



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Institute of Continuing Education

Undergraduate Diploma in English Literature: Literature Past and Present

2024-2025

Course code: 2425DCR121

COURSE GUIDE

University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ
Tel 01223 746222 www.ice.cam.ac.uk

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Welcome

Welcome to the **Undergraduate Diploma in English Literature: Literature Past and Present**, a University of Cambridge award offered by the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE). The Diploma is taught and awarded at Level 5 (i.e. second-year undergraduate level) and attracts 60 credits. The award is completed in one academic year. For further information about academic credit please see the relevant section in our Undergraduate Student Handbook.

The course offers three termly units and a syllabus and reading and resource list for each of these units are included in this course guide.

The programme will be taught remotely, through pre-recorded lectures which students can access at times convenient to them in addition to scheduled live sessions where students will gather for discussion. While attendance at the live sessions is encouraged, all sessions will be recorded and will be accessible via the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Discussion forums and suggestions for additional reading and resources will also be found on the VLE. There will be an opportunity for one-to-one tutorials with the Course Director, Dr Jenny Bavidge, to discuss feedback on written work in Lent Term.

The programme aims to:

1. introduce students to a broad range of English Literature;
2. provide opportunities for the study of individual authors and genres in depth;
3. develop students' awareness and understanding of the cultural, historical and literary contexts of English Literature;
4. extend students' awareness of the range of approaches (theoretical and practical) to literary study;
5. provide opportunities for progression to further study in the area of literary and theatre studies.

Transferable skills for further study and employability

- The capacity for independent thought and judgement;
- The development of independent learning, study and time management skills;
- The deployment of skills in critical reasoning;
- The development of competence in using IT and online research tools to support one's work;
- The ability to work with others, productively and equitably;
- The qualities necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility and the demonstration of high levels of motivation and personal commitment through part-time study.

Subject specific skills and other attributes

Intellectual/Critical skills

- critical skills in the close reading, description, analysis, or production of texts or discourses;
- ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of texts, concepts and theories relating to English studies;
- sensitivity to generic conventions and to the shaping effects upon communication of circumstances, authorship, textual production and intended audience;
- responsiveness to the central role of language in the creation of meaning and a sensitivity to the affective power of language;
- rhetorical skills of effective communication and argument, both oral and written;
- command of a broad range of vocabulary and an appropriate critical terminology;
- bibliographic skills appropriate to the discipline, including accurate citation of sources and consistent use of conventions in the presentation of written work;

- awareness of how different social and cultural contexts affect the nature of language and meaning;
- understanding of how cultural norms and assumptions influence questions of judgement;
- comprehension of the complex nature of literary languages, and an awareness of the relevant research by which they may be better understood.

Practical and Transferable Skills

- the ability to communicate in written and spoken English with confidence and subtlety;
- the ability to work well in a group or seminar, discussing, listening and arguing with sensitivity and focus;
- original thinking, leading to the production of persuasive, organised and coherent writing and argument;
- the ability and focus to work well alone, reading and writing effectively;
- understanding how to use the Library resources to enhance research and learning;
- the ability to understand, interrogate and apply a variety of theoretical positions and weigh the importance of alternative perspectives.

Study hours

The award of academic credit is a means of quantifying and recognising learning and within the UK, one credit notionally represents 10 hours of learning¹. Each of the units in this course attracts 20 credits so students should expect to need to study for approximately 200 hours in total to complete each unit successfully. However, it is recognised that students study at different paces and use a variety of approaches, so this is a recommendation, rather than a hard-and-fast calculation.

¹ **SEEC** Credit Level Descriptors for Higher Education

Assessment

Students will be required to submit one assessment per term. There are four possible forms of assessment and you may choose which **one** you would like to undertake for each Unit. All of the four assessment types ask you to show:

- knowledge and understanding of the primary texts, their form and themes
- some knowledge and understanding of secondary criticism and contextual sources
- skills in research; skills in writing and / or oral presentation

Assessment formats:

You may choose **one** of the following assignment tasks for **each Unit**. Over the course of the Programme you should:

- write at least one essay
- undertake at least one non-essay form of assessment.

1. A 4000 word essay on one of the essay titles provided or a research topic of your own devising.

2. An oral/visual presentation of up to 20 minutes on one of the essay titles or a research topic of your own devising. This could be a recorded powerpoint talk, a video essay or an essay which includes sound or visual material.

