Genre: An Introduction to Literature

Module convenor: Prof Eve Patten
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Lecturers: Dr Julie Bates, Prof Eve Patten, Dr Tom Walker
ECTS weighting: 10
Year: JF
Term taught: Michaelmas Term
Assessment: Mid-term essay and end-of-term exam

Module Description:
This module examines the concept of genre in order to introduce some of the thematic structures and critical perspectives that underpin English literary studies. We will focus on three major literary genres - poetry, drama and prose fiction -- and discuss the ways in which these have evolved from the classical to the contemporary era. The module lecturers will explore a range of set texts to illustrate particular formal and stylistic qualities, and to question the relationship between literary genre and social, historical or cultural context. The module will also introduce some key critics and theorists of genre and reflect on the role of criticism in the formation of literary canons and traditions.

Note: Since this module is weighted at 10 ECTS, there will be two lectures each week in ‘Genre: An Introduction to Literature’ in addition to a full complement of tutorial classes.

Learning Outcomes:
On successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

• understand the evolution of literary genre in its major forms from the classical to the contemporary era
• be able to locate specific literary genres in historical and cultural context
• develop awareness of the critical frameworks and categories relevant to the study of literary genre
• acquire a critical vocabulary relevant to the discussion of literary genre and related concepts
• gain interpretative skills in reading a selection of illustrative texts from different periods in literary history

Module Outline:

1  Introduction (EP)
b) Genre, criticism and the canon

2  Poetry (TW)
a) What is Poetry? Text: Philip Sidney, The Defense of Poesy (c.1580) [extracts];
b) Reading Poetry: Form, Language, Voice

3  Poetry (TW)
a & b) Form versus Genre
Texts: Christina Rossetti, ‘Monna Innominata’ (c.1881); Tony Harrison, From the School of Eloquence (1978); Angela Leighton, On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word (2007) [extracts]

4  Poetry (TW)
a & b) Genre versus Mode

5  Drama (JB)
a) Drama and the tragic genre, the Ancient Greeks to Chekhov
b) Text: Sophocles, Antigone

6  Drama (JB)
a) Drama and the comic genre

b) Text: Aristophanes, Lysistrata

Reading Week

Drama (JB)

a) The limits of dramatic genre

Performance, the body, the spectator and the actor

b) Performance semiotics

Tragicomedy; devised theatre; performance art.

Fiction (EP)


b) The rise of the novel and social realism:

Text: Dickens, Dombey and Son (1848) [extracts]; Moretti, Franco, Graphs, Maps and Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History (2005) [extract]

Fiction (EP)

a) Modernist genres: time, narrative and ‘story’


b) Text: Virginia Woolf, The Mark on the Wall (1917)

Fiction (EP)

a) Postmodernism and Metafiction

Text: Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967)


Conclusions (EP)


b) Course review, revision and assessment preparation (EP)

Background Bibliography:

Poetry

Attridge, Derek, Poetic Rhythm: An Introduction (1995)

---------------------, Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry (2013)

Culler, Jonathan, Theory of the Lyric (2015)

**Drama**


**Prose Fiction**
