

English Literature

Module Descriptions 2018/19

Level I (i.e. 2nd Yr.) Modules

Please be aware that all modules are subject to availability. If you have any questions about the modules, please contact calincomingexchangemodules@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

For many of these modules, some experience of studying English Literature may be required, and you should remember this when choosing your modules.

Please note that at the time this document has been prepared (March 2018) the following information is provisional, and there may be minor changes between now and the beginning of 2018/19 academic year.

Module Title	The Canterbury Tales
Module Code	29579
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lectures & Seminars
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

Follow Chaucer's pilgrims on their journey to Canterbury and discover one of the greatest works of English literature by the 'Father of English Poetry'. In this revamped second-year module you will have the opportunity to study the most popular and fascinating of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Described by Helen Cooper as an 'encyclopedia' of literary genres, this medieval story collection has something for everyone; told in a variety of prose and verse forms, bawdy and scatological tales of sex and excrement exist side by side with tales of love and war, magic and morality, and science and religion, all peopled by vibrant, larger-than-life characters, such as the promiscuous Wife of Bath and a Miller partial to a spot of wrestling. As we compare and contrast these stories and place them within their wider historical and cultural contexts, we'll understand how they both offer a window onto the medieval world and speak to concerns of our own age, including gender roles and our relationship with other cultures, as well as the notion of literary authority and nature of poetic truth.

Module Title	Songs and Sonnets: English Poetry from Wyatt to Donne
Module Code	29088
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lectures & Seminars
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

This module offers the opportunity to explore the work of some of England's most celebrated poets, focussing upon their distinctive formal qualities as well as their precise literary, cultural and political contexts. Opening with early Tudor court poetry by poets such as Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, the module then moves forward through work by archetypal Renaissance poets such as Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney, female innovators like Isabella Whitney and Mary Sidney, significant later Elizabethan writers such as Christopher Marlowe and Walter Raleigh, and ending with a selection of works by William Shakespeare and John Donne. Particular emphasis will be placed upon developments in poetic form and genre, the translation and adaptation of classical and later European writers, the transmission and reception of literary works, especially in the intersections of manuscript and print culture, and upon the treatment of gender, history, politics and religious belief. Authors to be studied will span the period 1520-1620 and may include some of the following: Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard, William Baldwin, Isabella Whitney, Philip Sidney, Mary Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, Walter Raleigh, Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, Michael Drayton, William Shakespeare, Robert Southwell, and John Donne.

Module Title	Popular Fiction Before the Novel
Module Code	27845
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lectures & Seminars
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

What were people reading before they could curl up with a novel? This module explores the antecedents of modern fiction, focusing on the ways in which stories were created, packaged, and experienced by writers and readers of the past. With particular reference to narratives aimed at popular audiences, especially romances, topics investigated will include: reading and performance; stories and/in pictures; heroes, heroines, outlaws, and villains; role models and celebrities; representations of interiority; adaptations; structure and suspense; fiction, truth and fact; best sellers; publishing and marketing fiction; gender and fiction.

Module Title	Epic Ambitions
Module Code	25850
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lecture & Seminar
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

This module will be centred on a number of significant texts in the epic and mock-epic genres produced between the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. Texts such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Pope's *Rape of the Lock* have been selected in order to illuminate the concept of intertextuality and to encourage students to explore ways in which new works of literature result from the imitation, transformation and subversion of genre conventions and existing literary models. The nominated texts will be studied as representative of the continuities and changes in literary culture that were taking place between c. 1590 and c. 1800, and will be used to illustrate generic, contextual and theoretical issues raised in lectures. The nominated texts will also be used to provide points of reference for work in seminars/workshops, but discussion in these sessions will also draw upon a range of related texts. The requirement for wider reading in primary and secondary materials will be reflected in formative written work and in the examination rubric.

