



**Debate Chamber**  
11b Lloyds Wharf, Mill Street  
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# Autumn English Literature School 2010

27<sup>th</sup>-31st October • University of London Union

## Day 1

- 10.30- 12.30 **Introduction to Medieval English**  
An introduction to Middle English, including pronunciation and special characters. Students will learn key vocabulary and how to read aloud from Middle English texts. We will use a number of short extracts to examine differences between Middle English, Modern English and Old English, as well as differences in Medieval dialects
- 13.30- 2.45 **Gender in the Middle Ages**  
Forget chivalry and damsels in distress. Middle English literature offers us stories of cuckolded princes, cross-dressing knights and lecherous old women with magical powers - but what do they tell us about attitudes to sex and gender in medieval England, and how do these compare with contemporary conceptions of male heroism or idealized femininity? Students will compare and contrast extracts from the *Prose Merlin*, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.
- 2.50 – 3.50 **Nationalism in the Middle Ages**  
In this session we will use an account of Richard I's exploits during the crusades from *Richard Coeur de Lion* as a source for medieval patriotism and xenophobia, and examine what the text can tell us about medieval ideas of Englishness as well as stereotypes of foreigners and Muslims in particular.
- 3.50 – 4.30 **Middle English today**  
We will conclude the day with a discussion of the relevance of Middle English literature in the modern world – its influence on contemporary fiction, on our language, and our ideas about our selves and our past.



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## Day 2

**10.30 – 11.00 The Continental Renaissance and the development of Humanism (lecture)**

Students will be introduced to the Renaissance as a historical and cultural development, the growth of the Renaissance Humanist philosophies and aesthetics, the debate between Humanism and Scholasticism, and the establishment of a Christian Humanist spirit. In particular, the lecture will focus on the effect of these philosophies on art and literature, and the growth of the idea of the individual.

**11.00 – 11.45 Elizabethan Politics and Society and the English Renaissance**

An overview of Tudor history and politics, the Elizabethan age, the growth of renaissance scholarship and art in England, and the volatile relationship of state and stage. Students are then invited to reimagine the world of Elizabethan and Jacobean England in the contexts of Shakespeare's plays and particularly their theatrical spaces. We will explore artistic representations of the Globe theatre in London and consider its impact on the performance of the plays.

**11.45 – 13.00 Shakespeare, language and genre**

Using extracts from the sonnets, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, we will examine Shakespeare's linguistic experimentation and innovation, in particular his use of wordplay, metaphor and allusion to build dense layers of meaning. We will also examine the similarity of techniques used in the poems and the plays.

**14.00 – 16.30 Performance at Shakespeare's Globe (play tbc)**

A trip to a matinee performance at the reconstructed Globe theatre on the South Bank will help students think about the differences between staging in the Elizabethan period and today, and see how the historical, cultural and technical insights gained in earlier sessions can enhance our appreciation and understanding of Shakespeare's plays.



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## Day 3

### **10.30 – 11.15 The Origins of the Romantic Movement (lecture)**

Why did Romanticism in music, painting and literature arise when and where it did? A brief introduction to the Romantics' place in literary and political history within a pan-European context. The enlightenment and counter-enlightenment; liberalism; the French Revolution; German Idealism; the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution. We will mention thinkers including Rousseau, Voltaire and Kant.

### **11.15 – 12.00 The concept of the Romantic**

What do we mean or understand by this term 'Romanticism'? This session will involve the discussion of different definitions, and some group exercises in examining texts by Wordsworth and Shelley order to determine how they fulfill or disappoint the definitions we have discussed.

### **12.00 – 13.00 Romanticism and Nature**

An examination of the role nature plays in Romantic poetry and the special relationship held to exist between nature, the divine, and the human imagination. Discussion of Blake, and of Wordsworth in the context of residence in the Lake District, friendship with Coleridge, and in relation to his poetic philosophy and views on literary language.

### **14.00– 15.15 Romanticism, creativity and religion**

What does 'romantic' literature have to say about the role of author as god/creator? To what extent are these roles in conjunction or in opposition? This discussion will focus on texts such as Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and extracts from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to examine the romantic focus on the imagination as paramount. We will compare film adaptations of *Frankenstein* from different periods and how filmmakers have adapted the idea of the hubristic creator to apply to contemporary concerns.

