MA English Literature

Options Modules 2019/20

You take one at least one pre-1900 module from the following list:

- The Spatial Turn: History, Literature, and Geography

This module takes Edward Said’s sense of an opening up of the relationship between geography, history, and literature as the starting point for an exploration of spatial history and theory. Reading of key essays in spatial theory - Lefebvre, de Certeau, Soja, Jacob and others - will be interspersed with diverse case studies of the history of spatial representation, ranging from classical antiquity to the present. The case studies will be focussed within two principal zones: maps and mapping practices (cartography vs. topography, the God-like viewer vs. the walker etc.); and exile (specifically, exile as an experience of space, centre vs. periphery, urban vs. rural spaces). In addition, students will be invited to submit proposals for texts and themes to be read in the second half of semester. These texts may be of any period and genre, but must respond (and hopefully extend) the module’s focus on space, its history, and the literary representation thereof."

- Romanticism and Genre

Studying a wide range of texts from 1760 to 1830, this module examines the formal innovations of Romantic literature but also the fascination with archaic genres such as ballad, epic and national song, whose revival and transformation made Romanticism a ‘retro’ movement as well as a revolutionary one. The module analyses Romantic theories of genre alongside historical examples, while investigating too the ‘poetics of the book’: the publishing processes and paratextual practices through which experiments with form and format took concrete shape.

- Sociability Literature and the City 1660-1780

This module focuses on the representation of the city in the literature of the Restoration and eighteenth century. The general research question this module investigates is the interaction between literature and history: in particular how is urbanism - the formation of a new and distinct affectual structure associated with the structural transformation of urban life in the early eighteenth century - manifested in and by the literary. The module will examine how this cultural and historical transformation can be read in and through experiments in literary genre and style in the period (including forms of popular satire, verse, periodical essays, prose fictions and the novel, as well as painting and cartography). The module will focus on four key debates, which may include topics such as the city and its mock poetic forms, the coffee-house, the Spectator essays, and women writers, and will engage in key critical debates in twentieth-century city theory.

- Aestheticism and fin de siècle Literature

This module introduces students to developments in the literature of the late Victorian period with an eye to its possible influences on modernist writing. Students are encouraged to explore such issues as the construction of the self and personality, representation of the body, the role of

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the artist with reference to gender and sexuality, Decadence, and the 'New Woman', as well as making a more general survey of aesthetics, style, and the visual and literary imagination in the writings of the period. Students study a variety of different kinds of writing including poetry, drama, art and literary criticism, and the novel. Writers included are Swinburne, Pater, Wilde, and Hardy, and lesser known figures such as Vernon Lee and Charlotte Mew.

- Public and Private Cultures in Renaissance England

Since at least the nineteenth century, the Renaissance has been credited with witnessing the independent emergence of both the public sphere of political debate and participation and a fully-fledged concept of private and internal identity. As well as providing a framework for the interpretation of allegedly characteristically Renaissance literary forms - the lyric poem or the essay, for instance - these categories have also determined the nature of much recent critical writing about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This module will assess the usefulness of the concepts of public and private as they are applied to the period, considering a wide range of texts and other cultural artefacts from portraits to gardens. It will explore spaces where the distinction between the public and the private is contested (in the physical space of the court or the textual space of the preface) and will address important methodological debates concerning the history of the period.

- Global Shakespeare: History and Theory and Performance

This module aims to provide students with a common grounding in the study of Shakespeare within a global context through sustained analysis of three areas: an understanding of Shakespeare in terms of genre, historical context and the close reading of his texts; the transformation of the Shakespearean text by the critical turn of theory; and the afterlife of Shakespeare in his appropriation, translation or adaptation in a global context. The module will be divided into sections. Each section will be devoted to a play of a different genre: comedy, history, tragedy, and romance. The first week of each section will deal with close reading, genre theory, and the play in its historical context. The second will examine a major critical turn by which a new theoretical transformed perceptions of the play--in the classroom, the theatre, or in film. The third will study a particular, global appropriation of the Shakespeare text beyond Britain and North America, through popular cultural or political appropriations and in TV, theatre performance and film. The module will be cumulative: each section will build on the understanding and skills developed in the respective earlier one, and each week devoted to Shakespeare's afterlives will involve an intense critical conversation about the meaning and significance of the 'global'. The texts will be selected in accordance with available teaching expertise and performances of the plays in any year.

And then up to two other electives from the list as follows:

- State of the Novel

This module will enable students to explore a turbulent period of innovation, reformation, and artistic self-consciousness across which writers reconsidered the cultural status, aesthetic potential and political mission of the novel. Deliberately chronological in organization, the syllabus will move from the late-1960s to the present, in order to chart the evolution of key phases in the way we retrospectively frame late-twentieth-century writing, from postwar social realism, postmodernism and beyond. Students will thus have

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the opportunity to engage not only stylistically but also historically with discrete moments of and transitions in novelistic experiment. They will be reading important essays from writers themselves (Iris Murdoch, David Lodge, Jeanette Winterson, J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie, Caryl Phillips) and allowing the questions they raise to inform close readings of form. The selected novelists will be framed by topics ranging from early debates about the future of experimentalism in the 1970s, the relation between style and social critique in the 80s, the renaissance of historical fiction in the 90s, and finally the new directions in formal innovation that have emerged since 2000.

- Literature, Science and Technology

This module explores the diverse uses that contemporary authors (from the past fifty years) make of science and technology in their works, and the distinct ways in which critics and scholars engage with science and technology in the cultural field. We take a broad definition of 'science', 'technology' and 'literature'. Besides reading fiction, poetry and drama we may also look at selected works of electronic literature, non-fiction, performance, graphic novels, film, and museum exhibits.

- Imagining the Caribbean

Description to come

- Benjamin and Adorno

The module is intended to address core issues in interpreting what might constitute the modern age and a writing appropriate to it. Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno are two of the most important cultural theorists of the 20th century. They explain their ideas in the process of defining the modernism in writing and thinking of which they approve, in contrast to modern trends they condemn. In understanding these two thinkers, students are introduced to the ways in which a heritage of philosophical and political theory is transmitted to the 20th century and applied to that era's sense of its own period. Their opposition is also central to the methodological justifications by literary and cultural studies right now of what they think they can achieve.

- Reading the Middle East

This MA module will introduce you to key texts (in translation), and key debates, from or about the Middle East (defined broadly to include Iran, Turkey and North Africa). The module aims to ask questions about the role of race, religion, regional geo-politics, sectarian and other violence, gender and sexuality. It will allow you to explore these and other topics though some of the most interesting, iconic, or controversial writing to come from, or engage with, the region in the 20th and 21st centuries. The question of translation (literal, cultural, metaphorical) is at the centre of the module's approach to these texts. At a time when it feels as though the Middle East and its people have never been so demonised, nor so victimised, this module seeks to interrogate the work that such texts do in the university and beyond to represent, challenge representations, or

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'translate' their cultures of origin, and to shed light on the many prisms through which we analyse, understand, and perceive the Middle East, its people, languages and cultures today.

- What is World Literature?

This module allows students to engage with key examples of texts that might be regarded as belonging to a notional nascent 'canon' of 'World Literature', as well as those that might trouble its boundaries. 'What is World Literature?' begs other questions: has the category displaced the postcolonial as a critical term, or reinforced its purchase?; how does the term engage questions of translation, let alone aesthetics (what is `Literature'), politics (whose `world¿), and philosophy (what, after all, is a 'world')? We will read excerpts from theoretical works that have helped stake a claim for--or critiqued--the field¿s constitution in an attempt to find some answers.