

# Course Content

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## Description

Single Honours in English Studies offers a syllabus and approaches which maintain traditional areas of literary study and allow students to explore new and developing areas of the discipline. It aims to develop students' conceptual abilities and analytical skills by exposing them to a variety of literary critical approaches, to promote and develop clarity and persuasiveness in argument and expression and to enable students to develop, to a high degree of competence, a range of skills which are at once subject-specific and transferable, will fit them for a wide variety of professions and employment, and encourage a continuing engagement with literature.

## Level 4 (English Literature) (120 Credits)

The three first-year compulsory modules introduce students to representative works in the major literary genres, including knowledge of a range of writing before 1800. Four optional modules, from which Single Honours students must choose at least one, offer the possibility of studying important influences on English literature, early English literature and the history of the English language.

In this year students gain appropriate advancement on A-level skills of critical analysis and argument, critical skills in the close reading and analysis of texts, such as the awareness of formal and aesthetic dimensions of literature and of the affective power of language, and some ability to understand concepts and theories relating to literature.

## Compulsory modules

- Introduction to Drama 20 Credits
- Introduction to Poetry 20 Credits
- Introduction to the Novel. 20 Credits
  
- The Age of Chivalry 20 Credits
- The Heroic Age 20 Credits
- The English Language and its History. 20 Credits

## Level 5 (English Literature) (120 Credits)

The Level 5 builds on the Level 4 by introducing students to broad and detailed knowledge of a range of literature across different literary periods. Students acquire knowledge of a substantial number of authors, topics and texts and gain awareness of the range and variety of approaches to literary study. The second year also develops students' ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of concepts and theories relating to literature, their powers of critical argument and command of written English. Students develop their capacity for autonomy and independence of thought, for example, exploring, selecting from, and drawing together in an appropriate way specific texts and topics chosen from a wide syllabus.

- Classical and Biblical Background to English Literature 20 Credits
- Theory & Practice of Literary Criticism 20 Credits
- Shakespeare 20 Credits
- Medieval Literature 20 Credits
- Victorian Literature 20 Credits
- Post-War Fiction and Poetry 20 Credits

## Level 6 (English Literature) (120 Credits)

In the Level 6 students will be able to demonstrate a comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the subject, together with mature awareness of the variety of ideas relating to it. They will have studied a substantial range of authors, texts, and genres from different historical periods or cultures, and will be able to

demonstrate an ability to make connections and comparisons within their range of reading. Their knowledge will incorporate the ability to interpret different ideas and values represented in literature, to test the ideas of others and to pursue ideas of their own. Students will display mature critical skills in the close reading and analysis of texts, confident powers of critical argument and a developed command of written English. They will appreciate the importance of scholarly standards of presentation and of writing accurately, clearly and effectively.

Through the coursework, they will engage in an area of research through self-formulated questions, supported by the gathering of relevant information and materials and organised lines of enquiry resulting in work of sustained argumentative and analytic power.

- Medieval Literature 10 Credits
- Old English 10 Credits
- Old Norse 10 Credits
- Old French 10 Credits
- Chaucer 10 Credits
- Renaissance Literature 10 Credits
- Restoration & Eighteenth Century Literature 10 Credits
- Literature of the Romantic Period 10 Credits
- Victorian Literature 10 Credits
- Literature of the Modern Period 10 Credits
- Post-War Fiction and Poetry 10 Credits
- American Fiction and Poetry 10 Credits

## Level 7 (English Literature) (135 Credits)

This programme enables you to extend and develop your research skills and explore research issues across a broad range of periods. The flexible programme structure and small-group, research-led teaching of modules facilitates specialisation in those areas of greatest interest for you, while acquainting you with a relevant range of skills and conceptual frameworks to enhance your study, such as the nature of archival study, genre and textuality, the relationship between print and manuscript, interdisciplinarity, and questions of cultural and political context.

Accordingly, students taking the Level 7 English Literature are able to develop a bespoke programme that introduces a wide variety of material but allows a high degree of flexibility in selecting texts for more detailed study and assessment.