For both essay and presentation, you are welcome to extend the bounds of the traditional essay format to include creative responses, sound and visual material or mixed media. Please discuss with your course tutor.

3. An 'Anthology' of prose extracts or poems related to one of the themes of the Unit (eg 'War' for Unit One, 'Psychogeography' for Unit Two, 'City' for Unit Three). To create your Anthology, choose four short pieces which may include extracts from the novels or the poems/essays studied on the course, write a critical introduction to your Anthology (max. 1800 words) and an introduction to each extract (max. 300 words for each), explaining its relation to the theme of your Anthology.

4. A portfolio including one of each of the following elements:

- an annotated bibliography of 5 secondary works related to one of the authors/texts/topics covered on the Unit (1500 words);
- a close analysis of a poem or an extract of one of the longer texts included in the course (1500 words);
- a blog-style piece, intended to be read by a general audience, investigating an issue or question arising from one of the course texts/texts/topics (eg. for Unit 2: 'How can novels address climate change?') (1000 words).

Full advice about the format and scope of each assignment type and advice about how to go about completing them can be found on the VLE.

Teaching staff

Academic Director and Course Director: Dr Jenny Bavidge

Dr Jenny Bavidge is University Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for English at ICE. She is a member of the University of Cambridge English Faculty and a Fellow of Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. She is a Past President of the Literary London Society and a member of the English Faculty's Contemporaries group. She was made a Fellow of the English Association in 2017. Jenny teaches within a wide range of areas, including 19th-and 20th-century American and British literature, close reading and critical theory.

Tutors

Dr Polly Paulusma teaches Cambridge English undergraduates and Songwriting MA students at the Institute for Contemporary Music Performance in London. After reading English at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge, she became a signed, published singer-songwriter, and since 2003 she has toured internationally and released nearly a dozen critically acclaimed albums with Björk's record label One Little Independent and via her own folk imprint. In 2014, she returned to postgraduate research with an interest in literature and song, completing her PhD at the University of East Anglia. Her monograph *Angela Carter and folk song: Invisible Music, Prose and the Art of Canorography* was published by Bloomsbury in December 2022 and her research has also appeared in academic journals and books.

Dr Claire Wilkinson is a Lecturer in Eighteenth Century Literature at Robinson College, University of Cambridge. Her research interests lie primarily in the area of economic criticism, particularly financial crises and the materialisation of value forms. She teaches several undergraduate papers, including the second year paper on writing from 1660–1830, and the third year special paper 'Love, Gender, and Sexuality, 1740–1820'.

Administrative staff

| |
|---|
| English Literature Enquiries |
| e. literature@ice.cam.ac.uk |
| t. 01223 746212/746236/746223 |
| Lisa Hitch/Clare Barker/Julie Johnson/Lorraine Silk |

Institute of Continuing Education

The Institute of Continuing Education's administrative headquarters are at Madingley Hall, an elegant country house built in the 16th century and set in gardens of about seven acres, designed in the 18th century by Capability Brown. Please visit www.ice.cam.ac.uk and www.madingleyhall.co.uk for further information.

Contact details of ICE

Institute of Continuing Education
University of Cambridge
Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ
T: 01223 746222
www.ice.cam.ac.uk
literature@ice.cam.ac.uk

Please also refer to the 'information for students' section on ICE's website www.ice.cam.ac.uk/studying-with-us/information-for-students and the 2024-25 Student Handbook for award-bearing courses for further information and guidance relating to all aspects of the course including study skills, assignments, assessment and moderation. The Course Information and Help and Guidance section of the ICE VLE will also contain valuable information specific to your course.

Information correct as at 19 June 2024

Syllabus for Unit One

Michaelmas term 2024

Contemporary poetry: roots to now

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Start date | 09 October 2024 | End date | 27 November 2024 |
| Tutor(s) | Dr Polly Paulusma | No of meetings | Introduction and 6 live teaching/open sessions plus pre-recorded lectures |

Aims

- Develop students' interest in literary studies more widely through the critical study of poetry in Britain and the USA from the early 20th century to the present day
- Enhance students' understanding of how poetry is enmeshed within and contributes to the thinking of generations
- Enhance critical appreciation of the texts by close reading, reading aloud, practical criticism, and historical contextualization

Content

What is contemporary poetry in Britain and the USA? What is its provenance and present reality?

