

Sophister Module Description Template 2023-24

Full Name: Reading *Moby-Dick*

Short Name: *Moby-Dick*

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Stephen Matterson smttrson@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 5

Semester Taught MT/HT: MT

Year JS/SS: JS

Module Content: We'll focus on what has often been described as the world's greatest novel. There are so many topics to explore: generic status; thematic inclusiveness; the incorporation of contemporary epistemology—and the ongoing ethical and environmental concerns that Melville raises. We'll discuss the content of the 'novel' and its shifting tones from the comic to the tragic, but there's no end to the sense of things that the book raises. For us as readers, we'll have to reflect on topics such as political dictatorship, obsession, absolutism, oil, modernity, etymology, capitalism, Christianity, slavery, the roots of belief systems. And the novel includes what is probably the first ever Western fictional representation of a same-sex interracial marriage.

Above all in this module, let's just enjoy *reading*—and take the opportunity to share our reading with others. This module offers a space in which we may engage patiently, openly and inclusively with a book that has fascinated many generations. We'll read set chapters of the novel each week, progressing towards the conclusion.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of this module you should be able to

1. Identify and describe the characteristics of Melville as an author, and analyse his connections with other major authors.
2. Employ a highly developed range of interpretive strategies using appropriate critical vocabulary and theory.
3. Examine 19th century US and international cultural and historical contexts for *Moby-Dick*.
4. Articulate the development of American prose fiction in the 19th century with reference to *Moby-Dick*.
5. Generate research questions through the applied techniques of literature review, bibliographic enquiry, database and archive search.
6. Evaluate prose fiction in sophisticated written and oral presentation.

Learning Aims:

Moby-Dick invites varied and fresh critical interpretations and interventions. This module encourages you to engage independently with a key text of American literature and to do so in an active and informed way. This is a seminar-based

course; classes will require your articulation of your reading experience as we progress through the novel.

Assessment Details:

This module will be assessed by one essay (3,000 words).

Preliminary Reading List:

Moby-Dick, Moby-Dick, Moby-Dick

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.