

Sophister Module Description Template 2025-26

Full Name: Arthur Conan Doyle

Short Name: Arthur Conan Doyle

Lecturer Name and Email Address: Professor Darryl Jones: drjones@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: MT

Year JS/SS: SS

Module Content:

Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was, at various points in his life, the world's best-selling and most famous living writer. This is almost entirely owing to the phenomenal success of his most celebrated character, Sherlock Holmes, whose appearance in *The Strand Magazine* in June 1891 is one of the foundational moments of modern literature and popular culture.

But Conan Doyle was always unhappy that his literary reputation depended so heavily upon his most renowned creation, from whom he constantly sought to escape. As a qualified doctor and a keen sportsman, he considered himself to be one of life's all-rounders: a general practitioner of literature, equally adept across a number of genres. In this module, we will attempt to take Conan Doyle at his own evaluation, and look at his long and productive writing career in the round. He was a public figure, a man of letters, keen to have his say on matters of politics and war. He was simultaneously Scottish, Irish, and a passionate believer in the British Empire. He was educated at Edinburgh University Medical School, one of the most advanced of its kind in the world. He had a lifelong interest in the occult and the supernatural – and towards the end of his life became obsessed by spiritualism, and by the existence of fairies. He wrote Gothic fiction, adventure fiction, historical novels, sporting fiction, war fiction, political pamphlets and propaganda, and much else besides.

We will be looking at a representative sample of the work of this enormously important and influential writer:

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Enter Sherlock: *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

Week 3: Empire and Mysticism: *The Mystery of Cloomber* (1888)

Week 4: The Seen and the Unseen: selections from *Gothic Tales*

Week 5: Historical Fiction: *The White Company* (1891)

Week 6: The Holmes Phenomenon: selections from *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894)

Week 7: Reading Week

Week 8: Autobiographical Fiction: *The Stark-Munro Letters* (1895)

Week 9: Imperial Wars: *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898) and *The Green Flag* (1900).

Week 10: Folklore and Rationalism: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902)

Week 11: Adventure Fiction: *The Lost World* (1912)

Week 12: The Last of Holmes: selections from *His Last Bow* (1917) and *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927)

Learning Outcomes:

- The student will be expected to gain detailed knowledge and understanding of the writing and career of Arthur Conan Doyle.

Students studying this module will develop:

- critical skills in the close reading and analysis of texts
- an ability to demonstrate knowledge of a range of texts, genres, and critical approaches
- an ability to discuss a range of texts in their intellectual, historical and critical contexts
- an informed awareness of formal and aesthetic dimensions of literature and an ability to offer cogent analysis of their workings in specific texts
- a sensitivity to generic conventions and to the shaping effects on communication of historical circumstances, and to the affective power of language
- an ability to articulate and substantiate an imaginative response to literature
- an ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of concepts and theories relating to Conan Doyle's writings
- an understanding of the literary marketplace, of professional authorship, and of popular literary genres
- an ability to demonstrate skills in critical reasoning, including the ability to assess other critical readings
- skills of effective communication and argument

Learning Aims:

- **Learning Aims:**
- Our aim is to read critically through a representative sample of Arthur Conan Doyle's published works, to gain a sense of his writing career in the round. This will include an extensive selection of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 1
- Name/Type of Component(s): Essay
- Word Count of Component(s): 5000
- Percentage Value of Component(s): 100%

Preliminary Reading List:

There is an enormous body of secondary literature on Conan Doyle, and most particularly on Sherlock Holmes. As a place to start, students are encouraged to look at the following:

Mike Ashley, *Adventures in the Strand: Arthur Conan Doyle and the Strand Magazine* (2016)

Matthias Böstrom, *The Life and Death of Sherlock Holmes* (2013)

Clare Clarke, *Late-Victorian Crime Fiction in the Shadows of Sherlock* (2014)

Jonathan Cranfield, *Twentieth-Century Victorian: Conan Doyle and the Strand Magazine* (2016)

Michael Dirda, *On Conan Doyle* (2011)

Andrew Glazzard, *The Case of Sherlock Holmes* (2017)

Douglas Kerr, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession and Practice* (2013)

Andrew Lycett, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (2007); *Conan Doyle's Wide World* (2017); *The Worlds of Sherlock Holmes* (2023)

Catherine Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle* (2002)

The podcast *Doings of Doyle* is an engaging and extremely well-informed guide to Conan Doyle's life and writings.

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.