

MA Literature, Culture and Modernity: Victorian and Modernist

This MA explores the literary and cultural forms and movements that emerged in the decades around 1900, as industrialisation, urbanisation and other forces of modernity reshaped society. It enables the in-depth study of specific authors and texts associated with particular moments – such as fin de siècle decadence, or the politically committed modernism of the 1930s – and offers a breadth of perspective by moving across periods that are often artificially divided. Modules are grounded in the study of English literature but also facilitate transatlantic and interdisciplinary approaches.

[Study here and find out why the University of Birmingham has been awarded The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year 2013-14 \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/latest/2013/09/20-sep-Birmingham-announced-as-University-of-the-Year.aspx)

Course fact file

Duration: 1 year full-time, 2 years part-time

Start date: September

Contact

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[School of English, Drama and American & Canadian Studies \(/schools/edacs/index.aspx\)](/schools/edacs/index.aspx)

[Department of English Literature \(/schools/edacs/departments/english/index.aspx\)](/schools/edacs/departments/english/index.aspx)

Details

You will study four core modules [full descriptions available below]:

- Victorian Modernity
- Modernism
- Research Methods: Literature, Culture and Modernity
- Guided Reading: Literature, Culture and Modernity

You will also choose two optional modules from a wide range (see below) and complete a 15,000-word dissertation relating to the concerns and period covered by the MA.

Modules

You will study four core modules:

Victorian Modernity

This module allows you to explore the diversity of literary impulses in a turn-of-the-century period characterised by literary non-conformity. These will be studied across a variety of genres and authors, with reference to formative theorists/philosophers of the period. In spite of its interest in diversity the module will be unified by two themes that are characteristic of the period: an intense interest in the past as well as fascination with the future.

Modernism

This module will enhance your knowledge of a range of key issues within the study of literature in the 1910s, 20s and 30s, introducing some of the more challenging texts written during these years, as well as recent scholarly thinking on the literature of the period more generally. You will be encouraged to rethink mainstream definitions of the literary history of the early twentieth-century, and examine the complexity of the literary and cultural moment of modernism. Major topics to be covered include: literary nostalgia and innovation; narrative and traumatic-memory; the concept of Modernism; High Modernism and its aftermath; and the social and aesthetic politics of the 1930s. These will be studied across a variety of genres and authors, with reference to formative theorists/philosophers of the period.

Research Methods: Literature, Culture and Modernity

This research skills module introduces you to the various methodological challenges in studying and carrying out research into the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century literature and culture. The module consists of a series of fortnightly seminars exploring different methodological approaches to the period. For example, 'Working with Archives,' 'Using Special Collections', 'Digital Scholarship', 'Periodisation', and 'Interdisciplinarity'. The module is both theoretical and practical, allowing you to understand how different methodological approaches can shape what you learn, and take this into consideration when carrying out your research.

Guided Reading: Literature, Culture and Modernity

This module is designed to lay the foundation of the MA dissertation whilst allowing you to further refine your skills in research and communication. The module builds on the methodological work already undertaken, allowing you to put your research skills into practice under the supervision of your dissertation supervisor. You will also develop your communication skills through the writing and delivery of a 15-minute presentation on your dissertation topic to your peers, staff, and interested undergraduate students at a specially organised conference in the summer term.

You will also choose two optional modules from a wide range which includes:

Literary Modernism

This module offers higher-level study of some of the more challenging texts and debates in literary modernism. You will undertake close textual reading of some of the larger modernist texts, relating these to key developments in Anglo-American modernism in the 1920s and 30s, as well as recent critical debates. You will be encouraged to rethink mainstream definitions of the literary history of the early twentieth century, and examine the complexity of the literary and cultural moment of modernism.

The Work of T S Elliot

This module introduces you to one of the key modernist writers, and one whose work is widely perceived as among the most 'difficult'. You will be required to read widely in Eliot's poetry, prose and drama, with a view to finding links and mutual illumination between these different writings, and discovering the consistencies in his outlook that can make that work more graspable. The module will consider chronologically the poetry from *Prufrock* (1917) to *Four Quartets* (1943), as well as a range of Eliot's literary and cultural criticism, and the drama of the 1930s. It will consider a range of Eliot's sources, some key interpretative debates his work has provoked, Eliot's 'Englishness', the anti-semitic controversy surrounding the work and the relations between his classicism, Christianity and cultural theorising.

The American Renaissance: Above, Beneath and Around

This module is designed to explore the outburst of writing activity that occurred in America in the decades leading up to the American Civil War (1861-5), during the war itself and just afterwards. In particular, it will focus on the twenty-year period 1840-1860. This period is often designated the American Renaissance: that moment in American literary history when American writing 'came of age' and found its distinctive 'American' voice. The classical critical study referred to when defining this period is F O Matthiessen's "The American Renaissance", a text which will provide a constant reference-point during the teaching of this module, both for its strengths and its weaknesses.

New York, New York

At the start of the twentieth century New York City was becoming *the* city of modernity; *the* "cubist city" as Francis Picabia described it. Its metropolitan scale, vibrant, cosmopolitan sidewalk cultures, and the visceral rush of its rapid transit systems demanded new modes of expression from writers (and painters and photographers). The juxtaposition of skyscrapers and tenements created new symbolic and physical urban geographies. This module begins with Henry James, Jose Marti, Abraham Cahan, John Sloan, George Bellows, Alfred Stieglitz, Anzia Yezierska, Claude McKay, Djuna Barnes, Walker Evans, Bernice Abbott and Weegee as they meet the challenges of early-twentieth-century urban representation. The module goes on to explore changes in the City and its representation over the course of the twentieth century.

