

Full Name: Laurence Sterne: A Literary Career in Context

Short Name: Laurence Sterne

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Darrell Jones (jonesd4@tcd.ie)

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught: MT

Year: SS

Content:

The Anglo-Irish clergyman Laurence Sterne was one of the most innovative, controversial, and influential figures in eighteenth-century literature. His satirical fiction *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, was published in five instalments between 1759 and 1767, while his follow-up novel *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* appeared shortly before his death in 1768. During that time, he also exploited his literary celebrity by publishing two collections of his sermons under the pseudonym of his fictional alter-ego Parson Yorick. Sterne's formal ingenuity, bawdy humour, and comic confluences of his private and public personae attracted appreciation, imitation, and criticism in equal measure. His later admirers included Friedrich Nietzsche, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and Italo Calvino.

This module immerses students in the world of Sterne's early audience by reading his works in their original instalments alongside contemporary responses. Its contextual approach encourages engagement with the practices and possibilities of eighteenth-century print culture, from anonymity and pseudonymity to satire and serialization. It also explores enduring questions about the nature of fiction, the identities of characters, and the moral responsibilities of authors.

Learning Outcomes:

On successful completion of the module a student should be able to:

1. identify Sterne's literary sources and satirical targets and strategies;
2. understand the dynamics of print culture in the 1760s;
3. critically examine Sterne's involvement in contemporary moral controversies;
4. critically evaluate Sterne's contribution to the history and theory of fiction.

Assessment Details:

One 1,500-word reflective journal (25%); one 3,500-word essay (75%)

Preliminary Reading List:

1. Introduction
2. Early works
 - A Political Romance* (1759)
 - 'Rabelaisian Fragment' (1759)
3. *Tristram Shandy*
 - Vols. I-II (1759)
 - Contemporary critical reception
4. *Sermons*
 - Vols. I-II (1760)
 - Contemporary critical reception
5. *Tristram Shandy*
 - Vols. III-IV (1761)
 - Contemporary critical reception
6. *Tristram Shandy*
 - Vols. IV-VI (1762)
 - Contemporary critical reception
7. *Tristram Shandy*
 - Vols. VII-VIII (1765)
 - Contemporary critical reception
8. *Sermons*
 - Vols. III-IV (1766)
 - Contemporary critical reception
9. *Tristram Shandy*
 - Vol. IX (1767)
 - Contemporary critical reception
10. *A Sentimental Journey*
 - Vols. I-II (1768)
 - Contemporary critical reception
11. Conclusion

Please note:

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