Tracing the development of twentieth-century poetry from the end of the Victorian period, through the experiments of Modernism and arriving at the contemporary moment, the unit will explore verse in Britain and the USA with classes on a wide range of poets including Thomas Hardy, H. D., Ezra Pound, Lola Ridge, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Kathleen Raine, Dylan Thomas, Sylvia Plath, Philip Larkin, Countee Cullen, Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Carol Ann Duffy, Benjamin Zephaniah and Kae Tempest.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught in a series of pre-recorded lectures and 'live' teaching sessions via Zoom. Live teaching will involve directed discussion and reading, with short talks from tutors and small-group work in breakout rooms. There will be comfort breaks during each session and opportunities for general Q&A with the tutor.

Please also look at the VLE for each block's dedicated **discussions** and **forum activities** which are designed to guide your reading and to introduce you to relevant contextual and critical resources.

Teaching Sessions/Lectures list

For each block pre-recorded lectures will be available a week before the live teaching session. Live teaching sessions will be on **Saturdays between 13.00-15.00 and 16.00-18.00 pm GMT**. Please watch each lecture before the live sessions and follow the discussion forums on the VLE.

| Session | Date | Content |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Introduction | Wednesday 9 October 2024 19.00-20.00 | Hello and welcome... A chance to meet your classmates and tutor and to become familiar with the online classroom environment. |
| Block One | Saturday 12 October 2024 | Victorians meet Modernists (via the imagists and War Poets) |
| Block Two | Saturday 26 October 2024 | Modernists meet New Romantics The Auden Group (New Country Poets) — W. H. Auden, Stephen Spender, Cecil Day-Lewis. The New Romantics — Dylan Thomas, George Barker, Kathleen Raine, Elizabeth Smart and prose poetry. |
| Open session | Wednesday 30 October 2024 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |
| Block Three | Saturday 16 November 2024 | Poets meet editors — how poems emerge Close readings of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' and Sylvia Plath's <i>Ariel and other poems</i> , working with editions that reveal editorial interventions from Ezra Pound and Ted Hughes respectively. |
| Block Four | Saturday 30 November 2024 | Poetry meets performance: the 'auditory imagination' An exploration of the auditory dimension of poetry; a day of reading aloud and examining what effects sounded elements have on our reception and comprehension. Immersions in recordings of and by Seamus Heaney, Ted Hughes, Dylan Thomas, and performance poets working today, such as Benjamin Zephaniah, Salena Godden and Kae Tempest. |
| Open session | Wednesday 4th December 2024 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |

Learning outcomes

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

1. Demonstrate informed, analytical literary-critical responses to the texts and to the issues arising from them
2. Articulate the broader concepts of the unit and the relationship between the texts
3. Indicate an awareness of the historical (social, literary, cultural) contexts of 20th century and contemporary verse.

Student assessment and Essay titles

You should choose one of the four assignment formats (essay, presentation, anthology or portfolio).

Possible essay / presentation titles

If you create your own title please **agree it in writing with the tutor first to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit.**

1. Modernist poetry is 'founded on a partial and strategic dissociation of the poet from the poem' (Peter Nicholls). Discuss representations of estrangement, detachment and dissociation in any modernist poet you have studied.
2. Cary Nelson asserts that 'much of twentieth-century American poetry is a dialogue with Walt Whitman.' Analyse Whitman's influences on one of the American poets you have studied.
3. Compare and contrast the use of form in the work of two contemporary poets.
4. In *The Music of Time* John Burnside explains he wants to write about poems using what Randall Jarrell calls the 'dailiness of life', in order 'to discuss poems and ideas of poetry as they inform, not just 'the life of the mind' but also my own day-to-day existence.' Explore the effective usage of the everyday in one of the poets you have studied.
5. T. S. Eliot wrote that the manuscript of *The Waste Land* 'is worth preserving in its present form solely for the reason that it is the only evidence of the difference which [Pound's] criticism has made...' Discuss the importance of the role of editorial interventions in one of the poets you have studied.
6. According to Julia Novak, live poetry emerges from 'a specific manifestation of poetry's oral mode of realisation, which is a parallel to, rather than a mere derivative 'version' of, the written mode.' Analyse the importance of orality and performance in the work of any poet you have studied.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Wednesday 8 January 2025 by 12.00 noon GMT*

*Greenwich Mean Time

Reading and resource list

The Course Tutor will provide copies of required poems in advance of the beginning of the Unit. You are encouraged to read more deeply into the work of any poet or movement in which you are particularly interested.

