

BCENG: UNDERSTANDING LITERATURE 2007-8

Mondays and Thursdays, Room 2041A, Arts Building, 1-1.50pm

Course convenor: Dr Alice Jorgensen
(on leave 2007-8; acting convenor Prof. Stephen Matterson)

What do we understand by the term 'literature'? How do we go about interpreting literary works of the past and the present? Drawing upon the expertise of the School of English across a wide range of literatures in English, this course will offer to students from outside the discipline an opportunity to develop structured and informed approaches to reading. Concentrating on literature before 1900 in Michaelmas Term and on twentieth-century texts in Hilary Term, the course will highlight issues of historical periodization, the development of genres such as the novel, and literary influence and imitation. It will examine the possibilities and implications of literary form, with each term offering a selection of prose, poetry and drama. By the end of the course students will have sharpened their own skills of literary analysis and will have studied a varied collection of substantial and rewarding texts.

Course schedule

The course is delivered through twice-weekly lectures or classes given by members of the School of English. Note that the course runs in weeks 2 to 9 of Michaelmas term and weeks 1 to 9 of Hilary. Attendance at all classes/lectures is compulsory and a record of attendance will be kept.

Michaelmas Term

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| Week 2 | i) Introduction I
ii) Introduction II: 'The Fall of the House of Usher' |
| Week 3 | i) Poetry: Form and Meaning I
ii) Poetry: Form and Meaning II |
| Week 4 | i) Bank Holiday
ii) Andrew Marvell, selected poems |
| Week 5 | i) What is Tragedy?
ii) Sophocles, <i>Oedipus Rex</i> |
| Week 6 | i) William Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> I
ii) William Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> II |
| Week 7 | i) Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> I
ii) Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> II |

Week 8 i) Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* I
 ii) Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* II

Week 9 i) Discussion
 ii) Class test

Hilary Term

Week 1 i) Introducing twentieth-century literature
 ii) Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Week 2 i) Philip Larkin, an introduction
 ii) Philip Larkin, selected poems

Week 3 i) Seamus Heaney, an introduction
 ii) Seamus Heaney, *Beowulf*

Week 4 i) Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* I
 ii) Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* II

Week 5 i) Children's literature I
 ii) Children's literature II

Week 6 i) Fairy stories
 ii) Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber*

Week 7 i) Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* I
 ii) Tom Stoppard, *Arcadia* II

Week 8 i) Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*
 ii) Brian Friel, *Dancing at Lughnasa*

Week 9 i) Discussion
 ii) Class test

Assessment

The course will be assessed by means of two essays of up to 3,000 words each (each 30% of the final mark) and two in-class tests (each 20% of the final mark). Students must submit at least one piece of assessed work on each of the three literary forms – poetry, drama and prose – studied in the course. **Students must complete all elements of the course on time in order to pass.**

Michaelmas week 9	In-class test	20%
First meeting of Hilary term	Submit essay 1	30%
Hilary week 9	In-class test	20%
Beginning of Trinity term	Submit essay 2	30%

Arrangements for the submission of essay 2 will be announced in class before the end of Hilary term.

Topics for the essays will be based on material covered in the lectures while the in-class tests will assess close reading skills. Students will need to liaise with the course convenor to make sure they cover the required range of material in the assessed work. Students will also need to be clear about the difference between scholarly citation, collaboration, paraphrase and plagiarism. These will be outlined and clarified in the initial classes of the course.

Contact

Queries about the course may be addressed by e-mail to Prof. Stephen Matterson (smtrson@tcd.ie).