# **English Literature**

# **Module Descriptions 2024/25**

# **Level C (i.e. First Year) Modules**

Please be aware that all modules are subject to availability.

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 2024) the following information is provisional, and there may be minor changes between now and the beginning of 2024/25 academic year.

**Please note: Forms of assessment are currently undergoing review for 2024/25, and as a result the assessment information listed within this handbook may be subject to change.**

# **FULL YEAR MODULES**

## **Discovering Medieval Literature A & B**

MODULE CODE: 33548/33549

CREDITS: 10 + 10 (20 in total, cannot be taken separately)

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 1&2 (Full year only)

**Please note, only one 'Discovering' module can be taken. This is a full-year module, and as such only students studying for the full-year are able to take this module.**

**DESCRIPTION**

Students will be introduced to some of the earliest writings in English, get hands-on experience of medieval manuscripts, art, and buildings, and discover alternative views and interpretations of the world and of the self.

Semester 1 investigates how medieval writers and artists respond to, represent, and interpret the world. Our starting-point is a visit to the famous mappamundi (map of the world) at Hereford Cathedral. The map introduces us to the themes of this semester: how medieval people imagined their location in the world and the universe; and how they imagined other peoples, locations, animals and the natural world. We will follow up these themes through a wide variety of literary texts, including travel narratives, bestiaries, riddles, and stories of adventure by land and sea. Later in the term we will supplement our literary studies with an external visit, e.g. to the new Staffordshire Hoard Gallery at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery to see the mysterious gold objects decorated with images of animals, birds, fish, snakes etc.

Semester 2 investigates how medieval writers and artists respond to, represent, and interpret the self. Our starting-point is an on-campus visit to engage with a cultural collection, e.g. the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, the University’s world-renowned art gallery and museum. Here, we will examine a range of books and objects that were the prized personal possessions of medieval people, for example a jewellery box, a mirror, and beautiful books of hours. These objects will introduce us to the themes of this semester: the inner lives of medieval people, how they constructed their identities and saw the stories of their lives from birth, through love and sex, to death. We will follow up these themes through a wide variety of literary texts, including dreams and visions, love poems, romances of love lost and found, and stories of heroes and heroines. Later in the semester students will be divided into groups for student-led visits to medieval buildings to see how buildings and their artistic and literary collections also tell us about the medieval self (for example, the Guildhall, Coventry; Lichfield Cathedral; Great Malvern Priory).

## **Discovering Shakespeare A & B**

MODULE CODE: 33554/33555

CREDITS: 10 + 10 (20 in total, cannot be taken separately)

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 1&2 (Full year only)

**Please note, only one 'Discovering' module can be taken. This is a full-year modules, and as such only students studying for the full-year are able to take this module.**

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces students to the legacy and role of Shakespeare in twentieth and twenty-first century culture. It is divided into four study blocks, focused on Shakespeare in the theatre and Shakespeare in education, in semester 1 and Shakespeare in Society and Shakespeare and heritage culture in semester 2. Students will explore a number of Shakespeare’s plays as they have been and are used and interpreted within these contexts.

## **Discovering Children's Literature A & B**

MODULE CODE: 37002/37003

CREDITS: 10 + 10 (20 in total, cannot be taken separately)

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 1&2 (Full year only)

**Please note, only one 'Discovering' module can be taken. This is a full-year modules, and as such only students studying for the full-year are able to take this module.**

**DESCRIPTION**

Semester 1 introduces students to the critical study of children’s literature in English. Four blocks of study follow an initial introduction to the major debates in the field and an overview of the history of children’s literature. These blocks will focus on key types of children’s literature, such as the Coming of Age Story, Boys’ Adventure Fiction, the School Story and Literature of War. Set texts in each block from a variety of historical periods foster a comparative approach.

Semester 2 develops critical approaches to children’s literature in English. It is divided into a series of study blocks, each focusing on a key type of children’s literature. From year to year there will be opportunities to study genres such as: fantasy and dystopia for children, children’s horror and historical fiction, child detective stories, comics and graphic novels, and young adult fiction. Set texts in each block both foster comparison across historical periods and raise themes of particular contemporary interest (e.g. sexuality and gender, race, the environment).

# **SEMESTER 1 MODULES**

## **Prose**

MODULE CODE: 27933

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: Portfolio, 1,000 word (30%); Essay 2,000 words (70%)

SEMESTER: 1 (Autumn term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces students to a range of styles and stylistic devices that constitute writing in prose. They will explore how a variety of authors across a wide historical and geographical spectrum think about prose as a literary medium distinct from, but interacting with, other forms of writing, such as poetry. Time will be spent analysing how prose works and the different grammatical and rhetorical devices it employs as well as thinking about the modes of writing with which it has become associated (e.g. the novel and short story, essay writing, confessional memoir and prose-poem). Students will be introduced to a diverse field of critical approaches and will practice writing clear and thoughtful sentences and paragraphs of their own in order to develop their academic prose style.

## **Plays and Performance**

MODULE CODE: 27926

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 1 (Autumn term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces key knowledge and skills that will be essential in students’ undergraduate literary studies.