The following would be useful but not essential to own:

Anthology of Twentieth-Century British and Irish Poetry, ed. by Keith Tuma (OUP, 2001)

Anthology of Modern American Poetry, ed. by Cary Nelson (OUP, 2000)

Secondary material: texts in bold can be found to read in full via the University Library.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|---------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Acheson, James (ed) | <i>Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism</i> | University of New York Press, 1996 |
| Brinton, Ian | <i>Contemporary Poetry: Poets and Poetry since 1990</i> | CUP 2009 |
| Burnside, John | <i>The Music of Time: Poetry in the Twentieth Century</i> | Profile, 2019 |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Caddel, Richard and Peter Quartermain | <i>Introduction to the Anthology</i> | http://jacketmagazine.com/04/otherbrit.html |
| Churchwell, Sarah | <i>Ted Hughes and the Corpus of Sylvia Plath</i> | <i>Criticism</i> , Vol. 40, No. 1 (Winter, 1998), pp. 99-132 |
| Crozier, Andrew | <i>Resting on Laurels</i> | <i>An Andrew Crozier Reader</i> (Carcenet, 2012), pp. 247-259 |
| Day, G. And Docherty, B. (eds) | <i>British Poetry from the 1950s to the 1990s: Politics and Art</i> | Palgrave Macmillan, 1997 |
| Ellmann, Maud | <i>The Poetics of Impersonality: T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound</i> | Edinburgh University Press, 2013 |
| Empson, William | <i>Seven Types of Ambiguity</i>, first publ. 1930 | Pimlico, 2004 |
| Hurley, Michael D | <i>The Audible Reading of Poetry Revisited</i> | <i>British Journal of Aesthetics</i> 44.4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 393-407 |
| Novak, Julia | <i>Live Poetry: An integrated Approach to Poetry in Performance</i> | <i>PN Review</i> quarterly magazine, 2011 https://www.pnreview.co.uk/ any copies, just have a browse |
| Padel, Ruth | <i>The Poem and the Journey</i> | Chatto & Windus, 2007 |
| | <i>PN Review</i> quarterly magazine | https://www.pnreview.co.uk/ any copies, just have a browse |
| Ricks, Christopher | <i>The Force of Poetry</i> | Oxford University Press, 1987 Read online https://archive.org/details/forceofpoetry0001rick |
| Richards, I. A | <i>Practical Criticism — A Study of Literary Judgement</i> | first publ. 1930 (London, 1987) |
| Spiers, Emily | <i>Kate Tempest: A 'Brand New Homer' for a Creative Future' in Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to</i> | Oxford University Press, 2019 |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--|
| | <i>Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond</i>, ed. by Fiona Cox and Elena Theodorakopoulos, pp. 105-124 | |
| Tempest, Kae | <i>Brand New Ancients</i> | Picador, 2013 |
| Wheatley, David | <i>Contemporary British Poetry</i> | Red Globe, 2014 |
| Winters, Yvor | <i>The Audible Reading of Poetry</i> | Hudson Review 4 (Autumn 1951), pp. 433-47. |

Syllabus for Unit Two

Lent term 2025

Literature and Place

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|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Start date | 04 January 2025 | End date | 19 February 2025 |
| Tutor(s) | Dr Jenny Bavidge | No of meetings | 6 live teaching/open sessions plus pre-recorded lectures |

Aims

- To introduce students to literary works from a range of periods and genres paying specific attention to the representation of place, nature and the built environment.
- To encourage critical debate about the relationship of literature and landscape.
- To examine theoretical approaches to the understanding of space and place.

Content

This Unit will take a long view of the representation of place and space in literature. We will examine the tensions between the dualism of city and country which operates as an important underlying structure or explicit theme in much literary work. We will begin by exploring this tension in poetry from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century and move on to explore the theme of place as it pertains to a range of modern literature. We will study the history of pastoral and the particular importance of the natural world to the Romantics and investigate the literature of walking, from the poetry of John Clare to contemporary city literature and nature-writing. Students will encounter ideas from ecocriticism and critical animal studies alongside their readings in poetry and fiction.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught in a series of pre-recorded lectures and 'live' teaching sessions via Zoom. Live teaching will involve directed discussion and reading, with short talks from tutors and small-group work in breakout rooms. There will be comfort breaks during each session and opportunities for general Q&A with the tutor.