Law and Literature

This module will introduce you to a vibrant area of current interdisciplinary scholarship: namely, the study of law and literature. Such study can be split into two related categories. Firstly, law in literature reflects upon the variety of ways in which law has been represented by literature (an example of which would be the depiction of criminal trials in contemporary fiction). Secondly, law as literature explores the affinities between the interpretative strategies utilised by lawyers and legal scholars and those practiced by literary theorists – in other words, the law can be read as a text. With these dual topics in mind, texts by authors such as Charles Dickens, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, E. M. Forster, Franz Kafka, Truman Capote and Julian Barnes will be studied alongside the theoretical work of amongst others, Michel Foucault, Peter Brooks and Hans-Georg Gadamer. The issues raised by the module will include representations of justice (both poetic and juridical); the fact-finding employed by both the criminal trial and realist novel of the nineteenth century; the pervading influence of surveillance in modern culture; the use and abuse of confession; and the determining/illustrating of criminal states of mind.

Fees and funding

We charge an annual tuition fee. Fees for 2015/16 are as follows:

- Home / EU: £6,210 full-time; £3,105 part-time
- Overseas: £14,140 full-time

For part-time students, the above fee quoted is for year one only and tuition fees will also be payable in year two of your programme.

Eligibility for Home/EU or Overseas fees can be verified with Admissions. Learn more about [fees for international students \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/International/students/finance/fees.aspx).

Tuition fees can either be paid in full or by instalments. Learn more about [postgraduate tuition fees and funding \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/postgraduate/pgt-fees/index.aspx).

Scholarships and studentships

Scholarships to cover fees and/or maintenance costs may be available. To discover whether you are eligible for any award across the University, and to start your funding application, please visit the University's [Postgraduate Funding Database \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/fees/funding/FundingFilter.aspx).

International students can often gain funding through overseas research scholarships, Commonwealth scholarships or their home government.

Entry requirements

You should already have completed an honours degree with at least an upper-second-class (or equivalent) result.

Learn more about [entry requirements \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/index.aspx).

International students

Academic requirements

We accept a range of qualifications; our [country pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/international/students/country/index.aspx) show you what qualifications we accept from your country.

English language requirements

You can satisfy our English language requirements in two ways:

- by holding an [English language qualification \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/index.aspx) to the right level
- by taking and successfully completing one of our [English courses for international students \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-pg/international/english-courses.aspx)

How to apply

Before you make your application

You may wish to [register your interest with us \(https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate\)](https://bham.hobsons.co.uk/emtinterestpage.aspx?ip=postgraduate) to receive regular news and updates on postgraduate life within this Department and the wider University.

Making your application

When clicking on the Apply Now button you will be directed to an application specifically designed for the programme you wish to apply for where you will create an account with the University application system and submit your application and supporting documents online. Further information regarding how to apply online can be found on the [How to apply pages \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/apply-pg/index.aspx)

[Apply now \(https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo44.htm\)](https://pga.bham.ac.uk/lpages/CALo44.htm)

Learning and teaching

You will be supported with your dissertation by a tutor with expertise in the field, particularly through the Guided Reading module which will give you an opportunity to develop an outline, extend research into primary and secondary sources, and to test and refine an analysis under the guidance of your tutor.

You will also become part of, and contribute to, the vibrant international community of the College of Arts and Law Graduate School, which offers dedicated research resources and a supportive working environment. Our team of academic and operational staff are on hand to offer support and advice to all postgraduate students within the College.

Support with academic writing

As a postgraduate student in the College of Arts and Law, you have access to the [Academic Writing Advisory Service \(AWAS\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx) (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/colleges/artslaw/student-experience/opportunities/awas/index.aspx>) which aims to help your transition from undergraduate to taught Masters level, or back into academia after time away. The service offers guidance on writing assignments and dissertations for your MA/MSc programme with individual support from an academic writing advisor via tutorials, email and the provision of online materials.

International students can access support through the [English for International Students Unit \(EISU\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx) (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/eisu/inseasonal/index.aspx>).

Related research

- [Centre for the Study of Cultural Modernity \(/research/activity/culturalmodernity/index.aspx\)](/research/activity/culturalmodernity/index.aspx)

Employability

The University of Birmingham has been ranked 8th in the UK and 60th in the world for post-qualification employability in the latest global survey of universities commissioned by the International Herald Tribune.

Your degree will provide excellent preparation for employment and this will be further enhanced by the employability skills training offered through the College of Arts and Law Graduate School.

Adobe Flash Player or QuickTime is required for video playback. [Get the latest Flash Player](#) [Get the latest version of QuickTime](#)

Birmingham's English Literature postgraduates develop a range of skills including presentation, communication and analytical skills, as well as the ability to work independently, think critically and develop opinions.

Over the past five years, over 90% of English Literature postgraduates were in work and/or further study six months after graduation. Many of our graduates go on to further study or academia, while others use their transferable skills in a wide variety of occupations including accounting, the charity sector, teaching, local government, law, publishing and media. Employers that graduates have gone on to work for include: Birmingham Museums Trust; Bloomsbury Publishing; Civil Service; Coventry Arts and Heritage Trust; House of Commons; and University of Kent.