

(Re)Imagining the Nineteenth Century

Languages & Cultures, School of Languages, Cultures, Art History and Music

College of Arts and Law

Details

Code 21627

Level of study Third/Final year

Credit value 20

Semester Runs throughout the year

Module description

Nineteenth-century France produced some of the most celebrated novelists in world literature. Focussing primarily on Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola, this module examines the richly varied contexts (social, economic, political and literary) in which their works were written, and in which they have subsequently been revisited, adapted, and 'reimagined'. The first part of the module deals with questions of literary heritage and national identity (through, for example, Balzac's 1832 novel *Le Colonel Chabert*, and its adaptation for the screen in 1994), before proceeding to consider the reception of the nineteenth-century French novel beyond France. Foremost among the texts proposed for study is Dai Sijie's award-winning *Balzac et la Petite Tailleuse chinoise* (2000), a novel which rereads Balzac through the unique prism of 1970s China, and Mao's Cultural Revolution. In the second semester, students will further their understanding of the relationship between literature and its context by engaging with theoretical questions (reception, intertextuality and the 'anxiety of influence') appropriate to the demands of a final-year module. In so doing, they will be required to draw upon a broad selection of primary materials including (though not restricted to) adaptations of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) by two of the twentieth century's most prominent filmmakers, Jean Renoir and Claude Chabrol, and the novel's reworking in visual format by the British illustrator, Posy Simmonds (*Gemma Bovary*, 1999). The whole is intended to serve as a stimulating, intellectually rigorous option that will challenge students to re-evaluate the status enjoyed by nineteenth-century French literature today.

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