Please also look at the VLE for each block's dedicated **discussions** and **forum activities** which are designed to guide your reading and to introduce you to relevant contextual and critical resources.

Teaching Sessions/ Lectures list

For each block pre-recorded lectures will be available a week before the live teaching session.

Live teaching sessions will be on **Saturdays between 13.00-15.00 and 16.00-18.00 pm GMT.**

Please watch each lecture before the live sessions and follow the discussion forums on the VLE.

| Session | Date | Content |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Block One | Saturday 4 January 2025 | Country, City, Court, Estate Definitions of Pastoral: Selected poetry inc. Spenser and Marvell Jane Austen, <i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814) |
| Block Two | Saturday 18 January 2025 | The Romantics' Nature and the Sublime Wordsworth and Clare: Selected Poetry |
| Open Session | Wednesday 22 January 2025 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |
| Block Three | Saturday 1 February 2025 | Psychogeography: Walking, London and Literature Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> (1925) Samuel Selvon, <i>The Lonely Londoners</i> (1956) |
| Block Four | Saturday 15 February 2025 | Ecocriticism: New Nature Writing, More-than-human/human encounters and the Anthropocene Nan Shepherd, <i>The Living Mountain</i> (1977) Richard Powers, <i>The Overstory</i> (2018) and selected poetry by First Nations poets |
| Open Session | Wednesday 19 February 2025 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |

Learning outcomes

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

1. develop knowledge and understanding of the representation of place in a wide range of literature;
2. show awareness of critical and theoretical approaches to the topic;
3. develop a greater in-depth knowledge of literary history and keener close reading skills;
4. have confidence to discuss the issues of the course and to produce an informed and analytical piece of writing around them.

Student assessment and Essay titles

You should choose one of the four assignment formats (essay, presentation, anthology or portfolio).

Suggested Essay / Presentation titles

If you wish to create your own title please **agree it in writing with the tutor first to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit.**

1. 'Life consists with wildness' (Thoreau). Discuss the representation of 'wildness' in any one or more of the course texts.

2. “Country” and “city” are very powerful words.’ (Raymond Williams). How does the structure of country and city make itself felt in any one or more of the course texts?
3. “Thou art not, Penshurst, built to envious show.’ (Ben Jonson ‘To Penshurst’) Discuss the meanings which cohere around the idea of the country house estate.
4. Define any one of the following concepts and then discuss the representation of landscape in any one or more of the course texts in the light of this definition: the pastoral; the sublime; psychogeography; the Anthropocene.
5. With reference to one or more of the course texts, explore the relationship between literature and walking.
6. ‘London is illimitable’ (Peter Ackroyd). How have literary texts and/or essays sought to represent the city?
7. Explore how any the course texts question the category of the ‘natural’.
8. ‘Come all ye,’ the country says,
You win me, who take me most to heart.
(‘Here lies our land’, Kathleen Jamie)

How do any one or more of the writers on the course attempt to give a voice to the more-than-human world?

Closing date for the submission of assignments: **Wednesday 26 March 2025 by 12.00 noon GMT***

*Greenwich Mean Time

Reading and resource list

The following essays and poetry will be provided for you to print off/download via the VLE:

Pastoral Poetry: selected poems inc. Christopher Marlowe ‘Passionate Shepherd to His Love’ (1599), Ben Jonson ‘To Penshurst’ (1616), Andrew Marvell ‘Upon Appleton House’ (1651).

William Wordsworth, selected poems inc. *The Prelude Book VII*, ‘Residence in London’. If you wished to purchase your own copy of Wordsworth’s poetry, then we recommend *The Major Works: including The Prelude* (Oxford World’s Classics), or any scholarly edition of the collected works.

John Clare, selected poems. If you wish to purchase your own copy of Clare’s poetry, then we recommend *John Clare: Major Works* (Oxford World’s Classics), or any scholarly edition of the collected works.

Henry David Thoreau, ‘Walking’ (1862); Charles Dickens, ‘Night-Walks’ from *The Uncommercial Traveller*, 1860), Virginia Woolf, ‘Street-Haunting’ and ‘Oxford Street’ (1931 – collected in *The London Scene*).

