

English Language and Literature Modules

EGH622 Murderers and Degenerates: Contextualising the fin de siècle Gothic (30 credits)

The module explores three related case histories which help to establish the ways in which the literary Gothic shaped particular fin de siècle anxieties. To that end the module examines accounts of Joseph Merrick (aka The Elephant Man), newspaper reports of the Whitechapel murders of 1888, and the trials of Oscar Wilde. It is by exploring how the Gothic infiltrated medical, criminological, and legal discourses that we can see how a narrative which centred on the pathologisation of masculinity was elaborated at the time. These case histories will be read alongside *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) and *Dracula* (1897) as two of the key literary texts which also examine medicine, the law, and crucially the urban and gender contexts which in turn shape the three case histories.

EGH6023, Reconsidering the Renaissance (30 credits)

This module is designed both to explore the concept of 'the Renaissance' and to interrogate it. It examines the ways in which late medieval and early modern writers approached the Renaissance's defining project of cultural rebirth, including translation of and allusion to classical literature, and it encourages students to identify (and question) processes of periodisation and canon-formation in pre-modern texts and modern criticism alike. It also introduces students to the medieval and Renaissance discourses and practices within which these developments took place, such as manuscript circulation, printing, letter-writing, and changing notions of authorship.

LIT631 Post-War British Theatre, Film and Television (30 credits)

This module provides the opportunity for parallel study of the British drama, cinema and television of the post-war period. This era saw the emergence of influential styles, prominent figures and landmark texts in all three artistic forms: e.g. the plays of John Osborne (*Look Back in Anger*), television drama (*Cathy Come Home*) and key British films, such as Ealing comedies (*The Man in the White Suit*), retrospective war films (*The Cruel Sea*) and social problem films (*Sapphire*). The module will explore the evolving post-war cultural landscape to contextualise and critically appraise examples from these interrelated literary, performative and representational media.

LIT635 Confession (30 credits)

"Western man has become a confessing animal," or so Michel Foucault contended. This module interrogates confessional acts in literature and culture, beginning with St Augustine's *Confessions* (often considered the first autobiography in the Western tradition) and focusing in particular upon eighteenth- and nineteenth-century forms. Students will explore confession across a range of contexts: sacred and secular law, medicine, self-improvement, scandal and sensation. A variety of genres will be considered, from autobiography to fiction, prison writing to medical case studies, periodical print to the confession 'album'. Authors will include Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas De Quincey, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Oscar Wilde.

LIT636 Love, Death and Destiny: The Ancient Novel (30 credits)

The fictional narratives of Greco-Roman antiquity play a foundational role in the Western literary tradition. In this module students will encounter the extant masterworks of Chariton, Xenophon of Ephesus, Achilles Tatius, Longus, Heliodorus, and Apuleius - authors once widely read in the ancient world - as well as two Jewish and Christian examples: *Joseph and Aseneth* and the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*. The ancient novels, the earliest examples of the genre, are a ripe literary field to explore the construction of gender, human sexualities, the relation of lovers to family and society, and the intersection of eroticism with ancient religious sensibilities.

LIT637 Victorian Bodies (30 credits)

This module will address the representation of bodies (human and otherwise) in the literature of the Victorian period. It will explore intersecting issues of (for example) gender, race, empire, class, species, sexuality and (dis)ability in a variety of textual media and in relation to key historical, cultural and theoretical contexts. Topics may include (for example) the literary construction of gorillas; Egyptian mummy fiction; the male nude; Victorian freak shows; tattooed Victorians; and the labouring body. The aim is to encourage critical engagement with this key issue and to facilitate a deeper appreciation of the period's literature, culture and politics.

LIT651 I want a Hero: Romantic and Victorian Epic (30 credits)

Herbert Tucker, following the Romantic poets' esteem for the genre, refers to the epic as 'the last rite of passage to full poetic majority, the summative test of art'. This module proposes to examine the knotty problem of epic in the Romantic and Victorian period, encouraging students to consider the vital though testing presence of the epic across the long Nineteenth century. Students will explore lesser known works by well-known poets, such as *The Excursion* and *Laon and Cythna*, *The Ring and the Book*, and *Aurora Leigh*. As well as featuring poets such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Browning, and Barrett Browning, students will explore a range of contexts, from artistic and aesthetic, to politics, culture, and gender. Formative assessment will consist of a short abstract and class presentation (based on their abstract). Summative assessment is by a 5000-word essay based on their abstract and presentation.

LIT699 New African Literatures (30 credits)

This module introduces students to a diverse range of contemporary African fiction and extends the theoretical and regional knowledge of students who have studied some postcolonial literatures at undergraduate level. We will read novels and short stories from a range of countries, including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Rwanda. We will consider new forms and genres emerging in African writing, particularly Afrofuturism and Afropolitanism. The course will also pay attention to the politics of publishing work by African writers; the function of literary prizes; the relation between the local and the global and the value and use of the global presence that some African writers now have.

LIT6007, The Rise of The Gothic (30 credits)

The Rise of the Gothic will examine the transmutations of the Gothic genre in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. 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 upon scientific experimentation and vampire fiction in 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. This year, there will also be an optional excursion during the Autumn semester to the John Rylands Library in Manchester for their 'Gothic' exhibition.

LIT6011, Fiction and Reality (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.

