School of Humanities

ENG-40032: Canon, Anti-Canon, Context

Semesters 1 and 2

The day-school workshops will be held on:

- Saturday 10 November 2012 (1)
- Saturday 8 December 2012 (2)
- Saturday 9 February 2013 (3)
- Saturday 9 March 2013 (4)
- Saturday 23 March 2013 (presentations)

*For details of the individual teaching workshops, see 1-4 below*

Cost: £760 (for 30 credit module)

Venue to be confirmed.

Through this module we provide core, cross-period teaching that will be of service and interest to professionals with responsibility for teaching literature in context at advanced level. In developing the indicative content for this module, we have been informed by the syllabus of the AQA (Assessment and Qualification Alliance), [http://www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk) AS Level includes materials on the Victorians, and Identity in Modern Literature; A2 includes material on Shakespeare. It can be taken as a free-standing module in a programme of continuing professional development. The module will be delivered by expert teachers and researchers across two semesters, in day-school workshop mode. The module will be assessed by means of oral presentations, and research-based essays. Students following a CPD route through the module will have the opportunity to write a research-informed essay which also reflects on the process of teaching relevant material in the classroom.
Module Description

Canon, Anti-Canon, Context enables advanced students of literature to explore, at a high level, key questions of literary value and function which are common to literatures of different genres, and from different periods and contexts. The module will ask questions such as: what is a 'literary' text, and in what ways is it different from non-literary texts? How might these texts relate to one another? How does it become 'canonical'? What prevents other texts from being recognised as 'canonical'? How do canonical and non-canonical texts construct and communicate different constructions of identity? How do these texts and identities come to be recovered, and perhaps evaluated differently in different social and intellectual contexts? The module will enable students to identify and evaluate similarities and differences between varieties of literary texts, and moreover provide them with methods for extending this analysis to contexts of practice in which the student may have to work more independently.

Aims

- Develop high-level skills in cross-period, comparative reading through a variety of literary periods, national and international contexts, and movements: including Early Modern, Eighteenth Century, Romantic, Victorian, Modernist, Contemporary and Postmodern, American and Postcolonial, Women’s Writing
- Critically compare canonical material with non-canonical texts
- raise questions about literary value between periods and contexts,
- critically explore the politics of acts of cultural recovery, restoring access to more marginal texts that cast light on material that is considered central and ‘valuable’
- critically situate literature and the phenomenon of ‘literariness’ in context, which would include its relationships to non-literary materials.

Outcomes

- Critically assess the relevance and usefulness of primary and secondary sources, in particular in thinking about the formation of canons and the values that support them: will be achieved by assessment 2
- Critically evaluate a range of theoretical and critical perspectives affecting literary study at the forefront of the discipline: will be achieved by assessments: 1, 2
- Develop systematic approaches to the ways literary texts and critical theories have developed over time, within their historical context and in relation to each other; as well as insight into their critical claims and priorities, and the capacities of these approaches for creating and sustaining canons: will be achieved by assessments: 1, 2
- Communicate research process and research findings to academic and other audiences using a variety of written, oral and visual means will be achieved by assessments: 1, 2
- Develop advanced, innovative and reflective findings and connections in research will be achieved by assessments: 2

Teaching Format

Teaching will be delivered in day-school workshop mode over five Saturdays, spread across the two semesters, with intervals between the sessions to permit preparation and follow-up reflection. Four of the sessions will focus on canonical and non-canonical, literary and non-literary materials from different periods, contexts and movements. The days will begin at 10.00 and end at 4.00, with breaks for lunch and refreshments. They will be a mixture of tutor-led exposition and seminar-style discussion. The days will be divided up to give attention to the different kinds of material under focus; the teaching will be cumulative and comparative (so, returning to a literary text to reassess it
after discussing a non-literary text). There will be an opportunity in a plenary session to bring together and discuss all the findings and insights encountered during the day). **It is important that all participants read and prepare materials in advance.**

The fifth and final day will bring everyone together to deliver their presentation assessments (see below); all participants will, in consultation with a tutor, select a text and context on which to present.

To help with preparation for the research essays, students will be able to seek guidance and feedback during tutor consultation and feedback hours (to be announced)

**Assessment**

1. 1 X 20% oral presentations (15 minutes)
2. 1 X 80% essays 4000 words.

For post-experience students following a CPD route through this module, it will be possible to build a significant element of reflective analysis into these essays, enabling them to develop links between classroom teaching practice, and the research-based learning facilitated by the module.

**1. Victorian, Neo-Victorians, and the (New) Woman Question** (David Amigoni)

Thomas Hardy’s *Tess* has become a canonical text in proportion to Hardy’s central status as a Victorian novelist: yet, when it was first published it was highly controversial and participated in a debate about the place of women in nineteenth-century society: a debate that was driven by such notions as ‘The Woman Question’, and identities such as ‘the New Woman’; and in which many other fictional and non-fictional texts participated as ideas about modernisation and progress were contested.

In seeking to address the central aims of the module, this study day will look in particular at gender and sexuality, and the way in which these topics were framed by scientific, evolutionary discourses in the late nineteenth century. It will also look at the role of periodicals as mediators of scientific and political ideas and values.