Required Primary Reading: texts in bold can be read in full online via the University Library

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Austen, Jane | <i>Mansfield Park</i> (1814) | Suggested Edition: Norton or Oxford World’s Classics |

| | | |
|-----------------|--|---------------------------|
| Powers, Richard | <i>The Overstory</i> (2018) | Vintage |
| Selvon, Samuel | <i>The Lonely Londoners</i> (1956) | Penguin Modern Classics |
| Woolf, Virginia | <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> (1925) | Oxford's World's Classics |
| Shepherd, Nan | <i>The Living Mountain</i> (1977; repr. 2011) intro. Robert MacFarlane | Canongate |

Suggested Secondary Reading: texts in bold can be read in full online via the University Library

Best introduction to Ecocriticism: Garrard, Greg, ***Ecocriticism* (Routledge, 2009)**

Great collection of original writing which introduced the concept of 'new nature writing':
Granta 102: The New Nature Writing (Summer 2008)

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|---|--|---|
| Armbruster, Karla and Kathleen R. Wallace (eds) | <i>Beyond Nature Writing: Expanding the Boundaries of Ecocriticism</i> | Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001 |
| Bate, Jonathan | <i>Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition</i> | London: Routledge, 1991 |
| Bate, Jonathan | <i>The Song of the Earth</i> | Picador/Harvard UP, 2000 |
| Buell, Lawrence | <i>The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination</i> | Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 2005 |
| Coupe, Lawrence (ed) | <i>The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism</i> | London: Routledge, 2000 |
| Daston, L (ed) | <i>Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism</i> | Columbia UP, 2006 |
| Drabble, Margaret | <i>A Writer's Britain: Landscape in Literature</i> | London: Thames and Hudson, 1979 |
| Dungy, Camilla ed. | <i>Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Writing</i> | Georgia: U of Georgia Press, 2009 |
| Glotfelty, Cheryl and Harold Fromm (eds) | <i>The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology</i> | Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996 |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Kerridge, Richard and Neil Sammels (eds) | <i>Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature</i> | London: Zed Books, 1996 |
| Trexler, Adam | <i>Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change</i> | University of Virginia Press, 2015 |
| Westling, Louise | <i>The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment</i> | Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 |

Syllabus for Unit Three

Easter term 2025

The modern novel: experiments in narrative

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|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Start date | 29 March 2025 | End date | 14 May 2025 |
| Tutor(s) | Dr Claire Wilkinson | No of meetings | 6 live teaching/open sessions plus pre-recorded lectures |

Aims

- introduce students to the novel, and to innovations made in the period 1900-2021;
- enable students to engage critically with key texts from the period;
- compare the techniques of novelists writing during the period.

Content

The novel is the most accessible of literary forms: awards like the annual Booker Prize attract scholarly and popular attention, and novels are as likely to be read on sun loungers as in university libraries. What is it about the novel that has made it such a popular and enduring form? How can it communicate cultural anxieties, excesses, and preoccupations so clearly? Will its success continue?

This unit addresses the questions above. Students will study a range of novels written between the very beginning of last century – 1904 – and now, 2024-5. We'll think about what is distinctive about novel form, and how a series of different writers have made adaptations and innovations to narrative in their art. The selected novels are from a diverse range of writers: six by women and six by men, from Britain, Ireland, the USA, and South Africa, written by writers of different ethnicities and backgrounds. All are exceptional works of fiction.

By the end of the unit, students will have a solid grounding in modern and contemporary literary writing.

Presentation of the unit

The unit will be taught in a series of pre-recorded lectures and 'live' teaching sessions via Zoom. Live teaching will involve directed discussion and reading, with short talks from tutors and small-group work in breakout rooms. There will be comfort breaks during each session and opportunities for general Q&A with the tutor.

Please also look at the VLE for each block's dedicated **discussions** and **forum activities** which are designed to guide your reading and to introduce you to relevant contextual and critical resources.

Teaching Sessions/ Lectures list

Provisional unit structure

For each block pre-recorded lectures will be available a week before the live teaching session.

Live teaching sessions will be on **Saturdays between 13.00-15.00 and 16.00-18.00 pm GMT.**

Please watch each lecture before the live sessions and follow the discussion forums on the VLE.