Module Title	Stories of the Novel
Module Code	25852
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

This module traces the major developments and transformations in the genre of prose fiction in the eighteenth century. By engaging with significant texts such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1721), Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and encouraging students to observe the continuities and differences between such early-, mid- and late-century works, the module introduces students to influential critical accounts of the 'rise of the novel' in the eighteenth century. At the same time, by combining these diverse focal texts in seminars/workshops with extracts and examples from contemporaneous and contextual works, and by drawing on a range of novelistic voices, both male and female, the module encourages students to challenge the simplicity of the 'rise' story of the novel, and to develop a more complex understanding of the multiple shaping influences on prose fiction in this century; as well as the ability to analyse closely issues of form, style, gender and genre. Beginning with examples of earlier, seventeenth-century prose fiction, the module ends by gesturing towards Gothic fiction and the work of Jane Austen, showing how eighteenth-century fiction has powerfully shaped – and continues to shape – modern conceptions of the novel. Any additional primary materials will be supplied and the requirement for wider reading in primary and secondary materials will be reflected in formative written work and in the examination rubric.

Module Title	Romantics and Romanticisms
Module Code	27770
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

Spanning a half-century marked by violent revolutions and rapid social change, the Romantic era was an age of exceptional artistic energy, ambition, and achievement. During the period, gifted poets transformed the traditions of English verse and prose writers began to explore the full psychological and historical possibilities of the novel. This module explores Romantic writing by reading the pioneering fiction of Jane Austen and Sir Walter Scott alongside wide-ranging selections from William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and John Keats: the 'Big Six' poets whose innovative and controversial views laid the foundations for modern conceptions of poetic genius. Alongside these writers, whose works have come retrospectively to define Romanticism, the module brings to light the varied achievements of some of the vibrant away of less well-known figures of the period, including the novelist and sonneteer Charlotte Smith, the essayists William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, and the pastoral poet John Clare. By reading enduring masterpieces within their imaginative, critical, and historical contexts, we will seek to recapture the fears, ideals, and excitement that reverberated through the period's vibrant and rancorous literary culture.

Module Title	New World Orders? Literature after 1945
Module Code	27773
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lectures and Seminars
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

The decades that followed the second world war saw radical realignments of the political and social ordering of the preceding years: memories of the war's horror – including the particular atrocities of the Holocaust and the atom bomb – gave way to the paranoia of Cold War politics; the flowering of decolonisation further refigured the relations between nations, while the rise of liberationist idea social ordering such as the Civil Rights and feminist movements restructured the distribution of rights and opportunities within national societies; and the changing conditions of economic production and supply facilitated the emergence of a 'consumer culture' such as had never been seen before. In this module we look to trace the impact of such global shifts on Anglophone literature. We'll examine a broad range of fiction, poetry, and drama from the 1950s to the 1990s (which includes material some students may find offensive and/or distressing) to question how writers looked to represent these new political, social and cultural landscapes and what forms they developed to do so. Writers on the module may include Ralph Ellison, Shelagh Delaney, Samuel Selvon, B.S. Johnson, Adrienne Rich, Toni Morrison, Angela Carter, and Hanif Kureishi.

Module Title	Twenty-First-Century Literature
Module Code	27775
Credits	20
Assessment Method	1,500 word essay (35%) 2 hour examination (65%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

On this module we will consider whether the twenty-first century has ushered in a new literary period. We will discuss whether we can distinguish literary concerns of the current century from those of the twentieth century, and the ways in which literature may be registering new social and political formations. How does literature work, and to whom is it addressed in an age of abundant communication, and a perpetual narrative of crisis?

This module will introduce students to a range of fiction and theory since the millennium, addressing topics that might include postmodernism, technology, globalisation, race, feminist, and queer studies. The module will begin by considering new modes of story-telling and media at the millennium. It will progress to study texts in light of themes that might include sincerity and authenticity, eco-criticism and post and trans-humanism. During the module we will encounter a range of texts, including: novels, short stories, poetry, plays, comics, graphic novels, and film.

