

English Literature MA

■ FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

About the course

Course overview

This course provides an exciting opportunity to pursue further studies in English literature at postgraduate level across a broad range of literary traditions and historical periods. It combines contemporary theoretical approaches with practical research skills to develop your knowledge and understanding of English literature through a number of focused topics taught by specialists in the field. It aims to sharpen your skills of literary research, writing and analysis through the close study of both literary writings and related forms.

The course is ideal for:

- students who wish to gain a postgraduate qualification in English literature for career development purposes, including educators and those employed in publishing and creative industries;
- students intending to move on to a postgraduate research degree, such as a PhD; and
- all students who enjoy reading and writing about literature in English at an advanced level.

What you will study

You will study conceptual approaches to literature through modules such as Gender and Sexuality, Empire and its Aftermath, and Writing Lives, Writing Places, as well as a core module in Advanced Research Skills. These modules cover a range of genres, and are likely to include the following:

- Early modern literature
- 18th-century and Victorian literature
- 20th-century and contemporary literature
- Life writing
- Literature and empire
- Suburban studies
- Gender studies

Assessment

- Essays and other written coursework
- Presentations
- 15,000-word dissertation

Careers

This course is designed for students who have a personal or a professional interest in literature. It is particularly suited for those wishing to enhance their careers in areas such as publishing, library and museum services, journalism, teaching, the arts in general, the creative industries and any other context where a knowledge of literature and skills in critical analysis are of importance.

Special features

- Be part of a vibrant postgraduate community and attend keynote lectures and events organised by the London Graduate School and the Kingston Writing School.
- Option modules and your dissertation give you the chance to focus on an area of particular interest.
- Capitalising on our London location, field trips complement several modules to enhance and support your learning experience.
- The department is home to two archives of books and papers relating to the work of Iris Murdoch, as well as the Sheridan Morley archive of theatrical life writing and ephemera.
- The English Literature department also contributes to the Centre for Suburban Studies, the Centre for Life Writing, the Iris Murdoch Centre and the Victorian Popular Fiction Association.

Course content

The course comprises:

- one core module: Advanced Postgraduate Study Skills;
- a 15,000-word dissertation on a subject of your choice, produced under the supervision of a specialist academic member of staff; and
- three option modules from a variety of choices.

Core modules

Advanced Postgraduate Study Skills will provide you with thorough training in advanced research techniques and academic writing skills. It covers important topics such as the proper implementation of academic conventions, the formulation of effective theses and critical approaches, and the planning and structuring of a sustained piece of academic writing.

English Literature dissertation is a core module that consists of supervised independent research and writing. It will enable you to conduct detailed and extensive research into a distinctive area of enquiry and to present that research in a dissertation of approximately 15,000 words.

Option modules

Options include modules from other Kingston MAs and a range of English Literature Special Study modules. The module list varies from year to year as the course structure is reviewed and refined. Choose three from the following options:

Empire and its Aftermath considers how literature, in its broadest definition, responds to and reflects the influence of European colonisation on the construction of national, communal and individual identities. Texts are selected to offer a thematic or historical unity, which might, in any one year, cover a specific geography (Caribbean, African-American, African, Asian, or British identities, for example) or a particular issue (slavery, postcolonial identities, migration, religion, nationalism).

Gender and Sexuality will be structured around clusters of critical and theoretical texts that have offered radical new readings of literary representations of gender and sexuality – readings that interrogate the relationship between gender and sexuality, and give stress to the fluidity of both concepts. To consider the ways in which gender can be thought of as a social construct, and performed in social space, we will examine a range of texts produced at specific historical and cultural periods.

Writing Lives, Writing Places explores two vital and often interrelated aspects of writing: the narration of individual lives and the representation of places. Through an examination of a range of fictional, biographical and autobiographical texts that cross generic, historical and geographical boundaries, the module considers current debates within the study of life writing and literature more broadly.

Psyche, Subject, Sex will discuss the critical development of this theoretical framework by Lacan – the move from a psychology of the self to a philosophy of the subject – and its theoretical transformation and political critique in the writings of Louis Althusser and Judith Butler.

Special Study: America Dreaming: Suburbia, Literature and Culture examines, in considerable depth, how the suburbs have been the object of endless fascination for American writers, from the Jazz Age to 9/11 and beyond. We explore the ways the 'American Dream', the desire for wealth, property, security, etc, has been produced and challenged in different ways in different historical and social contexts. We'll look at how representations of suburban environments and lifestyles have captured central tensions within American society: about race relations and ethnic identity, gender roles and sexual deviance, the threat of nuclear war, and consumerism.

Special Study: Contemporary American Fiction will explore the good and bad features of American Literature. We will study academic literary criticism of the last 20 years and discover what American fiction is made of. We'll discuss what's great about contemporary American fiction and what's not – and why what's not may be winning the Booker or Pulitzer prizes.

