Sophister Option Description Template 2016-17

**Option Name:** A Work of One’s Own: Women’s Fiction Between the Wars

**Option Short Title:** Women’s Fiction Between the Wars

**Lecturer Name and Email Address:** Dr. Daragh Downes (downesda@tcd.ie)

**ECTS Weighting:** 10 ECTS

**Semester/Term Taught:** HT

**Option Content:**

In this one-semester seminar we will explore a diverse selection of novels, ranging from ‘popular’ to ‘middlebrow’ to ‘modernist’, published by women writers in Britain between the end of WWI and the outbreak of WWII. This was a period marked as much by the ‘long tail’ of Victorian realism as by the avant-garde experimentalism of High Modernism. Accordingly, we will not be going into this reading adventure together armed with any ‘grand metanarrative’ as to what fiction by women in this period ‘ought to’ look like. Instead we will proceed carefully and in pluralistic spirit from novel to novel, subjecting each work to a theoretically informed close reading and taking in themes like gender, romance, domesticity, sexual orientation, work, class and war.

For essay purposes, you will be given freedom to focus on any work(s) of your choice. Alternatively you may, if you prefer, consider more than one work by a single writer on the course.

Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918)

E. M. Hull, *The Sheik* (1919)

May Sinclair, *Life and Death of Harriett Frean* (1922)

Agatha Christie, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926)

Sylvia Townsend Warner, *Mr Fortune’s Maggot* (1927)

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928)

Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928)

Jean Rhys, *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie* (1931)

Vita Sackville-West, *All Passion Spent* (1931)

Antonia White, *Frost in May* (1933)

Stevie Smith, *Novel on Yellow Paper* (1936)

Daphne du Maurier, *Rebecca* (1938)

**Option Learning Aims:**

In the course of the module we will

- explore the praxis and self-understanding of a range of women novelists in the interwar years;
- relate the aesthetic, social and political issues raised within the course novels to the social and literary context of Britain between the end of the Great War and the culmination of the Hitlerian calamity;
- familiarise ourselves with relevant feminist and other critical theories and bring them to bear on our reading of the novels.
**Learning Outcomes:**

1) Describe and contextualise a range of novels by women writers between 1918 and 1939;
2) Employ a highly developed range of interpretive strategies using appropriate critical vocabulary in the prescribed texts;
3) Apply techniques of close reading and narratological analysis;
4) Display deepened understanding of feminist and other critical theories relevant to the course texts;
5) Use high-level transferable skills of analytical and writing techniques in relation to chosen topics studied in the module.

**Assessment Details:** 1 x essay (5-6,000 words)