Module Title	Shakespeare's Sisters
Module Code	25859
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

In Shakespeare's Sisters we will study women's writing across an extended historical period, from the medieval/early modern period to the late twentieth or twenty first centuries. We will read some of the major works of female-authored literature in the English language, and will also consider some of the key theoretical and methodological issues specific to the category of women's writing. Is there a canon of women's writing, and if so how can it be defined? Is there a tradition of women's writing in English, and if so when did it begin? Is it either feasible or desirable to study women's writing – in any period – in isolation from male-authored texts?

Texts to be studied in this module will cover a range of genres, and will differ from year to year. Course texts may include: *The Book of Margery Kempe*; Elizabeth Cary's *The Tragedy of Mariam*; the plays, fiction or poetry of Aphra Behn; Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*; Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* and *A Room of One's Own*; and Elena Ferrante, *My Brilliant Friend*.

Module Title	Tragedy
Module Code	27045
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lectures and Seminars
Semester	1&2

DESCRIPTION

Tragedy deals with powerful and destructive forces beyond our control; it gives voice to things which otherwise remain silent: it disturbs and unsettles, yet asserts free will in the face of almost unbearable challenges. It is dynamic and extraordinarily varied and a point of comparison with all other literary modes.

In recognising tragedy's fundamentally dramatic qualities this module focuses on stage performance and builds on work students may have done for the first year module *Plays and Performance*. In the first semester we explore the work of the great tragedians of fifth-century Athens, Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides. Their plays about dysfunctional families, adultery, murder, revenge crime, sacrifice, exile and loss have shaped much of the western literary canon and continue to inspire modern playwrights. This first semester closes with some of these re-imaginings, including assessment of how the Greek classical world speaks to modern and contemporary political and social concerns in Europe, America and Africa.

In semester 2 we examine the redefinition of the tragic mode in modern and contemporary British and Irish theatre. Texts change from year to year but may include works by O'Casey, Shaffer, Bond, Stoppard, Churchill, and Butterworth.

Throughout the module, and with reference to primary literary texts and other philosophical considerations of the nature of tragedy, we will turn over a series of central issues. How to define tragedy? Who gets depicted? What effect does tragedy have on its audience? How does tragedy relate to other genres? Does tragedy deal with universal or local concerns? Does tragedy have power in the modern society? What are the politics of tragedy?

Module Title	Uses of Genre
Module Code	29108
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

Read by scholars with guilt if at all, 'genre fiction' – including science fiction, romance, fantasy, and detective fiction – is often thought of as being unworthy of serious scholarly attention. Paradoxically, the genres with the most active readerships are easily dismissed as bad, popular, or cheap. Yet it is increasingly being noticed that scrutiny of genre fiction may be able to supply historical or theoretical perspectives on culture which canonical literary fiction cannot.

This module will introduce students to a cross-section of genres from the recent history of popular literature, organised by theme rather than in order of chronological appearance. Students will be exposed not only to a range of generic forms but also to a new set of ways of theorising them. When we grab our airport reading, what is happening? In what cultures does the reader of popular fiction participate? By what right are these fictions held to be lesser than their canonical contemporaries?

Spaceships, elves, magnifying glasses, and windswept clifftops – these and many others are the clichés of genre fiction. But what lies beneath them? What use might they have? And, most of all, how can we use them to think about our culture and ourselves?

Module Title	Digital Futures
Module Code	30610
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lectures and Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

How did people feel about digital technologies, before they became part of daily life? Are we living in the kind of future imagined by previous generations? And what might happen in the next hundred years? This module invites you to think about past, present and future versions of digital cultures in print and on screen, exploring the role played by authors, artists, theorists and filmmakers in developing the kinds of media privileged societies take for granted now. We will look back to how writers in earlier eras anticipated technological innovations in politics, work and leisure – some thrilled and some horrified by what they foresaw – and compare these with twenty-first century responses to phenomena such as social media, virtual reality, cyborg subjectivities, and global communications. The module will introduce key texts and theories that engage with digital innovations; examine terminology around new media and digital technologies; and consider how new media are related to changing literary techniques and aesthetics. Working across a variety of forms including literature, art, film and born-digital works, this module will combine primary texts with theory and analysis to investigate how cultural production continues to open up new understandings of an imagined “digital future.”

