About the M.Phil in Popular Literature.

Over the last two decades, the study of popular literature in all of its generic forms has been transformed from a niche area of academic interest into one of the most vibrant and rapidly growing areas of critical inquiry within literary studies. It was once the case that what few academic explorations of popular literature there were began with what amounted to a tacit apology for daring to pay serious attention to this kind of ‘trash’ in the first place. Nowadays, the level of student and academic interest in the field is such that the often rather pained justifications of the past are simply no longer necessary (or appropriate). As Tony Bennett and Graham Martin put it in their preface to one of the first major works in the field, *Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading* (1990), “There are many good reasons for studying popular fiction. The best, though, is that it matters”. As the first dedicated postgraduate course in this subject area, Trinity College Dublin's M. Phil in Popular Literature (which began in 2005) has for over a decade made a valuable contribution to this exciting and rapidly evolving field.

The M.Phil in Popular Literature is therefore first of all informed by the conviction that popular literature represents a challenging and intellectually worthwhile subject deserving of rigorous academic study. Our approach to the subject is grounded in the belief that in order to fully appreciate the breadth and significance of genre fiction, students must first familiarize themselves with the origins and development of popular literature from its beginnings up until the present day. It is for this reason that the historical component of the core course is of paramount importance to this course of study. Popular literature has a long and fascinating history that significantly pre-dates the present day, and one of our intentions is to expose students to as wide a range of popular texts as possible. You will therefore be expected to engage with texts from the eighteenth-century onwards (the period when the idea of a truly “mass” audience first emerged). While we will also be studying some more recent (twenty-first century) texts, these will constitute a relatively small percentage of the course material, which also incorporates texts from the Victorian, Edwardian, and early-mid Twentieth century periods.

In addition to the historicising component of the core course, students will be introduced to a wide range of theories related to the academic and critical perceptions of popular fiction. It is also important to emphasise that whilst we will be by necessity be referencing the work of selected cultural studies scholars, this is not a Cultural Studies MA, nor an MA in Popular Culture. Our primary focus is always on popular literature.

The core course traces the history of popular genres such as horror, science fiction, romance, the western, fantasy and detective fiction (to name but a few). We have also integrated specific weeks on topics of importance to the field, such as new and emerging genres, popular literature from a global perspective, popular taste, the impact that modern technology has had the publishing industry, and popular reading habits. In addition to the core course, students will
choose from a range of specialist options on particular aspects of the popular, each taught by a staff member with considerable research expertise in that area.

This M.Phil will provide an invaluable base for those wishing to progress to further graduate study, but will also appeal to anyone wishing to develop their critical skills and knowledge in relation to this extremely significant aspect of contemporary culture. Members of staff teaching on the course have expertise in areas as varied as Victorian Children's literature, the Irish Gothic, detective fiction, fantasy and Science Fiction, American horror, Victorian Popular Literature, Cyberculture, the dime novel, pulp magazines, comic books and graphic novels, and Chick-Lit, as well as popular literature more broadly.

### Option Courses, 2015/16.

**Michaelmas Term Options:**

- EN7027: The Victorian Child.
- EN7022: Cyberculture/Popular Culture.

**Hilary Term Options:**

- EN7101: Losers and Psychopaths: American Noir from 1920s to 1950s, and Beyond.
- EN 7046: The American Nightmare: Horror in Fiction and Film.
- EN7053: Modern Fantasy: Defining and Redefining a Genre.

### Core Course Schedule 2015/16.

Weeks on the Core Course are divided into two main themes:

1. Critical approaches to Popular Literature
2. Genre in focus

**MICHAELMAS TERM 2015**

**Week 1: What is Popular Literature?**

**Tues: Defining Popular Literature; What we do on the M. Phil in Popular Literature (Dr Jarlath Killeen, JK)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Introducing academic and critical attitudes towards Popular Literature</td>
<td>(JK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 2: Introducing Popular Genres</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Introducing Genre</td>
<td>(Dr Clare Clarke, CC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Genre Case Study: classical detective fiction</td>
<td>(CC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 3: The Origins of Popular Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Eighteenth-Century Chapbooks</td>
<td>(Dr Aileen Douglas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sir Bevis of Southampton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The History of the Seven Champions of Christendom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>The Castle of Otranto by Horace Walpole</td>
<td>(JK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 4: Non Fiction Popular Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Serial Killer True Crime</td>
<td>(Dr Elizabeth McCarthy, EMcC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Selected short excerpts from True-Crime books about Serial Killers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(on Blackboard)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td>Misery Memoirs: <em>A Child Called It</em> by Dave Pelzer</td>
<td>(JK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 5: Popular Taste</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td><em>The String of Pearls: A Romance</em> by Anonymous</td>
<td>(EMcC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thurs</td>
<td><em>Fifty Shades of Grey</em> by E.L. James</td>
<td>(JK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Week 6: Middlebrow and Melodrama</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tues</td>
<td>Middlebrow Fiction: <em>Rebecca</em> by Daphne du Maurier</td>
<td>(Prof Eve Patten)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thurs: Melodrama (EMcC):

