century Scottish Verse

30 credits

This module examines Scottish poetry written during the eighteenth century. Following the Union of Parliaments in 1707, Scottish verse was subject to a number of pressures: patriotic, economic, political, cultural and linguistic. The module examines how poets of this period, including Ramsay, Macpherson, Fergusson, Burns, Little and others, responded to those pressures. The module will read the creation of verse alongside the emergence of a vibrant print culture in Scotland. The emphasis is upon understanding the material conditions amidst and by which poetry is created, marketed and received.

* Available on the MAs in English Literature and Eighteenth Century Studies
Contact: h.mathison@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT638 Directed Reading in Topics in Early Modern Literature

15 credits

Designed to prepare students for dissertations on early modern topics, this module offers the opportunity to gain more in-depth knowledge about the literature and culture of one of three broadly-defined areas: 'medieval into Renaissance'; 'sixteenth century'; 'early seventeenth century'.

* Available on the Early Modern pathway
Contact: c.shrank@sheffield.ac.uk

LIT6760 Shelling Lives: Literary Biography in Theory and Practice

30 credits

'Knowledge of the life interprets - decodes - the poems; exactly what Eliot's theory of the objective correlation was designed to prevent.' Cynthia Ozick welcomes greater access to the personality behind the poems of T.S. Eliot. But can a work of literature be 'illuminated' by a knowledge of the life and times of the author, or is the biographical enterprise basically reductive? Why do writers of fiction - Julian Barnes in *Flaubert's Parrot*, A.S. Byatt in *Possession* - feel a fascination for the lives of writers? Is literary biography a form of fiction? With reference to both theoretical considerations and specific examples, this module will examine the issues of literary biography. We will analyse passages from complementary or conflicting accounts, and draw our own critical conclusions. Research projects will seek to gather information from biographies, letters, memoirs, poems, and fictions, to collate and evaluate, and even (in some instances) to essay a bit of literary biography.

* Available on all MAs and pathways (except MA in Theatre and Performance)
Contact: j.haffenden@sheffield.ac.uk

Please note that other modules (cross-listed from other MAs) are also available. These include:

HST676, Ways of Seeing (j.e.shaw@sheffield.ac.uk)

HST686, Representing the Eighteenth Century: History & Film (k.harvey@sheffield.ac.uk)

HST6886, Eighteenth-Century British-American Colonies (s.middleton@sheffield.ac.uk)

HST6892, The Scramble for Africa (i.phimister@sheffield.ac.uk)

HST6003, The Fin-de-Siecle (t.baycroft@sheffield.ac.uk)

HST6887, Discovering Rural England (clare.griffiths@sheffield.ac.uk)

HSS6002, Postcolonial Encounters (c.ramosvillar@sheffield.ac.uk)

GER601, Dutch Colonial and Postcolonial writing (h.louwerse@sheffield.ac.uk)

If your module is not listed here, please contact c.shrank@shef.ac.uk for further details.