### **15.15 – 16.30 Overview – style and project of the Romantic Movement**

We will compare and contrast texts from different stages of the Romantic movement and ask what stylistic features, what strengths and weaknesses, they have in common. We will ask why poetry is considered to be the main medium of romantic literature, and how the Romantics have shaped to this day our notions of poetry and the poet's vocation. This session will involve some close reading and the consideration of how verse, and form more generally, might liberate or constrain its creator. Do the limits of language prevent true artistic freedom? We will finish by some assessment of the 'success' of romantic philosophy as articulated by the authors we have been studying.



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## Day 4

**10.30 – 11.30 Introduction to Literary Modernism**

A discussion of the idea of 'modernity' and the modern will lead into an introductory lecture outlining the ideas and events that gave birth to the Modernist movement. The reaction to sentimentalism and impressionism; the influence of radical thinkers such as Marx, Nietzsche and Freud; the rise of the modern city and mass-production; the devastation of the first world war. We will examine examples of modernist music, cubist painting and sculpture, and the manifestos of the Futurists and Vorticists for clues as to what these artists were reacting to.

**11.30 – 12.15 Ezra Pound and Imagism**

An introduction to the life and work of Ezra Pound, in particular the genesis of Imagism. We will examine Pound's programmatic statements alongside poems by Pound, William Carlos Williams and others.

**12.15 – 13.00 James Joyce and the evolution of Modernist Prose**

Through an analysis of short extracts from works that span Joyce's career, from his early short stories to later experimental works, students will examine different approaches to representing human consciousness (and the unconscious) in prose fiction, and the challenges any author attempting this task faces.

**13.45 – 15.15 Approaches to versification**

A short introduction to versification, including technical terminology, types of rhyme, metre and scansion. We will look at examples of different metres, and evaluate statements by a range of authors, from Milton to T S Eliot, about what constitutes good poetic writing. We will finish the session the session by examining works by late twentieth century poets that depart from conventional expectations about poetic style and language.

**15.15– 16.30 Verse Composition Workshop**

Using ideas from the previous session, students will produce short poems of their own in a range of styles. Students may choose to work either individually or in groups, with the guidance of the tutor who will encourage them to build on the technical insights gained from their study of poetry over the last four days.



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## Day 5

**10.30 – 12.00 The Defence of Poetry**

Is fiction a waste of time? Should some topics be off limits? How is creative literature related to philosophy, history, sacred texts and other kinds of writing? Disputes about the morality and purpose of literature have raged since classical times, raising vital questions about the nature of art, the social role of the author, and freedom of speech. In this session we trace these arguments from Plato's banishment of the poets to the death threats made against Salman Rushdie, and critically examine defences of literature offered by major authors.

**12.00 – 12.45 The function of Criticism (lecture and seminar)**

A short lecture will introduce students to the history of literary criticism in England from the seventeenth century to the present day. We will discuss the changing role of the critic and evaluate arguments about the proper 'Function of Criticism' from the likes of Matthew Arnold and Terry Eagleton.

**13.30 – 14.30 Feminist Criticism**

Criticism may once have been an all-male profession for the reading of texts by mostly male authors, but in the past fifty years feminist critics have sought not only to uncover and promote a female tradition of writing but also to investigate the ways in which literary texts express, resist and react to conceptions of gender. In this seminar we will consider medieval, renaissance, and twentieth century work discussed previously in the course in the light of short extracts from works by feminist critics to explore what literature can teach us about the construction of gender.

**14.30 – 15.30 Postcolonial literature and theory**

Imperialism was a project not just of territorial but linguistic and ideological domination. In this seminar we discuss the impact of colonialism on literature, on our readings of past works, and on authors writing today. We consider Edward Said's notion of 'Orientalism' and examine extracts from works that have been accused of colluding with imperialism and others that set out to challenge it.

**15.30 – 16.15 The death of the author?**

There are few questions more controversial than the nature of the relationship between a text, its reader and its author. In this seminar we will discuss and evaluate the New Critics and the 'intentional fallacy', Barthes' argument for the 'death of the author' and poststructuralist critics who aim not to interpret texts but 'deconstruct' them. We will ask to what extent you should take the author's intentions into account when reading a text, and whether it is possible to arrive at a complete interpretation of a work of literature.

**16.15 – 16.30 Round-up and certificates**