- Pauline E. Hopkins, ‘Talma Gordon’ (1900) and ‘The Test of Manhood, A Christmas Story’ (1906) (on Blackboard)
- Fannie Hurst, ‘T.B.’ (1915) and ‘Sob Sister’ (1916) (on Blackboard)

Week 7: Study Week NO CLASSES

Week 8: The Serial

Tues: *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens (JK)

Thurs: Sensation fiction (CC)

- *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins

Week 9: Popular Romance and Chick-Lit

Tues: The Popular Romance (JK):

- Nora Roberts, *Untamed; Carolina Moon; Hidden Riches*

Thurs: Chick-Lit (JK):

- *P.S. I Love You* by Cecelia Ahearn
- *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic* by Sophie Kinsella
- *Jemima J.* by Jane Green.

Week 10: Magazines and Periodicals

Tues: Victorian Periodicals (CC)

- *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle, (1891-2)

Thurs: Pulp Magazines (EMcC)

Week 11: Victorian Ghosts Stories and A Popular Christmas

Tues: Victorian Ghost Stories (CC)

- Charlotte Riddell, *Weird Stories* (1882)

Thurs: A Popular Christmas (JK)

Essential Reading will be posted on Blackboard.
Week 12: Exploring Critical Approaches To Popular Literature: Group Presentations.

Tues: Student Group Presentations

Thurs: No Class.

HILARY TERM 2016

Week 1: The Western and Adventure

Tues: The Western (Prof Stephen Matterson)

- Shane by Joe Schafer
- Hondo by Louis L’Amour

Thurs: Imperial Adventure (CC)

- King Solomon’s Mines by H. Rider Haggard

Week 2: Horror

Tues: Rosemary’s Baby by Ira Levin (Dr Bernice Murphy, BM)

Thurs: World War Z by Max Brooks (BM)

Week 3: New and Emerging Genres in Popular Literature

Tues: Domestic Noir: The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins (CC)

Thurs: Urban Fantasy: The Rook by Daniel O’Malley (BM)

Week 5: Science Fiction

Tues: The War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells (BM)

Thurs: New Wave Science Fiction (EMcc)

- Philip K. Dick, ‘We Can Remember It for You Wholesale’ (1966)
- Ursula Le Guin, ‘Vaster Than Empires and More Slow’ (1971)

Week 5: The Bestseller/The Author as Celebrity
Tues: *The Valley of the Dolls* by Jacqueline Susann (BM)

Thurs: *A Bid for Fortune* by Guy Boothby (Dr Ailise Bulfin)

**Week 6: Fantasy**

Tues: *Mort* by Terry Pratchett (Dr Gerard Hynes, GH)

Thurs: *Uprooted* by Naomi Novik (GH)

**Week 7: Study Week NO CLASSES**

**Week 8: British and American Detective Fiction**

Tues: Golden Age British Detective Fiction (CC)

- *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie

Thurs: American Hard-Boiled Fiction and the Private-Eye:

*Farewell my Lovely* by Raymond Chandler (EMcC) (on Blackboard)

**Week 9: Comic Books and Graphic Novels**

Tues: *Fun Home* by Alison Bechdel (Kate Roddy, KR)

Thurs: *All Star-Superman* by Grant Morrison (KR)

**Week 10: Global Popular Literature**

Tues: *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi (BM)

Thurs: Scandi-Noir (CC)

*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson

**Week 11: Thrillers**

Tues: The Spy Thriller: *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* by John Le Carré (EMcC)

Thurs: The Serial Killer Thriller: *The Silence of the Lambs* by Thomas Harris (CC)

**Week 12: The Future of Popular Literature** *

Tues: Amazon, E-Readers and Electronic Publishing (BM)

Thurs: The “Genrefication” Debate (BM)