- Adaptation Studies 20 Credits
- Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures 20 Credits
- Contemporary Literature 20 Credits
- Drama and Performance 20 Credits
- Eighteenth-Century Literature 20 Credits
- Late-Medieval and Early-Modern Literature 20 Credits
- Literary and Cultural Geographies 15 Credits

## Level 8 (English Literature) (360 Credits)

At this programme you will be imparted research skills training as part of the qualification, and you will have the opportunity to explore a diverse range of literary genres and to investigate textual and critical issues involved in the study of literature in their cultural and historical context.

Topics covered will include: questions of genre, establishing and challenging a literary canon, the idea of the archive, notions of orality and performance, the relationship between manuscript and print cultures, and editorial practice and politics.

### PART 1

#### Textualities: Defining, making and using text (40 credits)

This module investigates the ways issues in modern editorial theory—the nature of authorship, what constitutes an ‘authoritative’ text, and the inevitably embodied nature of textuality—illuminates our understanding of literary creativity. Students will explore how modern editors describe and theorise the textual transmission of a range of works, drawn from a variety of periods, places and forms. They will examine different concepts of textuality—including copy-texts, plural or ‘mobile’ texts, and digital texts—and different theories of text-editing, such as ‘first’ and ‘final’ intention editing, ‘social’ and ‘eclectic’ texts, and genetic

editing. Students will explore how theories of literary creativity are embedded in editorial practices, and so, therefore, how editorial treatment determines the ways we ascribe identity and value to texts. Students of all literary periods will gain a detailed understanding of how literary texts are produced, and why some versions of well-known literary works take precedence over others. Creative writers will appreciate how the editorial process—which may include the choice of illustrations, type-faces, cover designs, and the imposition of a house-style, be that paper-based or digital, as well as changes to the text itself—affects how readers engage with a work, and ultimately how they value it. Students will be expected to reflect on editorial practice as they have encountered it, and also to undertake practice themselves.

#### Literary Histories (40 credits)

It has often been suggested that the very idea of literary history – of a narrative that understands, classifies, and explains, the English literary past – is an inherent impossibility. The relationship between literature and the history of the time of its creation is an equally vexed and productive question. This module will look at the various ways in which literature in the last few centuries has combined with the study of history, with significant changes in the ways in which works of the past are viewed, and also how histories of literature began to be constructed (a history of literary histories, so to speak) paying attention to such questions as the development of the literary canon, periodicity, inclusions and exclusions, rediscoveries, and lack of representation. It will also look at the ways in which literary biography, autobiography and life-writing relate to the creation of literary histories. This will be a team-taught module, introducing key topics in the area and apply them to a variety of types of literature from different historical periods, and the myriad critical ways in which such literature has been viewed, retrospectively.

#### Modernism and the Avant-Garde in Literature and Drama (40 credits)

This module will investigate radical strategies of aesthetic presentation and the challenge they offered to prevailing limits of personal, gender and national identity between 1870 and 1960. Through a selection of key literary, dramatic, cultural, and critical texts, the module will examine ways that modernist and avant-garde writings draw their formal, generic and political borders, how they reconfigure ideas of the self, and what the political consequences of that reconfiguration are. The module will also consider the multiple meanings of 'radicalism' in an aesthetic and literary context, relating those meanings to questions of taste, community, and the market. This will be a team-taught module which examines a wide spectrum of literature and drama, including as well the era's cultural criticism and more recent critical and theoretical studies. Some of the texts are difficult: students will be expected to have read material thoroughly before each seminar, and to come prepared to discuss its theoretical, aesthetic and political implications.

## **PART 2**

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#### Speculative Fictions (30 credits)

This module address interests in speculative fiction, including a selection of the following genres: Detective Fiction, Gothic and Horror as well as Sci-Fi and Fantasy. The module will introduce students to the study of speculative fiction from across a broad historical spectrum ranging from the Medieval period to the present, including an awareness of the historical contexts out of which speculative genres emerge and of their ongoing cultural relevance. Not only is speculative fiction an area of ongoing scholarly and popular interest, but also it allows for the theoretical discussion of, and critical reflection on, key contemporary issues, such as the problem of evil, identity, alterity, freedom and terror. Students will read works by a selection of authors and will choose two particular authors – either from the same historical period or from different periods – to study in depth. The module will engage with a variety of genres and media, such as prose, poetry, film, the graphic novel and the illuminated manuscript (the exact selection of texts and type of text will vary).

