UC SUMMER SCHOOL

LITERARY LONDON

Key Information

Module code: ISSU1011
Taught during: Session One: 29 June – 17 July 2020
Module workload: 45 teaching hours plus approximately 100 study hours
Module leader: Dr Alistair Robinson
Department: English Language & Literature, Faculty of Arts & Humanities
Credit: 15 UCL credits, 7.5 ECTS, 4 US
Level: Level 1, first year Undergraduate
Pre-requisites: Standard entry requirements
Assessment: 10-minute presentation (25%); 2,500-word essay (75%)

Module Overview
This module introduces students to the literature, culture and history of London from the eighteenth century to the present day. The course is chronological and is organised around three core themes: the environment (built and organic); identity (personal and social); and community (civic and national). During the three-week course we will examine the ways in which literary texts register, explore and problematise these themes in exciting and interesting ways. As we read some of London’s greatest poems, short stories and novels, we will also inform our classroom discussions by walking through the streets of London, and visiting some of its great landmarks and museums.

Week One: Eighteenth-Century & Romantic London

- Jonathan Swift (1667-1745): ‘A Description of a City Shower’; ‘A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed’
- John Gay (1685-1732): Trivia: or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London
- Mary Robinson (1757-1800): ‘London’s Summer Morning’
- William Wordworth (1770-1850): ‘St Pauls’
- William Blake (1757-1827): ‘London’
- John Keats (1795-1821): ‘On Seeing the Elgin Marbles’

Week Two: The Victorian Metropolis

- Charles Lamb (1775-1834): ‘A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis’
- Charles Dickens (1812-1870): ‘A Nightly Scene in London’
- Augusta Webster (1837-1894): A Castaway

Please note that this module description is indicative and may be subject to change.
● Margaret Harkness (1854-1923): *In Darkest London*
● Virginia Woolf (1882-1941): ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’

**Week Three: Postwar to the Present**

● Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973): ‘Mysterious Kôr’
● Sam Slevon (1923-1994): *The Lonely Londoners*
● Richard Scott (1981-): ‘Oh My Soho!’
● Zadie Smith (1975-): *NW*

**Module Aims**
The module aims to give students a broad historical and literary awareness of how London has changed between the early eighteenth century and the present day. Within this broad historical sweep, students will be given the opportunity to engage with literary works on an analytical level, and to explore them through a range of literary, historical and cultural contexts covered on the course. In addition, students will also be encouraged to situate their responses to literary texts within their own experience of London; the class excursions will be used as an opportunity to nuance our collective understanding of the city. The course will allow students to explore the city’s social, historical, and architectural foundations and the exciting, invigorating relationships these have had and continue to have with literature and literary form.

**Teaching Methods**
This module will include a range of teaching methods, including lectures, seminars, excursions, group and individual work. There will be two outcomes: a 2,500 word essay to be submitted on the last Friday of Summer School and an oral presentation, which will be delivered at the end of the second week. Instructions for these assignments will be given in advance and students will have the opportunity to meet the Module Leader individually to discuss their titles and the subjects of their presentations during office hours.

**Learning Outcomes**
Upon successful completion of this module, students will:

- Be able to discuss, analyse and write about poetry, short stories, novels and art;
- Have produced and delivered oral presentations on an aspect of the course that has particularly engaged them;
- Have a strong sense of how London as a European city has grown, developed and changed over the last 300 years;
- Have visited and physically experienced London in a way that is informed by this growing awareness of the past and the constantly shifting permutations of life in the city;
- Be aware of how literature and particular literary forms have developed in order to relate these shifts in urban experience more effectively.

**Assessment Methods**
- 10-minute presentation (25%)
- 2,500-word essay (75%)
Key Texts

Essays and Short Stories:
- Charles Lamb: ‘A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis’ (1822)
- Charles Dickens: ‘A Nightly Scene in London’ (1856)
- Arthur Conan Doyle: ‘A Scandal in Bohemia’ (1891)
- Virginia Woolf: ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’ (1927)
- Elizbeth Bowen: ‘Mysterious Kôr’ (1944)

Novels:
- Margaret Harkness: *In Darkest London* (1889)
- Sam Selvon: *The Lonely Londoners* (1956)
- Zadie Smith: *NW* (2012)

Long Poems:
- Augusta Webster: *A Castaway* (1870)

Module Leader
Dr Alistair Robinson is an Assistant Lecturer in the English Department of the New College of Humanities and taught for several years as a Teaching Assistant in UCL’s English Department. He holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Cambridge, a master’s from the University of Edinburgh, and a PhD from UCL. His research on the representation of poverty and mobility in nineteenth-century British culture has recently been published in the *Journal of Victorian Culture* (2017) and the *Review of English Studies* (2019). He is currently working on a monograph entitled *Victorian Vagrancy: The Wandering Poor in the Long Nineteenth Century*. 

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