The end of the session will gesture towards the way in which twentieth-century so-called neo-Victorian novelists have played with the generic and cultural issues that have been passed down to us through this debate: students should read , as follow up *The French Lieutenant’s Woman.*

**Canon**, Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891)


‘Plain Words on the Woman Question’, Grant Allen, *Fortnightly Review*, 1889

‘Candour in Fiction’, Thomas Hardy, *New Review*, 1890

**Follow up reading**: The neo-Victorian Context: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, John Fowles (1969)

**Secondary Reading:**

David Amigoni, *Victorian Literature* (Edinburgh, 2011)


Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin-de-siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

2. *Scriblerians, Grub Street, and the Ivory Tower* (Nick Seager)

In this session we will look at a transitional moment in how authors thought about posterity and value: early eighteenth-century British literary culture. At this time, a collection of writers who styled themselves the Scriblerians, headed by the canonical poets, Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift, set themselves in opposition to Grub Street ‘hacks’ and ‘dunces’, which is to say professional writers and those unversed in classical learning. Pope and Swift feared a disintegration of literary standards and cultural knowledge, and they attacked rival authors whom they alleged wrote for money or political position, or who adopted parvenu genres like the novel. Pope and Swift were reacting to an explosion in the quantity of printed material and widening access to information in this period, which we can try to account for in terms of cultural contexts like rises in literacy and the reading public, a new taste for novelty, increased public involvement in current affairs, developments in print technology, and women’s professional authorship. Pope and Swift saw themselves as cultural gatekeepers, arbiters of taste and learning, and their value judgments had long-lasting implications for the study of literature.

**Canon**
Jonathan Swift, ‘Advice to the Grub Street Verse Writers’ (1726) and ‘On Poetry: A Rhapsody’ (1733) – photo/digital copies provided.

**Anti-canonical**
Lewis Theobald, *The Cave of Poverty* (1715) – please access through ECCO.

**Context**

**Some recommended further reading**
Pope’s *Peri Bathous* and his moral essays (especially ‘Epistle to Bathurst’)
Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub and The Battle of the Books* (1704)
Henry Fielding’s plays, especially *The Welsh Opera*
Samuel Johnson’s ‘Life of Swift’ and his ‘Life of Pope’


*Using ECCO*

Access this through the Electronic Resources on the Library webpage.

http://www.keele.ac.uk/library/findresources/subject/englishandamericanliterature/

Example search

Type in “Cave of Poverty”; limit the search to “title”; type “1715” in the year(s) box. Use either of the two editions available.

3. *Text, Genre and Subjectivity in Early Modern England* (Lucy Munro)

This session will explore in detail one of the most canonical of all works written in English: Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. This play has been central to the literary and theatrical canon for four centuries, and it has even been seen as a text that heralds the birth of new forms of individualism and interiority in the seventeenth century. Yet even *Hamlet’s* status is in some respects ambiguous. It first emerged in three different versions – we will read two of them – and it has intriguing relationships with a wide range of early modern texts and contexts. In this session we will focus on issues relating to genre and subjectivity, reading Shakespeare’s tragedy alongside John Ford’s little-studied and little-performed tragicomedy *The Lover’s Melancholy*. We will examine the treatment of melancholy, madness and interiority in the two plays, drawing on contextual materials that will include extracts from related poetry and plays, and from two of the greatest prose works of the period, Michel de Montaigne’s *Essays* and Richard Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.


**Anti-Canon:** John Ford, *The Lover’s Melancholy* (1628), in *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore and Other Plays*, ed. Marion Lomax (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)

**Context:**

Anthology including:

Michel de Montaigne, *Essays* (1580-95) extracts

Richard Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), extracts

Poetry and other excerpts on melancholy, madness and interiority
Recommended Further Reading:

Jonathan Gil Harris, ed., *Surviving Hamlet*, special issue, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62.2 (Summer 2011), 145-278
Lisa Hopkins, ‘Staging Passion in Ford’s *The Lover’s Melancholy*,’ *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 45 (2005), 443-59

4. Slavery, Race and Narrative in nineteenth-century America (Tim Lustig)

Taking slavery and race in the nineteenth-century America as a context, this session will explore the complex fortunes of texts as they enter into the canon-making, and de-canonization, processes. For instance *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was one of the most widely read and influential novels on both sides of the Atlantic when it first appeared – yet now, it is barely read, and where it is, subject to ideological critique. On the other hand, ‘slave autobiographies’ were, in the nineteenth century, part of a political movement: now, Douglass’s *Life* could be said to occupy the kind of canonical position once occupied by Beecher Stow’s fiction. What are the historically transforming politics of genre, relating to fiction, non-fiction, ideologies, modes of publishing, that have contributed to these processes? This session will provide an opportunity to investigate correspondence between Douglass and Stowe and to assess the nature of their encounter in the context of nineteenth-century abolitionism, feminism and sentimentalism. We will discuss, among other things, approaches to race, emancipation, miscegenation, religion and political struggle.

**Canon** Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

**Anti-Canon** Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*

**Context** assorted context documents including Douglass's ‘What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?'
Application Form

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Cost: £760 (for 30 credit module)

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Address
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_________________________________________________Postcode________________________

Email________________________________________________

Telephone:
Home________________________Work_____________________________________

Email________________________________________________

I enclose my cheque for £_______________ made payable to Keele University.

Return to: Mrs Kath McKeown, Senior School Manager, School of Humanities, Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG

Tel: 01782 733203 or email: k.c.mckeown@keele.ac.uk

If you wish to pay by Mastercard or Visa please complete the form overleaf

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