Module Title	Rags and Riches
Module Code	30728
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay 40% 3,000 word essay 60%
Teaching	Lecture & Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

From Benjamin Franklin's invention of the "self-made man" to the "greed is good" ethos of the 1980s, the aspiration to - and acquisition of - wealth has been central to American myths and narratives of self and nation. That cultural emphasis on money means that its absence has also been keenly felt, so that, for example, the economic crisis of the Depression in the 1930s became a crisis of national identity. This module explores the representation of wealth and poverty from the boom and bust of the nineteenth century, through the "roaring 20s," Great Depression and post-War "affluent society," to the twenty first century and Occupy Wall St. Across these periods American writers have been particularly attentive to the fissures and divisions created by the disparity between the rich and poor; what it means to acquire, lose, pursue, or eschew wealth; and how money or the lack thereof defines American experience. The module will explore key themes in stories of wealth and poverty, such as work, precarity, consumption, inequality, and upward and downward mobility. It will consider the narrative and aesthetic strategies that shape depictions of rich and poor, and the ethics of celebrating wealth and documenting poverty. And it will look at a range of literary and cultural forms such as novels and short stories by Horatio Alger, John Steinbeck, Edith Wharton, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Jayne Anne Phillips, but also documentary and journalism, self-help texts, photography and visual art that all work to construct, sustain and challenge myths about wealth and poverty in the United States.

Module Title	Introduction to Gender and Sexuality
Module Code	25859
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

This module will provide an introductory overview of the core concepts and key debates of gender and sexuality studies. It will focus on the historical and theoretical foundations of feminism, masculinity studies, gender, and queer theory, tracing the development of feminist and queer perspectives from the 1940s to the present day. We will examine the ways in which gender has been approached as social, cultural, political, and economic constructions; and the ways in which we can draw from queer theory to problematize heteronormativity and destabilize gender and other identities. The module is theory-led, but will include some literary texts to enable practical application of literary theory. The course may also include work drawn from visual culture and media studies as well as literary studies.

Module Title	Gothic
Module Code	26837
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay (40%) 3,000 word essay (60%)
Teaching	Lecture and Seminar
Semester	1 & 2

DESCRIPTION

This module will explore the afterlife of ‘the Gothic’ in literature over the last two centuries, from texts such as Shelley’s Frankenstein to Egan’s The Keep. The module will consider the genre of the Gothic, as well as the tropes and conventions of the Gothic that are incorporated into or appropriated by a variety of other literary genres, including science fiction, detective fiction, horror, and romance. We will explore categories such as the ‘Urban Gothic’, the ‘Female Gothic’, and the ‘Southern Gothic’, as well as themes such as the uncanny, the double, the Gothic body, and repression and the spectre of the past.

Module Title	20th Century American Literature & Culture: Modernity to Postmodernity
Module Code	29137
Credits	20
Assessment Method	2,500 word essay (70%) 10 minute Class presentation (10%) Group project (20%)
Teaching	TBC
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

This module will explore American texts – primarily literature but also film, photography and other media – spanning the twentieth century. It will introduce the work of modernists – such as John Dos Passos and Zora Neale Hurston – and postmodern writers – such as Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut – alongside a broad range of literary, visual and filmic texts that reveal aspects of American modernity and postmodernity. Intended as a survey, the module uses those period terms as loose organising categories through which to interrogate shifts in American culture and society across the century, including the shift from visions of coherence and consensus to what historian Daniel T. Rodgers terms an ‘age of fracture’; the impact of new technologies; the breakdown of boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and the rise of popular and playful cultural forms.

