



June 2013

Dear First Year Student,

I am writing to all students likely to be joining us in September. I would like to explain a little about what to expect, and to indicate what preparatory reading we want you to have done should you come to us in the autumn.

Tutorials

You will be assigned to a tutor whom you will normally meet once a fortnight for a half-hour tutorial. In this, your work is discussed, and essays set and commented on. You will write a short critical commentary and four essays of about 3,000 words each term.

Seminars and Lectures

You will also attend roughly five seminars a week and four lectures. Seminars focus on particular texts, and it is expected that you prepare thoroughly for these occasions. Each member of a seminar group, which will normally consist of around 20 students, should contribute to the discussion.

During your first two terms your time will be spent following four courses:

1. **Narrative Texts**

In this course you study seven major texts. These are taught in chronological order as set out in the enclosed reading list. There will be weekly lectures and seminars on these texts, on which you will write your tutorial essays. You should have read the whole of *Paradise Lost* before you arrive here, and as many of the other texts as possible; the better you know them, the more interesting and rewarding the work you do on them will be.

2. **Introduction to Medieval Language and Literature**

In this course you will be introduced to Middle English in the first term and Old English (sometimes called 'Anglo-Saxon') in the second. The Old English period is approx. 700-1100, the Middle English period approx. 1100-1500. Please obtain, before you arrive, all the books listed in the relevant section on the reading list, beginning with the Benson edition of Chaucer and a copy of *Beowulf & Other Stories* (second edition, 2011, in which we would like you to start with Peter S. Baker's chapter on the Old English language and then the Introduction). You may also find an outline of Modern English grammar (but useful for Old and Middle English and for Criticism) in Gerry Nelson's *Internet Grammar*, at <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>.

3. **Intellectual and Cultural Sources**

This course runs parallel to the Narrative Texts course. It consists of a series of lectures and seminars on a variety of texts, both literary and non-literary, which may have helped to form the minds of English writers and readers over many centuries. You should aim to read a good number of them before September; this will help you to keep ahead of reading requirements during term-time. Again, these are taught in the chronological order set out on the reading list.

4. **Criticism**

This course consists of lectures on formal and technical aspects of literature, and on the history of literary criticism. The seminars are opportunities to practise close reading of examples of various genres. On arrival at UCL you already know how to read literary works, but by the time you leave you will be better at it than you are now: the work on this course is intended to make you reflect on your reading, and on that of other readers through time.

'Sessional' Examinations

Early in the third term single honours English students will be required to sit departmental examinations on the courses mentioned above. These examinations will provide a significant indication both to you and to your teachers of the progress you have made.

The First Week

When it is clear that you are coming to us, the UCL Registry will write, probably in September, giving precise details of what to do. What follows below is a general outline of your first days in the Department: more detailed information about these days will come from me in September.

You will be asked to enrol with the College on Monday 23rd September. On Wednesday 25th September the Department will hold an event for all new students. This will enable you to meet your fellow first-year students, and allow me to introduce you to the course and the Department. You will also be addressed by the Head of Department, Professor John Mullan, and the day will end with a party in the Student Common Room. During this week there will also be a coffee morning. You will be introduced to the mentoring scheme and meet your student mentor (a second or third year English student) who will organise events in the first few weeks of term.

You will meet your tutor on Thursday 26th September or Friday 27th September.

I look forward to meeting you in September.

Yours sincerely

Dr Marilyn Corrie
Departmental Tutor