Provisional lecture list

| Session | Date | Content |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Block One | Saturday 29 March 2025 | Novel Forms Joseph Conrad, <i>Nostramo</i> (1904) Virginia Woolf, <i>To The Lighthouse</i> (1927) James Baldwin, <i>Giovanni's Room</i> (1956) |
| Block Two | Saturday 12 April 2025 | Epistolarity Paul Auster, <i>In the Country of Last Things</i> (1987) J. M. Coetzee, <i>Age Of Iron</i> (1990) Marilynne Robinson, <i>Gilead</i> (2004) |
| Open Session | Wednesday 16 April 2025 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |
| Block Three | Saturday 26 April 2025 | Cities Don DeLillo, <i>Cosmopolis</i> (2003) Zadie Smith, <i>NW</i> (2012) [Tao Lin, <i>Taipei</i> (2013) – will be referred to in lectures, optional reading] |
| Block Four | Saturday 10 May 2025 | Fiction, now Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, <i>Americanah</i> (2013) Sophie Mackintosh, <i>The Water Cure</i> (2018) Sally Rooney, <i>Conversations with Friends</i> (2017) – will be referred to in lectures, optional reading] |
| Open Session | Wednesday 14 May 2025 19.00-20.00 | An open session for informal discussion, chat and questions about coursework |

Learning Outcomes

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

1. demonstrate an understanding of the novel as a literary form between 1900 and 2022;
2. analyse some of the major characteristics of the novel by engaging critically with key texts;
3. discuss how authors use language to create different narrative styles.

Student assessment and Essay titles

Students will be expected to read the set novels and to attend the sessions whenever possible and be prepared to engage in class discussion.

There is a wealth of critical material on this area of study but students will gain from some background reading as set out in the reading list. Articles and specific books will be suggested during the sessions.

You should choose one of the four assignment formats (essay, presentation, anthology or portfolio)

Essay titles

If you wish to create your own title please **agree it in writing with the tutor first to ensure it meets the learning outcomes of the unit.**

1. 'Starting a novel is like opening a door on a misty landscape; you can see very little but you can smell the earth and feel the wind blowing.' (Iris Murdoch)

In light of this comment, consider the work of any author(s) of your choice.

2. Define any one of the following concepts, and then discuss its representation in at least one of the novels studied as part of this unit: (a) analepsis; (b) epistolarity; (c) the urban; (d) discomfort.
3. 'Forms are the abstract of social relationships: so, formal analysis is in its own modest way an analysis of power' (Franco Moretti)

Discuss the role of form in any modern or contemporary novel.

4. 'Abroad in England? Yes, abroad; for in varying degrees we are all foreigners even in our own country. How little of this England of which we are the citizens, how absurdly little, for any one of us, is "home"!'

Discuss some meanings of 'foreignness' or 'home' in the work of any author(s) of your choosing.

5. 'The commonest teaching of the civilised world in our time can be stated simply: "Tell me where you came from and I will tell you what you are".'

Write an essay on the importance of origins in the novel.

6. 'Love is a possible strength in an actual weakness' (Thomas Hardy)

Discuss representations of love **and/or** weakness in any novel(s) of your choosing.

7. 'The novel is a moral form. It's about cause and effect.' (Anne Enright, BBC Radio 4 interview, 2011)

Discuss with reference to any novel(s) of your choosing. Do not limit your answer to considerations of plot.

8. 'Tell me how free I am' (Richard Powers, *Prisoner's Dilemma*, 1988)

Discuss varieties of freedom in any novel, or novels, of your choosing.

If students wish to create their own titles this **must be agreed in writing with the tutor first to ensure it meets the learning outcome of the unit.**

Students are expected to submit their assignments online and feedback on assignments is delivered online.