LIT6021, Exchanging Letters: Art and Correspondence in Twentieth-Century America (30 credits)

This module looks at the art and practice of letter writing in twentieth-century American literature. In particular, it considers the relationship between letter writing and other literary genres, investigating the use writers make of their own and other people's correspondence in published novels, poems and stories. Students will read letters by some of the twentieth-century's most controversial and innovative epistolary writers, including Elizabeth Bishop, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Robert Lowell, Marianne Moore, Flannery O'Connor and Sylvia Plath. One of the main aims of the module will be to consider the aesthetics of letter writing and the extent to which it might be seen as a literary genre in its own right. In addition to this, we will also be looking at the aftermath of singular letters or letter writers in different art forms. Students will be expected to show awareness of the different historical and social contexts in which these artists worked and to contextualise their readings of letters through reference to other biographical and literary sources.

LIT6039, Poetry and History (30 Credits)

This module looks at poems from the 'long nineteenth century' (1719-1874) which have been inspired by public events. Such poems challenge received ideas about poetry in the period as being preoccupied with private or domestic emotion. Examples might include: the French Revolution in Wordsworth and Coleridge; Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and Keats's *Fall of Hyperion*; Anna Barbauld, 'Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq., on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade'; Byron's *Don Juan*; *Aurora Leigh* by Barrett Browning; Tennyson and the end of empire, amongst others. The module will combine close reading of selected lyric or narrative or autobiographical poems with study of contemporary sources and documents.

LIT6045, Humans, Animals, Monsters and Machines: From *Gulliver's Travels* to *King Kong* (30 credits)

This module examines imaginings of the 'human' in relation to machines and animals (and those monsters that are neither one thing nor the other) from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. We will focus mainly on fiction, its cultural contexts and on readings from the period's key thinkers of human being, alongside more recent theories of humans, posthumans and animals. The aim is to encourage critical engagement with this key issue and to facilitate a deeper appreciation of the period's literature, culture and politics, including the relationship of discourses of technology and species to discourses of class, gender and race.

LIT6046: Rocket-State Cosmology: Cold War Techno Culture (30 credits)

This module engages with the technological systems that sustain the Cold War—atom bomb; ballistic missiles; super-computers; cyborgs—through their representations in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) and genre film. *Gravity's Rainbow* forms the core text for this module; each week, it is complemented with science fiction/horror films that allow us to consider the different types of Cold War technology. The technological systems under investigation are all linked to Cold War ideologies of containment; the nuclear family; body/nation-state maintenance; shelter fiction; gadget love. The module is structured according to thematic concerns that interrogate technological fantasies and fears..

LIT6047: Early Modern Books (15 credits)

'Whatever they may do, authors do not write books. Books are not written at all. They are manufactured by scribes and other artisans, by mechanics and engineers, and by printing presses and other machines' (Roger E. Stodhard). This module examines the processes which created the works that early modern audiences experienced, in manuscript and print, or as performance. Topics covered on the module include the production, licensing, dissemination, reception, and censorship of literary works. Knowledge of these processes, and the practical constraints and contingencies attendant on them, enriches our appreciation of how early moderns perceived the books they read/owned and the performances they witnessed, and gives insight into the often collaborative and contested nature of 'authorship'. The module will also consider the role of the modern scholarly editor.

LIT6090 Romantic Gothic (30 credits)

Romantic Gothic considers the various manifestations of the Gothic mode, from the middle of the eighteenth century towards the end of the Romantic period in 1830. Looking at how the Gothic became such an enduring and powerful mode of expression in literature, the module will look at Gothic poetry, Gothic novels, Gothic bluebooks, and accounts of supernatural occurrences in the popular magazines and newspapers of the age. By the end of the module, you will have a good knowledge of the rise of the Gothic during the eighteenth century and Romantic periods, and will have examined some of the most popular Gothic works of the age alongside less canonical works.

LIT6340: British Poetry in the Long Eighteenth Century: Union, Divergence and Death (30 credits)

This module examines 'British' poetry written during the long eighteenth century. Following the Union of Parliaments in 1707, national verse was subject to a number of pressures: patriotic, economic, political, cultural and linguistic. The module examines how poets of this period, for example Pope, Dryden, Thompson, Goldsmith, Gray, 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 England and Scotland. The emphasis is upon understanding the material conditions amidst and by which poetry is created, marketed and received.

LIT6351, Topics in American Postmodernism: Postmodernism to Neoconservatism in American Culture (30 credits)

This module is especially designed for postgraduate students exploring potential research areas in the School of English. It is highly recommended for students on the American Literature Pathway and for those thinking about pursuing a PhD in American Literature or a related field. We will cover different research topics each week, taught by potential supervisors for those topics. After the culture wars in the American academy in the 1970s, in which students complained about American literature basically consisting a 'five dead white men from New England,' Donald Pease in 1990 formulated the concept of 'New Americanists.' Feminist, racial, theoretical, new historical, and class criticism apparently destroyed the consensus criticism of the 'American Renaissance' (Matthiessen) and the 'American Adam' (Lewis, Smith, and others), opening up the canon and manner of critique. American literary criticism changed dramatically, reinventing itself time after time, and focusing on different terrains. This year, our very own 'new Americanists' will explore this research landscape via topics in: The African American Child and Postcolonial Film, Ecology, American Pornography, PostRacial African Americanism, Whiteness Studies, American Postmodern Stylistics, Post Classical Hollywood Film, Postmodern American Animals, and American Postmodern Detective Fiction.

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.

LIT6700, Tales of the City (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.