EN2L4-30 Literature in Theory

20/21

Department
>   English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level
>   Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader
>   Rashmi Varma

Credit value
>   30

Module duration
>   20 weeks

Assessment
>   Multiple

Study location
>   University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Literature in Theory aims to examine the very object of study in the students' undergraduate degree—literature and literary studies. Questions about what we study when we say we study literature will be aligned with an examination of topics such as the institutionalisation of literature as a discipline, issues of literary and cultural "value", literature's relationship to other fields of cultural production, as well as its place in the wider constitution of humanities in the university today. The module will provide a set of concerns common to all students in Q300, thus deepening a sense of intellectual community, as well as fostering a culture of critical thinking. Further, it will prepare students to face the challenges confronting the study and practice of humanities today and the crises of the public university globally. Indicative readings include works by theorists such as Terry Eagleton ('What is Literature?') and Pascale Casanova ('The World Republic of Letters') as well as films, poetry and novels such as J. M. Coetzee's Disgrace and Sally Rooney's Normal People.

Module aims

The aim of the module is to build on knowledge introduced in the level 4 module, "Modes of Reading", by encouraging students to situate texts within their wider social, material and institutional contexts. While also reflecting on key debates in the field, students will be encouraged to see these as applicable to their own work in other modules, and to gain a sense of the discipline

in all its variety with a view to developing these ideas at level 6, particularly in the core research module (Selected Topics; or Dissertation).

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

The syllabus is comprised of 8 units taught over the course of the year.

The units for 2020–2021 will be:

Term 1

What is Literature?
Disciplining Literature
Literary and Cultural Value
Literary Markets

Term 2

The State of Literature
Institutions of World Literature
Literature as media / technology / data / intellectual property
University and Universalism

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Situate texts in relation to the material and institutional contexts shaping their production at regional, national and global levels
- Engage confidently in critical analysis, online research and presentations on topics relating to the production, distribution, institutionalisation and marketing of literary and cultural texts
- Participate in discussions and exercises concerning the role of literature and the humanities in relation to other disciplines and media
- Make an informed choice about level 6 module options and dissertation supervisors

Indicative reading list

Jorge Louis Borges, "The Library of Babel"
Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library"
Terry Eagleton, 'What is Literature?' in Literary Theory: An Introduction
Toni Morrison, "black matters" from Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination
Edward Said, "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories" in Culture and Imperialism (1-72)
Raymond Williams, "On High and Popular Culture" in Culture and Materialism
Daljit Nagra, Look We Have Coming to Dover
Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory"
Leah Price, "Reading: the State of the Discipline"
Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "On the Abolition of the English Department"

Gauri Viswanathan, "Beginnings of English Literary Study" from Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India

Akira Kurosawa, Rashomon

Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital"

Joshua Clover and Christopher Nealon, 'Literary and Economic Value', in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature (2017)

Neil Lazarus, "The Politics of Postcolonial Modernism"

Gayatri Spivak, "How to read a 'culturally different' book"

Jamaica Kincaid, A Small Place

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" (1944)

Sarah Brouillette, "Postcolonial Writers and the Global Literary Marketplace" (2007)

Pascale Casanova, "World Republic of Letters", New Left Review

Leonard Woolf, Virginia Woolf and Melba Cuddy-Keane, Are Too Many Books Written and Published? PMLA Vol. 212, No. 1, Special Topic: The History of the Book and the Idea of Literature (Jan, 2006), pp. 235-244

J M Coetzee, Disgrace

Benedict Anderson, excerpt from Imagined Communities

Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form'

Franco Moretti, excerpt from Atlas of the European Novel

Joseph Slaughter, 'Enabling Fictions and Novel Subjects: The "Bildungsroman" and International Human Rights Law' / Human Rights Inc.

Amitav Ghosh, In An Antique Land

Fredric Jameson 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism'

Aamer Mufti, "Where in the World is World Literature?" in Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literature

Graham Huggan, excerpt from The Postcolonial Exotic

Warwick Research Collective, excerpt from Combined and Uneven Development

David Mitchell, "The Right Sort" (Sceptre Books/Twitter)

Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Info-labor and 'Precarization'" in Precarious Rhapsody (2009)

Moretti and Oleg Sobchuk, "Hidden in Plain Sight", New Left Review

'Neoliberal Tools (and Archives): A Political History of Digital Humanities', by Daniel Allington, Sarah Brouillette, David Golumbia, LA Review of Books.

'Response: The Scandal of Digital Humanities', Brian Greenspan

Bailey, Moya Z. (2011). "All the Digital Humanists Are White, All the Nerds Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave". Journal of Digital Humanities.

Sally Rooney, Normal People

Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, Kerem Nişancıoğlu (eds), Decolonising the University (2018)

Eric Hayot, "The Sky is Falling," in Profession [https://profession.mla.org/the-sky-is-falling/]

Chris Newfield, Chapter 3 from Unmaking the Public University

Martha Nussbaum, "Cultivating the Imagination: Literature and the Arts," Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities (2016 edition)

Research element

Research task in the portfolio: each seminar leader will determine portfolio assignments.

Interdisciplinary

Discussion of film, anthropology/ethnography, travel narrative, social media, sociology and digital humanities in addition to literary texts and critical theory.

International

Discussion of texts from around the world (such as Antigua, Japan, Egypt, India, South Africa, Ireland)

Subject specific skills

- Effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms, including essays, seminar presentations, and other research tasks (such as book reviews or analyses of literary prize winners)
- Approach texts in ways that are sensitive to the politics and power dynamics governing their production, distribution and reception
- Assess key debates concerning the current make-up of the professional disciplinary boundaries of the study of English

Transferable skills

- Read texts independently with greater confidence than before taking the course
- Use a range of techniques to initiate and undertake the analysis of data and information in the set critical reading
- Situate literary texts in relation to other media and disciplines

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Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	264 hours (88%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading, note taking from lecture, independent research, consultation with tutor

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Essay	40%	
Assessed Essay		
Portfolio	60%	

A portfolio of three short assignments (e.g. an in-seminar presentation, book review, analysis of book covers, research into a publisher, analysis of prize winners e.g. selection of prize winner stories, discussion of twitter poems, etc.) Each seminar leader will determine portfolio assignments.

Assessment group R

	Weighting	Study time
Review essay	40%	

The essay will provide a critical overview of any one unit of the module

Book reviews/literature reviews	60%	

The portfolio will consist of three elements combining reports, reviews and critical analysis

Feedback on assessment

Written comments and one-to-one meetings in office hours

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of UENA-Q300 Undergraduate English Literature