Closing date for the submission of assignments: Friday 13 June 2025 by 12.00 noon BST*

* British Summer Time

Reading and resource list

Most of the novels we'll study during this course are short. Students are advised that the starred texts are longer, and will require significant reading time. It is advisable to begin reading these in advance of the course. Any good edition of the novels below will be appropriate. Texts in bold can be accessed in full via the University Library.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| Aidichie, Chimamanda Ngozi | <i>Americanah</i> | Fourth Estate, 2017 |
| Auster, Paul | <i>In the Country of Last Things</i> | Faber, 2005 |
| Baldwin, James | <i>Giovanni's Room</i> | Penguin, 2001 |
| Coetzee, J.M. | <i>Age of Iron</i> | Penguin, 2010 |
| Conrad, Joseph | <i>Nostramo: a tale of the seaboard</i> | Penguin, 2012 |
| DeLillo, Don | <i>Cosmopolis</i> | Picador, 2011 |
| MacIntosh, Sophie | <i>The Water Cure</i> | Hamish Hamilton, 2018 |
| Lin, Tao | <i>Taipei</i> | Canongate, 2013 |
| Robinson, Marilynne | <i>Gilead</i> | Virago, 2006 |
| Rooney, Sally | <i>Conversations With Friends</i> | Faber, 2018 |
| Smith, Zadie | <i>NW</i> | Penguin, 2013 |
| Woolf, Virginia | <i>To The Lighthouse</i> | Penguin, 2010 |

Reading and resource list: secondary texts

There is no need to buy any of the items from the list. Extracts will be provided on the VLE.

Students interested in a theoretical introduction to studying the novel may wish to purchase the Hawthorn or Mullan books. Both are available cheaply in bookshops and texts in bold can be read in full online via the University Library.

| Author | Title | Publisher and date |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Auster, Paul, and Coetzee, J.M. | <i>Here and Now: Letters 2008-2011</i> | Penguin, 2014 |

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|-----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Caserio, Robert L., ed. | <i>The Cambridge Companion to the Twentieth-Century English Novel</i> | Cambridge, 2009 |
| Eaglestone, R and D. Gorman | <i>The Routledge Companion to Twenty-First Century Literary Fiction</i> | Routledge, 2019 |
| Hawthorn, Jeremy | <i>Studying the Novel: an introduction</i> | Edward Arnold, 1985 (any edition) |
| James, David, ed. | <i>The Cambridge Companion to British Fiction since 1945</i> | Cambridge, 2015 |
| Mullen, John | <i>How Novels Work</i> | Oxford, 2008 |

Preparation for the Course

The most important thing to do in preparation for the course is to read the primary texts and get to know them well. Have a look ahead in the Units and see where the reading needs to be done by. You will get the most out of the lectures and live seminar discussion if you have read the texts in advance.

Progression routes

After completing this Diploma you can progress to the Diploma in English Literature: Literature and Criticism or if you would like to step up to the next level of study you could apply for the Advanced Diploma in Research Theory and Practice and prepare to write a dissertation on a Literature topic of your choice.

If you have completed 240 credits in English Literature and/or Creative Writing with ICE (two Certificates and two Diplomas) you will be able to progress the BA pathway with the Open University.

Full Timetable

All Saturday/Sunday live sessions run from 13.00-15.00 and 16.00-18.00

Michaelmas 2024: Contemporary Poetry: roots to now

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|----------------------|--|
| Introduction Session | Wednesday 9 October 2024, 19.00 - 20.00 |
| Block One | Live session Saturday 12 October 2024 |
| Block Two | Live session Saturday 26 October 2024 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 30 October 2024, 19.00 – 20.00 |
| Block Three | Live session Saturday 16 November 2024 |
| Block Four | Live session Saturday 30 November 2024 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 4 December 2024, 19.00 – 20.00 |

Lent 2025: Literature and Place

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|--------------|---|
| Block One | Live session Saturday 4 January 2025 |
| Block Two | Live session Saturday 18 January 2025 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 22 January 2025, 19.00 - 20.00 |
| Block Three | Live session Saturday 1 February 2025 |
| Block Four | Live session Saturday 15 February 2025 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 19 February 2025, 19.00 - 20.00 |

Easter 2025: The Modern Novel: Experiments in Narrative

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| Block One | Live session Saturday 29 March 2025 |
| Block Two | Live session Saturday 12 April 2025 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 16 April 2025, 19.00 - 20.00 |
| Block Three | Live session Saturday 26 April 2025 |
| Block Four | Live session Saturday 10 May 2025 |
| Open Session | Wednesday 14 May 2025, 19.00 - 20.00 |

Whilst every effort is made to avoid changes to this course, changes to course-content and structure and timings may be made. Students will be consulted on any changes.

University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education, Madingley Hall, Cambridge, CB23 8AQ
Tel 01223 746222 www.ice.cam.ac.uk