

EN9C2-30 Literature and the Lifecourse: From Infancy to the End of Life

26/27

Department

English and Comparative Literary Studies

Level

Taught Postgraduate Level

Module leader

Liz Barry

Credit value

30

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

EN9C2-30 Literature and the Lifecourse: From Infancy to the End of Life

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

This module will look at modern (C20 and C21) UK and US literary responses to the different phases and key transitions of the lifecourse from infancy to old age, engaging perspectives from developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, medicine, sociology and history. It will also think about what it is to write a life, drawing on theoretical and conceptual frameworks from genre studies (lifewriting/(auto)biography, Bildungsroman, Reifungsroman (novel of 'ripening')). Key themes will include time, work, aging, disability, sexuality, gender and reproduction, and the end of life. Each week the students will look at one or more fictional text, alongside a historically important formulation of the lifecourse categories (from the fields of history, sociology, psychology).

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.

Unit 1: Childhood (Weeks 1-3)

From J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan* (1911); James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916); L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables* (1908); Susan Hill, *I'm the King of the Castle* (1970); Alice Childress, *A Hero Ain't Nothing But a Sandwich* (1973); Short stories by Joy Williams ('Train'), Robert Penn Warren ('Blackberry Winter'); Katherine Anne Porter ('The Circus')

Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five Year-Old Boy' (1909); from Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* (1960); from Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History* (1993)

Unit 2: Adolescence (Weeks 4-6)

Frank Wedekind, *Spring Awakening* (1891); J. D. Salinger, *Catcher in the Rye* (1951); Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* (1970); Cynthia Voigt, *Izzy Willy Nilly* (1986); Tarell Alvin McCraney, *In Moonlight, Black Boys Look Blue* (2015)

From: G. Stanley Hall, *Adolescence* (1904); Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968); Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, *Inventing Ourselves: The Secret Life of the Teenage Brain* (2018)

Unit 3: Adulthood (Weeks 7-8)

Henry Green, *Living*; from Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*; James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*; Anne Tyler, *Morgan's Passing*; Thomas Page McBee, *Amateur*

From: Gail Sheehy, *Passages* (1974); Erik Erikson, *Adulthood* (1978); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

Unit 4: Old Age (9-10)

Stories: Patrick White, 'Five Twenty' (1968); Toni Cade Bambara, 'My Man Bovanne' (1972); Alice Munro, 'Lichen' (1985), Margaret Atwood, 'Torching the Dusties' (2014); Jonas Jonasson, *The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared* (2012); Julian Barnes, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011)

From G. Stanley Hall, *Senescence* (1922); from Elaine Cumming and William Earl Henry, *Growing Old: The Process of Disengagement* (1961); Susan Sontag, 'The Double Standard of Aging' (1972)

Learning outcomes

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

- Through reading modern and contemporary fiction and lifewriting, interpret and evaluate its contribution to our understanding of key phases and transitions in the lifecourse
- Understand and demonstrate advanced, detailed subject knowledge and professional competencies informed by recent research/scholarship at the forefront of the discipline
- Demonstrate a conceptual understanding of age and its representations which enables the development and sustaining of an independent argument

- Critique, evaluate and advance the current debates around age and literature
- Working under their own initiative, deploy and communicate complex techniques of analysis and enquiry within the discipline
- Independently formulate an original hypothesis on representations of age, and develop an appropriate conceptual framework to pursue it
- Evaluate the uncertainty, ambiguity and limitations of knowledge in the discipline;
- Make appropriate use of criticism, theory and primary sources from different disciplines, including medicine, psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, history, genre studies,
- Engage with current scholarship on key debates relating to the cultural conception of childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age;
- Give a professional, well-structured, well-paced, well-delivered oral presentation.

Subject specific skills

No subject specific skills defined for this module.

Transferable skills

No transferable skills defined for this module.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	10 sessions of 2 hours (7%)
Private study	280 hours (93%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

Reading & reseach

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Assessed essay 1 x 4,000 word essay	80%		Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

Assessment component

Presentation 15 minute presentation	20%		Yes (extension)
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Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Feedback will be given on an outline of the essay in one-to-one tutorials. Written feedback will be given on the essay via Moodle.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 1 of TENS-Q2PE MA World Literature
- Year 1 of TENA-Q3PD Postgraduate Taught Critical and Cultural Theory
- Year 1 of TENA-Q3P1 Postgraduate Taught English Literature
- TENA-Q3PE Postgraduate Taught English and Drama
 - Year 1 of Q3PE English and Drama
 - Year 1 of Q3PE English and Drama
 - Year 2 of Q3PE English and Drama
- TENA-Q3PK Postgraduate Taught Environmental Humanities
 - Year 1 of Q3PK Environmental Humanities

- Year 2 of Q3PK Environmental Humanities

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of TENA-Q3PD Postgraduate Taught Critical and Cultural Theory

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 1 of TPHA-V7PN Postgraduate Taught Philosophy and the Arts