

## 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### LIT646 Renaissance Transformations (30 credits)

This module approaches Renaissance literature through the theme of transformation. It will look at examples of transformation in Renaissance writing, such as changing sex, changing religion, and changes between the human and the animal. It will also consider the changes that Renaissance writers wrought upon existing literary traditions such as the classical, the biblical and the medieval.

### LIT665 Reimagining the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (30 credits)

Reimagining the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the core module of the MA Literature, Culture and Society 1700—1900. The module will address the diverse thematic approaches which can be applied to the novel, poetry, and other media such as life-writing, published between 1700-1900. The module reflects the range of expertise of the teaching team in these areas and this research-led module will introduce students to current research approaches and methods.

### 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.

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.

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.

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.