FIRST-YEAR BOOK LIST: 2016–17

Dates of publication, or approximate dates of composition, have been included on this list for your information. Many of these books can be obtained most cheaply online, especially second-hand.

Contrary to popular belief, the First-year UCL English course is not a continuation of A-Levels by other means, but is an invitation to reconsider approaches to works which you have read and to revise any prejudices about works which you haven’t. The first paradox is that students who wish to do well in their exams for this degree are advised not to think of exams at all, but instead to learn the enjoyment of this literature for the sake of its artistry and regardless of any moral deficits – such as the relative uniformity of gender and race in works written before the eighteenth century – which it may seem to incur. To enjoy the literature is to start reading it, in quantity and as soon as possible.

GENERAL
You are advised to provide yourself with a history of the development of English literature, for example: Andrew Sanders, The Short Oxford History of English Literature (Oxford, 1994; rev. edn. 2004). You may also find it helpful to consult:

- The English department style sheet for essays, on the first-year course Moodle page and on the English departmental website.
- The English department punctuation guide on the English website (‘current students’)

TEXTS FOR FIRST-YEAR COURSES


1. Narrative Texts


Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759-67) edited by Melvyn New and Christopher Ricks (Penguin).

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), edited by Deborah E. McDowell (Oxford World’s Classics).


2. Introduction to Medieval Language and Literature

This course is taught in two parts, Middle English in the autumn term and Old English in the spring term. The Old English literary period falls approximately within 700–1100, the Middle within 1100–1500. The Middle English is placed first in order to ease the student into what may be considered the least familiar period of literature studied here.

Most Medieval literature can be challenging, especially with the Cheshire dialect of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Later in the course, there is Old English, which is the language spoken and written in Anglo-Saxon England before the Norman Conquest of 1066. Here you will be taught *Beowulf* in Seamus Heaney’s translation, and enough Old English language to be able to read *The Wanderer*, the other text on this half of the course, as its Anglo-Saxon poet composed it.

You may find much of this literature completely new, but if you keep an open mind, you will see that it represents something of the greatness which the English literary tradition has achieved. We are teaching Old and Middle English because our department covers English from beginning to end. That is what makes us different from most other departments of English language and literature, and you would be advised to note that, by accepting a place here, you have agreed to honour the Medieval part of its syllabus no less than any other.

Where a section in the following is given as underlined, please prepare it in the summer before you come up:

Middle English

Taken in order, the works we study in class this term are *The Miller’s Tale* of *The Canterbury Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer, the north-west Midlands romance *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the last two books of Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur* (his *Works*), and a play, *The Wakefield Second Shepherds’ Pageant*. The editions for these are listed in order below (the Benson edition of Chaucer is also needed for second-year study). Burrow’s book gives a valuable literary background.


**Old English**

This course consists of Seamus Heaney’s translation of the epic poem *Beowulf*, followed by one poem in the original Old English language, *The Wanderer*. The quickest way into the language and context is Peter S. Baker’s chapter on the Old English language in ‘*Beowulf* & Other Stories’, and we recommend that you read this and surrounding chapters first. For *The Wanderer*, read Jenny Neville’s chapter on the Elegies in the same.


Not required for the course, but with more literature from the period, there is also Richard North and Joe Allard, and Patricia Gillies, ed., *The Longman Anthology of Old English, Old Icelandic and Anglo-Norman Literatures* (Pearson Longman, 2011) 978-1-4082-4770-9

**3. Criticism**

This course makes use of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, Second Edition (2010) as a core reference work, and you are strongly encouraged to buy your own copy, and even to dip into it over the summer, following your own interests. The essays lectured on in the Spring Term can all be found in this anthology, and the volume will be of broader use to you in your second and third years. The essays lectured on and discussed in seminars during the Spring Term, all contained in the anthology, will include the following:

- Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* (c. 1580, published 1595)
- Samuel Johnson’s ‘Preface’ to his edition of Shakespeare’s plays (1765)
- Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802)
- Henry James’s essay ‘The Art of Fiction’ (1884)
- T. S. Eliot’s essay ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’ from *The Sacred Wood* (1920)
- Roland Barthes’s ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967)
4. Intellectual and Cultural Sources

This is a long list: do not be daunted. Think of the list as a sample of the world of books and ideas in which you are free to travel for the next few years. Read as much as you can. Read the ones which interest you most. Read some more carefully than others if it suits you. You can and will go back to some of them later in your degree course. The editions and translations recommended below are those on which the examination will be based. In the cases of some longer works you are directed to particular parts; lectures and seminars will for the most part concentrate on these sections, and passages for comment in the examination will be taken from them.

In the case of translations, it is important that you obtain a copy of the recommended edition. If you are having trouble finding any of these, try and check the following: the UCL library, Waterstones, amazon.co.uk, bookfinder.com, or abebooks.co.uk.

*The Bible* (Authorized Version 1611), edited by Stephen Prickett (Oxford World’s Classics). The set sections are Genesis (500s BC?) and The Gospel of St. Mark (c. 70 AD).

Homer, *The Odyssey* (700s BC?), translated by E. V. Rieu and D. C. H. Rieu (Penguin).

Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* (420s BC), in *The Three Theban Plays*, translated by Robert Fagles (Penguin).


Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (8 AD), translated by David Raeburn (Penguin), especially books 1, 4-6, 10, 15.

St. Augustine, *Confessions* (c. 397), trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford World’s Classics), especially books 1–2, 6, 8, 11.


Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), edited by Miriam Brody (Penguin), especially chapters 1–4, 7–9, 12, 13 sections ii and vi.


