

One day, one novel: Middlemarch

Date 9th April 2016 **Time** 10.00 – 16.45

Venue Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge

Academic Director Dr Jenny Bavidge **Course code** 1516NDX023

Director of Programmes Emma Jennings

For further information on this course, please contact Clare Kerr, Public Programmes Coordinator
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To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biographies

Jenny Bavidge is University Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for English at ICE and a Fellow in English at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. She is the President of the Literary London Society and a member of the English Faculty's Contemporaries group. Jenny teaches within a wide range of areas, including 19th and 20th-century American and British literature and has published on a variety of topics, including the literature of London, E. Nesbit, ecocriticism, rats, and balloons.

Day school content:

The subtitle of George Eliot's mighty *Middlemarch*, published between 1870-1, is *A Study of Provincial Life*. Why does she use the word 'study' to describe her fictional writing? What does it suggest about the way in which she will present the interconnected world of Middlemarch to us? In her novel *Adam Bede*, Eliot argues that the novelist has a moral obligation to devote their art to 'the faithful representing of commonplace things' and in *Middlemarch* she explores the lives of relatively unremarkable people facing everyday decisions and problems. During the course of our day school, we will explore the themes and structure of this novel, reading closely to uncover its patterns and narrative style. We will also discuss its wider historical and cultural contexts, from the 1832 Reform Act which forms the backdrop for the novel's events to Eliot's concerns with the societal position of women in her own times.

Each session will begin with a short lecture and then there will be time for discussion, debate and reading together.

Please read the novel in full before the course and bring a copy with you. If you are buying an edition of the novel for the course then the Oxford World's Classics or Norton editions are recommended. There are some suggestions of close-reading in the description for each session (below) which would form useful preparation for the course.

Programme:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| 09:30 | Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/ coffee |
| 10:00 – 11:15 | <p>Session 1: Introduction, the context and writing of <i>Middlemarch</i></p> <p>In this first session, we will examine the circumstances around the writing of <i>Middlemarch</i>. We will consider the context its publication in the 1870s in connection with the novel's setting in the 1830s.</p> <p>Preparation: please read the first chapter and the beginning of Chapter 56, where the coming of the railway is discussed.</p> |
| 11:15 | Coffee |
| 11:45 – 13:00 | <p>Session 2: Realism and 'the roar on the other side of silence'</p> <p>In this session, we will aim to define the nature of Eliot's realism, with reference to her theory of the novel and the role of the novelist. We will examine the nature of the narrative voice of the novel: it is didactic, as some critics have argued? Or does she achieve her aim of arousing 'deep human sympathy' for her characters?</p> <p>Preparation: Please read the beginning of Chapter 20, from 'Two hours later' down to 'you are exploring an enclosed basin.'</p> |
| 13:00 | Lunch |
| 14:00 – 15:15 | <p>Session 3: Women's Worlds: Dorothea, Rosamund and Mary</p> <p>We will discuss the portrayal of marriage in the novel and particularly the representation of women and women's worlds.</p> <p>Preparation: Please read the 'Prelude' to the novel and the very last section of the final chapter where Eliot refers to Saint Theresa in relation to Dorothea.</p> |
| 15:15 | Tea |
| 15:30 – 16:45 | <p>Session 4: 'A set of experiments': the novel as a study of systems</p> <p>Lydgate's ambition is to discover the secrets of the human body: he wants to give a name to the 'minute processes' and the structures which underlie all life, just as Mr Casaubon wants to uncover the 'key to all mythologies'. In this session, we'll explore the importance of scientific metaphor in Eliot's work and discuss one critic's claim that the novel is 'a work of experimental science' itself.</p> <p>Preparation: Please keep a note of scientific metaphors and images you notice in the novel.</p> |
| 16:45 | Day school ends |

Reading and resources list

Students are requested to read the novel in full in preparation for the course.

If you are buying a copy of the novel for the course then any good scholarly edition of the novel will do, such as Oxford World's Press or Norton.

You may also wish to familiarise yourself with some of Eliot's essays which will be referred to during the course of the day:

'The Natural History of German Life' (1856)

'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' (1856)

Eliot's essays can be found online at Project Gutenberg:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/28289/28289-h/28289-h.htm>

Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|--------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Eliot, George and A S Byatt | <i>Selected Essays, Poems, Collected Writings</i> | Penguin, 1990 |
| Beer, Gillian. | <i>George Eliot.</i> | Indiana UP, 1986 |
| Beer, Gillian. | <i>Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction</i> | Routledge, 1983; CUP, 2000 |
| Hughes, Kathryn | <i>George Eliot: The Last Victorian</i> | Cooper Square Press, 2001 |
| Uglow, Jennifer | <i>George Eliot</i> | Virago/Pantheon Press, 1987 |

Additional information

Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:

<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

Refreshments

Tea and coffee and a light sandwich lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies and have not already advised us, please inform our Admissions Team on ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk or +44 (0)1223 746262.

Note Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

Information correct as of: 11 March 2016