Module Title	Foundations of 20th Century American Literature & Culture: Modernity to Postmodernity
Module Code	29119
Credits	10
Assessment Method	2,000 word essay
Teaching	TBC
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

This module will explore American texts – primarily literature but also film, photography and other media – spanning the twentieth century. It will introduce the work of modernists – such as John Dos Passos and Zora Neale Hurston – and postmodern writers – such as Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut – alongside a broad range of literary, visual and filmic texts that reveal aspects of American modernity and postmodernity. Intended as a survey, the module uses those period terms as loose organising categories through which to interrogate shifts in American culture and society across the century, including the shift from visions of coherence and consensus to what historian Daniel T. Rodgers terms an ‘age of fracture’; the impact of new technologies; the breakdown of boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture and the rise of popular and playful cultural forms.

Module Title	20th Century American Literature & Culture: Mainstream and Margins
Module Code	29136
Credits	20
Assessment Method	10 minute class presentation (10%) 3 hour examination (90%)
Teaching	TBC
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

This module will explore American texts – primarily literature but also film, photography and other media – spanning the twentieth century. It will introduce students to major twentieth-century American authors – such as Edith Wharton, Richard Yates, Leslie Marmon Silko and Toni Morrison – and cultural forms and ideas – such as realism, documentary, protest movements, memorialisation and identity politics. While intended as a survey, the course is organised around a thematic concern with the contested, fluid relationship between mainstream and margin in twentieth-century America. This period was shaped by concerted attempts to shape a homogeneous national identity and to claim an American mainstream but also by the rising power, clarity and variety of voices speaking out from marginalised perspectives. Those polarities were, perhaps, most apparent in the contrast between Cold War conformity and the emerging Civil Rights and counterculture movements, but will be traced across the century and across a wide range of material.

Module Title	LI Foundations of 20th Century American Literature & Culture: Mainstream and Margins
Module Code	29120
Credits	10
Assessment Method	2 hour examination
Teaching	TBC
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

This module will explore American texts – primarily literature but also film, photography and other media – spanning the twentieth century. It will introduce students to major twentieth-century American authors – such as Edith Wharton, Richard Yates, Leslie Marmon Silko and Toni Morrison – and cultural forms and ideas – such as realism, documentary, protest movements, memorialisation and identity politics. While intended as a survey, the course is organised around a thematic concern with the contested, fluid relationship between mainstream and margin in twentieth-century America. This period was shaped by concerted attempts to shape a homogeneous national identity and to claim an American mainstream but also by the rising power, clarity and variety of voices speaking out from marginalised perspectives. Those polarities were, perhaps, most apparent in the contrast between Cold War conformity and the emerging Civil Right and counterculture movements, but will be traced across the century and across a wide range of material.

Module Title	LI Shakespeare: Selected Plays
Module Code	19598
Credits	20
Assessment Method	3,000 word essay
Teaching	TBC
Semester	1

DESCRIPTION

The module will provide a historical context for Shakespeare's involvement with the theatre of his age and will focus on about six plays drawn from different periods in his career. The plays will be chosen to represent a variety of genres and mixed genres (a typical list would be Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra and The Winter's Tale) and to illustrate a range of devices and conventions employed on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage (such as disguise, double-plot structure, asides, soliloquies, use of verse and prose, imagery, the fool). There will be some use of videos to demonstrate the theatrical possibilities of the chosen texts and to raise issues relating to performance as interpretation. Students will also be taking the module on Shakespeare and Theatre and will participate in theatre visits in connection with that module.

Module Title	LI Shakespeare: Selected Plays
Module Code	29479
Credits	20
Assessment Method	3,000 word essay
Teaching	TBC
Semester	2

DESCRIPTION

The module will provide a historical context for Shakespeare's involvement with the theatre of his age and will focus on about six plays drawn from different periods in his career. The plays will be chosen to represent a variety of genres and mixed genres (a typical list would be Romeo and Juliet, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra and The Winter's Tale) and to illustrate a range of devices and conventions employed on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage (such as disguise, double-plot structure, asides, soliloquies, use of verse and prose, imagery, the fool). There will be some use of videos to demonstrate the theatrical possibilities of the chosen texts and to raise issues relating to performance as interpretation. Students will also be taking the module on Shakespeare and Theatre and will participate in theatre visits in connection with that module.