Special Study: Images of Love and Sex in Medieval and Renaissance

Culture will explore how artists and writers in medieval and renaissance Europe imagined love and sexuality. In the first half of the module, we'll look at medieval literatures of courtly love, including Chaucer, the Romance of the Rose, love lyrics and Arthurian tales. In the second half of the module, we'll consider how visual and literary images of love and sex evolved in Renaissance England and Europe.

Special Study: Iris Murdoch is concerned with exploring both the fiction and philosophy, which is accessible to lay readers, and the variety of ways she integrates the visual arts into her writing. Iris Murdoch has the rare distinction of being a major 20th-century writer, an influential moral philosopher and accomplished art historian. We look at a selection of texts, both fictional and philosophical, written from 1954 until 1995. We will study some early apprentice fiction, some of the romances of the 1960s, some mature novels of the 70s and 80s, and one or two novels of the 90s. The philosophy comprises an exploration of the influence of Plato, Freud, Simone Weil and Murdoch's 'Christian Buddhism'.

Special Study: Writing and Environment will explore some of the ways in which writers have discussed the human relationship with the natural environment over the past 200 years. It will consider how authors have reflected the human impact on the environment and how literature can be used to raise environmental awareness. We will examine writing from several genres, which may include poetry by William Wordsworth and Ted Hughes, modern novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, science fiction such as Kurt Vonnegut's *Galapagos*, satire such as Ben Elton's *Stark*, science writing such as Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, and life writing such as Robert Macfarlane's *The Wild Places*.

Course features

Events and lectures

The School of Humanities runs an extracurricular activities series that includes talks by well-known scholars of English Literature and readings by professional writers. Recent speakers have included Ali Smith, Hanif Kureishi, John Fuego, Mal Peet and Kathleen McLuskie.

Links with business and industry

The department has a close relationship with the curatorial team at Historic Royal Palaces – the company that manages Hampton Court Palace, the Tower of London and three other Royal properties. Our links with professional authors and other writers also provide a range of different voices and styles to broaden your experience of English literature.

Learning support

The course makes extensive use of 'StudySpace', the University's online course delivery system, to provide materials for students and foster communication. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences runs a Centre for Academic Skills and Employability, which provides special sessions for those postgraduates who would benefit from assistance with their work.

Facilities

You will have access to books, journals and electronic resources in the Learning Resources Centre. In addition, you will have an opportunity to make use of the University's two archives of books and papers relating to the work of Iris Murdoch, as well as the Sheridan Morley archive of theatrical life writing and ephemera. You will also be encouraged to take advantage of the University's close proximity to the British Library and other research libraries in central London.

The English Literature department contributes to the Centre for Suburban Studies and the Centre for Life Writing, the Iris Murdoch Centre and the Victorian Popular Fiction Association.

Teaching staff

Dr Matthew Birchwood, Senior Lecturer

Specialist subjects: early modern literature, drama and polemic, particularly in relation to English engagement with Islam in the period.

Recent publications: 'Confounding Babel: the Language of Religion in the English Revolution' in *Religions of the Book: Christian Perceptions 1400–1660*, eds Hadfield & Dimmock (Palgrave, 2008); *Staging Islam: Drama and Culture 1640–1685* (Boydell & Brewer, 2007); and *Cultural Encounters Between East and West: 1453–1699*, ed. with Matthew Dimmock (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005).

Dr Brycchan Carey, Reader in English Literature

Specialist subjects: the literature and culture of the long 18th century, in particular, writing about empire, slavery and the slave trade, voyaging and exploration, and the cultures of science.

Recent publications: *Slavery and the Cultures of Abolition: Essays Marking the British Abolition Act of 1807* (Essays and Studies in Romanticism Series, 2007), edited by Brycchan Carey and Peter Kitson (Boydell and Brewer, 2007); and *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760–1807* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Professor Norma Clarke

Specialist subjects: 18th-century literature, particularly women's writing; children's literature; life writing.

Relevant publications: *Dr Johnson's Women* (Hambledon, 2000); *The Rise and Fall of the Woman of Letters* (Pimlico, 2004); and *Queen of the Wits: a Life of Laetitia Pilkington* (Faber, 2008).

Dr Jane Jordan, Senior Lecturer

Specialist subjects: Victorian popular fiction (especially Ouida); Victorian divorce law; Josephine Butler; Victorian prostitution; Biography.

Recent publications include: essays on Ouida in the *Blackwell Companion to Sensation Fiction* (2011) and *A Return to the Common Reader* (2010); *Life Writing*, co-edited with Meg Jensen (2010); and two biographies, *Josephine Butler* (2001) and *Kitty O'Shea* (2005).

Dr Anne Rowe, Reader in English Literature

Anne is Director of the Centre for Iris Murdoch Studies and lead editor of the *Iris Murdoch Review*.