#### Literature in Britain Since 1950 (30 credits)

This module embraces literature in Britain since the Second World War, taking 1950 as the starting point, after which distinctive post-war cultural and social trends began to emerge. The critical trend to divide the period into two, with 1979 as a watershed, will be subjected to critical scrutiny: continuities as well as discontinuities in the literature written before and after 1979 will be considered. The module embraces the poetry, the prose, and the criticism of the period, in three distinct blocks, each involving three or four weeks of study. Key practitioners will be discussed, but the aim is not to provide an exhaustive overview of the period, but rather to present a developed account of important topics and debates, using an appropriate combination of teaching blocks. We aim to offer a level of study that is appropriate for MA level, whilst clearly giving prospective doctoral students the opportunity to begin important work in the study of contemporary writing.

#### Place, Region, Empire (30 credits)

This module will explore the relationship between literary texts and cultural concepts of place. Students will be introduced to a selection of texts from the 16C to the present day, and a range of approaches deriving from recent interdisciplinary convergences between disciplines including literary criticism, cultural geography, literary history and theories of nationalism and postcolonialism. Topics for discussion might include: maps and cultural cartographies; urbanism and the literature of cities; travel and literary tourism; regional and provincial literature; nationalism and cosmopolitanism; colonialism and the postcolonial; the literature of empire; ideas of community and dwelling; the relation between literary and spatial forms. Writers to be considered will vary from year to year.

#### Early Performance Cultures (30 credits)

This module will introduce students to the range, practice and history of performance cultures in the medieval and early modern period. Students will be encouraged to understand extant texts within their historical conditions of production and circulation. The module will introduce theatrical performance from mystery cycles to professional playhouses; civic performance from provincial rituals to courtly masques; and oral cultures ranging from mumming to sermons. With close attention to the relationship between the manuscript and print traces of performance and the events to which they allude, students will develop an understanding of the physical conditions of textual and theatrical performance in their historical, cultural and political contexts. Students will be encouraged to relate texts to wider significant issues in the period such as national and religious identity, ideas of social, cultural, and geographical space and place, gender politics and generic experimentation.

## **PART 3**

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#### Literary Linguistics (40 credits)

##### Research in Literary Linguistics

This module explores the use of linguistic frameworks to investigate literary texts. Through a series of practical analyses, students will be introduced to a range of linguistic explorations of poetry, prose, and drama from a wide range of historical periods. The module will invite students to use the analyses as an occasion for the critical evaluation of the various approaches to language and literature, to investigate the notions of literariness and interpretation, and to consider the scope and validity of stylistics in relation to literature and literary studies. The range of key research methods and methodologies in stylistics will be studied.

##### Narratology

This module surveys key work in narratology, from literary, stylistics and sociolinguistic perspectives. Combining a consideration of ideological and theoretical issues in narratology with methodological approaches from other areas of linguistic study such as pragmatics, discourse analysis and cognitive poetics, the module will explore narratological analysis in relation to both literary and non-literary narratives.

##### Dickens and Language

Through detailed study of a selection of his novels, this module will examine the language and style of Dickens. It investigates the creation of fictional worlds and techniques of characterization. While the focus is on Dickens, the module introduces stylistic approaches that are of wider applicability (such as approaches to body language in literature or computer-assisted methods of analysis). The module also deals with the reception of Dickens's novels and assesses Dickens's literary celebrity in the context of popular culture.

#### Consciousness in Fiction

The module will explore in depth techniques for the presentation of consciousness in novels and other fictional texts. Students will learn about the linguistic indices associated with the point of view of characters and the various modes available to a writer for the presentation of characters' thoughts and perceptions. Alongside detailed examinations of narrative texts which portray consciousness, students will also study different theories put forward to explain the nature of writing consciousness in texts. Our stylistic analyses of fictional minds will also aim to account for historical changes in the techniques used for consciousness presentation.