The primary aim of this module is to explore plays both as pieces of prose and verse and as the basis for performance. The module will equip students with the analytical, critical and technical skills necessary both to analyse plays as literary texts and to evaluate performances as theatrical productions of these works. Students will be encouraged furthermore to consider the process of reception and adaptation, whereby plays are refashioned into cinematic or other media.

The module is structured chronologically. It analyses a group of key texts with close reference to genre and mode (comedy, tragedy, the absurd and so on); it examines staging and performance history; and the reception of plays by later writers and filmmakers. These themes will enable students to reflect on the significance, and the shaping effects, of genre, mode, and place on the style and structure of dramatic texts; and to consider the effects of media (and re-mediation) on the meaning and significance of individual plays.

# **SEMESTER 2 MODULES**

## **American Literature and Culture**

MODULE CODE: 37159

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 2 (Summer term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

From the canonical and popular to the unexpected and underexplored, American Literature and Culture will engage students in new conversations about the literature and culture produced on the North American continent. Taking a thematic approach, the module will focus primarily on the literature and culture of the United States, but will also explore work related to Mexico, Canada, and/or the Caribbean. Students will explore literature and culture addressing themes that might include slavery and freedom, the Gothic, race, self-making and undoing, conformity and counterculture, war and peace, North American places, the environment, Indigenous writing, ethics and politics, and gender and sexuality. Authors discussed on the module might include Toni Morrison, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Frederick Douglass, Zora Neale Hurston, Eileen Myles, Gwendolyn Brooks, Edith Wharton, Malcolm X, James Baldwin, Anzia Yezierska, Walt Whitman, E. Pauline Johnson, Langston Hughes, Leslie Marmon Silko, John Steinbeck, Danez Smith, Claudia Rankine, and Audre Lorde.

## **Dystopia**

MODULE CODE: 37160

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 2 (Summer term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

This module introduces students to twentieth-century and contemporary dystopian narratives with an emphasis on questions of genre and form. Problems at the foreground include things like: What are dystopias? How can we interpret them? What do they do, narratively speaking? And why do they matter? The goal is to establish and to help students identify key generic markers in dystopian texts and films that will a) give them a grounding in this important narrative mode; b) help them grasp how these generic conventions can be challenged; and c) serve students well if they return to the study of dystopian texts in later years at UoB.

## **Theory for English Literature**

MODULE CODE: 33542

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: 1,000 word essay (30%); 2,000 word essay (70%)

SEMESTER: 2 (Summer term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

This module will introduce students to the questions and arguments, events and vocabularies that shape study in our discipline and which will come up again and again throughout your undergraduate degree. It has two aims: i) to ensure that when you undertake your own research and read technical books and journals in your field that you will find the language less daunting (i.e. you’ll have a good understanding of what “hegemony,” “intersectionality,” “postmodernism,” or “historicism” mean and why they might be important) and ii) to help you to build and use your own vocabulary for discussing art, identity, culture, and politics. The module will focus on theoretical texts and the ways in which writers have tried to describe the effects of culture and society, but it will also emphasise how these ways of thinking have specifically used literary, filmic, and other artistic texts as subjects, examples, and evidence. For as long as artworks have been studied there have been critics and theoreticians who have tried to explore and explain their effects: how and why does a text make us feel this way? What role does art play in shaping society? What role does society play in shaping art? What makes something a novel, or a poem, or beautiful? Can we learn more about a time or place by exploring the works produced then or there? Can we learn something about what it means to be a human being from the texts that we read and watch and play? What does art and culture do to me? Topics may include:

* Psychoanalysis
* Feminism and Queer Theory
* Marxism and Materialism
* Postcolonialism
* Reader Response Theory
* Disability Studies
* Digital Studies
* Poetics, Aesthetics, and Narratology
* Animal Studies
* Ecocriticis

## **Poetry**

MODULE CODE: 26838

CREDITS: 20

ASSESSMENT METHOD: Portfolio, 1,000 word (30%); Essay 2,000 words (70%)

SEMESTER: 2 (Spring term only)

**DESCRIPTION**

The key aim of the module will be to develop skills in close reading, informed by a sampled knowledge of the historical and geographical varieties of verse written in English. Each week’s work will be structured around a key text, or group of texts, which will form the basis of that week’s lectures; in seminars, these key texts will be related to, or contrasted with, a variety of extension texts, some suggested by the module convenor in the form of ‘flat pack’ teaching plans, and others by the seminar leaders’ own interests and enthusiasms. The key texts will be grouped by three themes, each of which will form the basis of three weeks’ work: Love, Loss and Location, allowing the students to shape arguments about change and variety in English verse around an idea of shared attention to related topics. Detailed attention to and development of the skills in close reading, and the conversations between poems that these enable, will be the chief outcome (and pleasure) of the module; its key technical and historical vocabulary will provided by a critical course book such as John Lennard, The Poetry Handbook, 2nd edn (Oxford, 2005), and its primary texts will be drawn from a commercial anthology.