Specialist subjects: the life and work of Iris Murdoch; contemporary British fiction, children's literature.

Recent and forthcoming publications: *Iris Murdoch: A Literary Life with Priscilla Martin* (Palgrave, 2010); *Writers and their Work: Iris Murdoch* (forthcoming Northcote House, 2012); *Living on Paper: Letters from Iris Murdoch 1945–1995* with Avril Horner (Chatto & Windus, 2014).

Dr Andrew Teverson, Principal Lecturer

Specialist subjects: postcolonial literature; world writing in English; diasporic writing in English; contemporary British literature; folk-narrative and fairy tale studies.

Recent publications: *Salman Rushdie, Contemporary World Writers*, (Manchester University Press, 2007); 'Salman Rushdie and Fairy Tale' in *The Fairy Tale in Contemporary Literature*, ed. Stephen Benson (Wayne State University Press, 2008).

Dr Sara Upstone, Principal Lecturer

Specialist subjects: postcolonial literature; contemporary British fiction; Black British and British Asian writing; literary theory; spatial politics.

Recent publications: *British Asian Fiction: Twenty-First-Century Voices* (Manchester University Press, 2010); 'Same Old, Same Old: Zadie Smith's White Teeth and Monica Ali's Brick Lane', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (November 2007).

For those interested in further research, the course provides an excellent foundation for MFA/MPhil/PhD-level study in English literature.

English Literature MA

Entry requirements

Please read these carefully, as they are very important for your application.

- A second-class degree or above in English literature or another area appropriate to the content of the degree
- We will also give careful consideration to non-standard entrants.

All non-UK applicants must meet our English language requirements. For this course it is IELTS of 6.5 overall, with special conditions for students who require a Tier-4 student visa. Please make sure you read our full guidance about English language requirements on our course webpage, which includes details of other qualifications we'll consider.

Prior learning – AP(E)L

Applicants with prior qualifications and learning will be considered on an individual basis.

Duration

One year full time or two years part time

Attendance/delivery

- Timetables are subject to change from year to year.
- Details of semester 1 attendance will be available in August.
- In addition to the dissertation, you will take eight 15-credit modules taught in two-hour seminars over six weeks. Part-time students generally attend for one evening session a week, and full-time students attend for two sessions a week. Full-time students may be required to come for both afternoon and evening sessions.

Research areas

Main areas of research include the following:

- 17th-century literature, including drama, religious writing, women's writing and engagements with Islam
- Empire and 18th-century literature, particularly slavery and anti-slavery
- 18th- and 19th-century women's writing
- Children's literature
- Gothic literature
- Modernism
- The fairy tale
- Postcolonial literature and theory, including Black-British and British-Asian writing and American literature
- Contemporary fiction, including suburban fiction and Iris Murdoch

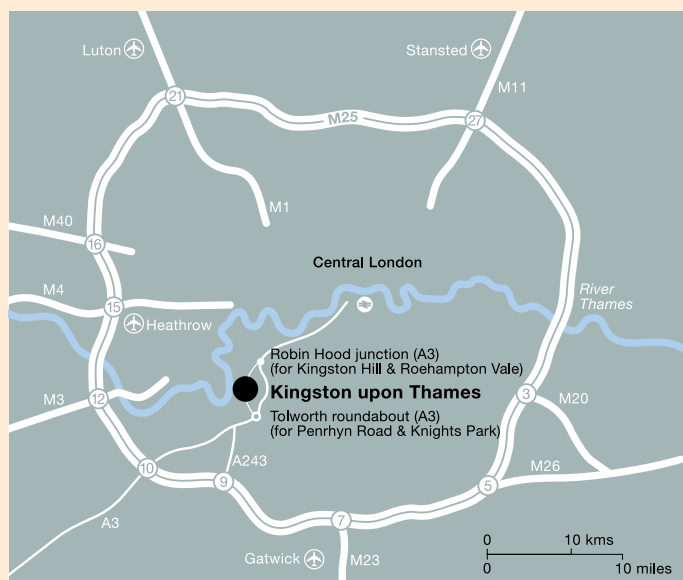
Related courses

MA/MFA in Creative Writing
MA in Creative Writing and Publishing
MA in Creative Writing and the Creative Economy
MA in Publishing
MA/MFA in Journalism
MA in Creative Writing and Pedagogy*
MA in Criticism, Literature and Theory*
MA in Language and Society
MA in Translation Studies

**At the time of writing, these courses were subject to validation. Please see our website for the latest information.*

Location

Located beside the River Thames, Kingston University is within the London travel-pass zone. Easily accessible from surrounding areas such as Surrey and Middlesex, its local train stations (Kingston; Surbiton) are only 25 minutes from London Waterloo.



Further information

Contact details

Please contact the Faculty's Admissions Office with any further queries.

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