

Whistling in the dark: the ghost stories of M R James

Start date	28 June 2019	End date	30 June 2019
Venue	Madingley Hall Madingley Cambridge		
Tutor	Kim Eyre	Course code	1819NRX043

Director of Academic Centres Sarah Ormrod
Head of Academic Centre Administration zara.kuckelhaus@ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 746204

For further information on this course, please contact www.ice.cam.ac.uk or 01223 746204

To book See: www.ice.cam.ac.uk or telephone 01223 746262

Tutor biography

Kim Eyre took a first-class honours degree in Modern Languages at Trinity College, Cambridge and obtained a distinction in educational theory and practice in his PGCE course at King's College, London. For over thirty years he taught variously French, German and English language and literature in the secondary sector, has published three textbooks and has been engaged in research on Marcel Proust since 1989, as well as having a research interest in Oscar Wilde, the Gothic and the writers, Jocelyn Brooke, Denton Welch and Ronald Blythe. He has lectured and given presentations at national and international conferences, most recently at the Universities of Reims and of Palermo, at the Dulwich Literary Festival and at Oxford and Cambridge. He enjoys group discussion and analysis of texts and the pooling of literary and linguistic experience and expertise.

Course programme

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00	Dinner
20:30 – 22:00	Lecture: The Life and Times of M. R. James 'A Vignette' : on the origin of species
22:00	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Open spaces; closed places
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The past is a foreign country
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 16:00	Free
16:00	Tea
16:30 – 18:00	Beyond belief
18:00 – 18:30	Free
18:30	Dinner
20:00 – 21:30	Legacies and legatees: A ghostly reading
21:30	Terrace bar open for informal discussion

Sunday

07:30	Breakfast
09:00 – 10:30	Protagonists and villains
10:30	Coffee
11:00 – 12:30	The Thing without; the Beast within
12:45	Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Course syllabus

Aims:

1. To examine themes and motifs of the ghost stories, considering points of connection and common preoccupations of the prescribed collection.
2. To study particular passages in greater detail, focusing on aspects of setting, characterisation, form and language, mindful of contextual influences and critical interpretations.
3. To encourage and foster personal reactions to, and shared opinions of, concepts and concerns arising from our literary investigations.

Content:

On this course we shall study the ghost stories of M. R. James from a number of conceptual perspectives, spinning an intricate web of thematic threads between many of the tales in the collection. We shall be concentrating on recurring features of James's short prose fiction, whilst noting possible points of contact with his scholarly work and interests. We shall also examine linguistic, formal and structural aspects of the texts, paying heed to socio-historical and cultural contexts, as well as to critical interpretations and subtextual readings, where appropriate. It is hoped that, by the end of the weekend, the sceptical student and the nervous reader will have discovered common ground which they may feel moved to unearth further.

Presentation of the course:

Session 1 will incorporate a lecture on the life and times of M. R. James, before considering the posthumously published 'A Vignette', by way of introduction to the ghost stories in general. Thereafter, the sessions will revolve around themes and ideas running through the collection, paying more detailed attention to certain passages. These will be conveyed through a combination of oral storytelling and study of the written word on the page, thereby honouring the Jamesian performative and textual tradition. It is, therefore, imperative, for ease of reference, that we all work from the same edition: namely, the Oxford World's Classics text, entitled 'M. R. James; Collected Ghost Stories', edited by Darryl Jones (OUP, 2013), which students will be expected to have read in advance of the weekend and to bring with them for the course.

Classes will be conducted on a whole group discussion basis, with the exception of Session 5, which will seek to situate M. R. James on the ghost story timeline continuum, before treating (or tricking) the student body to a ghostly reading in the spirit of the Provost of King's. Note-taking will be encouraged and facilitated throughout, and there will be ample opportunity for personal contributions and responses.

As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Give evidence of having an overview of the major ideas, themes and intertextual links of the ghost stories.
2. Demonstrate the ability to focus on certain conceptual, linguistic, stylistic and structural features of some of the texts under study.
3. Show willingness and confidence in voicing responses to central notions and critical interpretations, as well as to related contextual and subtextual matters.

Reading and resources list

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course. Any essential reading is marked with an asterisk *: **namely, the book at the top of the list, which is the prescribed text for the weekend. (See section entitled 'Presentation of the Course')**.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
M. R. James (Ed. Darryl Jones)*	Collected Ghost Stories	OUP, 2013
M. R. James (Ed. Michael Cox)	Casting the Runes and other ghost stories	OUP, 2009
M. R. James (Ed. S. T. Joshi)	The Complete Ghost Stories (Vol.1)	Penguin, 2005
M. R. James (Ed. S. T. Joshi)	The Complete Ghost Stories (Vol.2)	Penguin, 2006
Michael Cox	M. R. James: An Informal Portrait	OUP, 1986
M. R. James	Eton and King's	Ash-Tree Press, 2005
S.T. Joshi & R. Pardoe (Eds)	Warnings to the Curious: A Sheaf of Criticism on M. R. James	Hippocampus, 2007
Patrick J. Murphy	Medieval Studies and the Ghost Stories of M. R. James	Pennsylvania State UP 2017
Susan Owens	The Ghost: A Cultural History	Tate, 2017

Website addresses

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: 06 November 2018