#### Cognition & Literature

This module represents a course in cognitive poetics. It draws on insights developed in cognitive science, especially in psychology and linguistics, in order to develop an understanding of the processes involved in literary reading. The module also develops skills in stylistics and critical theory.

#### **Creative Writing (40 credits)**

##### Fiction: Form & Context

This module explores the structures, techniques, and methodologies of fiction through both creative and analytical practice. Students examine a range of international fiction from a writer's perspective, with an emphasis on craft. Assignments include creative exercises of imitation or modelling, as well as direct responses to works of fiction in ways that demonstrate a practical understanding of their qualities. Analytical writing focuses on the functional aspects of selected works. Particular issues for consideration might include narrative voice and technique, point of view, character development, dialogue, plot, and setting. Students consider not only the elements of fiction, but also how those elements contribute to overall structure of a narrative.

##### Poetry: Form & Context

The module is designed to make students familiar both with the craft and practice of using some common poetic conventions, and with the contexts in which poetry is published and read. Each session includes some lecture-style input, group discussion, and a workshop during which students share and discuss their draft poems. Through this 'practitioner' approach, students are not only supported in their craft but encouraged to work towards submitting their work for publication.

##### Creative Writing Workshop

This module is designed to develop students' skills in writing while developing their awareness of contemporary publishing. Each session includes some lecture-style input, group discussion, and a workshop. Students are encouraged to contextualise their writing with reference to modern and contemporary writers. Students will discuss techniques relevant to both fiction and poetry, such as: beginnings, endings, voice and description.

##### Creative Writing: Conventions & Techniques

Students are encouraged to develop their own creative practice through an examination of a range of ideas and techniques. Students will develop their creative writing skills through activities, including group discussions, exercises and workshops. Matters such as reviews, publication, public readings, and the teaching of creative writing may be included as ways of examining the context of creative practice. Students will learn how to incorporate the responses of others into their revisions, develop a more productive writing process, and become better editors of their own work.

#### **Viking, Anglo-Saxon and Middle-English (40 credits)**

##### The History of the Book 1200-1600

This module introduces the study of the book as artefact. Students will learn about methods of construction and compilation, handwriting and early printing techniques, reading marginalia as well as text; they will also be introduced to the benefits and applications, as well as the problems, of applying an understanding of the artefact to the texts contained within.

##### Medievalism

This module focuses on the reception and adaptations of medieval literature in the modern period. It surveys a range of authors who have made use of medieval texts in modern English literature (such as, for example, Thomas Gray, James Macpherson, Walter Scott, William Blake, Alfred Tennyson, W.G. Collingwood, J.R.R. Tolkien, T.S. Eliot, George Mackay Brown, Neil Gaiman) and examines how these relate to the medieval originals, which will be available as translations. Students are encouraged to develop an interest in one particular adaptation of a medieval text, on which coursework can be based.

We will also consider the history of editing and producing medieval text, and consider if the available choices influenced literary fashions. To this extent we will take into consideration developments in some other European countries and reflect on the role of medievalism in the creation of national identities from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century.

##### Middle English Romance

This module considers twenty-first century historicized readings of a major English literary genre, and demonstrates that medieval English romance texts can be set in complex and profound critical relationship to each other and to other artistic media. Such an approach is possible largely because of the vibrant and privileged international socio-literary milieu in which many romance tracts were first written and received. Students will be encouraged to explore how reading Middle English romance texts can equip us with vocabulary and concepts to discuss the cultural specificities of the literary representations of romance, love and chivalry in this period, the representations of public and private identities, and the questions regarding individuality and selfhood that arise in literature produced in a volatile period of religious and social uncertainty and dissent. These are all issues that now define "the Middle Ages" for modern scholars.

##### Reading Old Icelandic Literature

Through a series of short workshops, this module will train students in relevant aspects of runology, including how to examine, transcribe, transliterate, translate and present runic inscriptions. The workshops will be based on photographs and other visual materials, but students will then be able to test their skills on actual runic inscriptions in a one-day field trip. They will then develop an independent project in which they present and analyse a set of Viking Age or medieval Scandinavian inscriptions that are of particular interest.