M.A. Issues in Modern Culture

Reading List 2019–20
AUTUMN TERM
AUTHORS

1.

Walter Pater
Professor Matthew Beaumont


Further Reading:
- Denis Donohue, *Walter Pater: Lover of Strange Souls* (Knopf, 1995)

2.

Henry James
Professor Philip Horne

*The Turn of the Screw*, in *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*, ed. T. J. Lustig, OUP, 1998

Further Reading:
- John Carlos Rowe, *Henry James and the Other*
- Philip Horne, ed. *Henry James: A Life in Letters*

3.

Sui Sin Far
Dr Xine Yao

4.

James Joyce

Dr Scarlett Baron


This is the best critically edited text, but for a helpful introduction and useful notes (as well as for an interesting variant text), see *Ulysses*, ed. Jeri Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

It can also be useful to have to hand


Further Reading:

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (the OUP edition has a good introduction and notes by Jeri Johnson).

James Joyce, *Dubliners* (the OUP edition has a good introduction and notes by Jeri Johnson; I have written an introduction to the 2012 Vintage edition of the stories).


Terence Killeen, *‘Ulysses’ Unbound: A Reader’s Companion to James Joyce’s ‘Ulysses’* (Dublin: Wordwell, 2005).


5.

Virginia Woolf

Scarlett Baron


Further reading


6.

**Katherine Mansfield**

Dr Dennis Duncan


Further Reading:


7.

**Henry Green**

Dr Julia Jordan

Henry Green, *Party Going* (Vintage, 2001) [1939]

Further Reading

Thomas S. Davis, *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life* (Columbia, 2016)


Nick Shepley, *Class, Style, and the Everyday* (OUP, 2016)

8.

**T.S. Eliot**

Dr Dennis Duncan


All in *Collected Poems* (Faber) or *The Poems of T.S. Eliot*, Vol. 1 ed. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (Faber)

**Further Reading:**

- *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* (ed. Frank Kermode)
- *The Letters of T.S. Eliot* (Vols. 1-6)

9.

Samuel Beckett

Dr Julia Jordan


Further Reading:
- Steven Connor, *Samuel Beckett: Repetition, Theory, Text* (Davies Group, 2007)
- Christopher Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1993)

10.

Alfred Hitchcock

Professor Philip Horne

Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943)
Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Rear Window* (1954)

Further Viewing:
- *Rebecca* (1940)
- *Spellbound* (1945); *Notorious* (1946)
- *Strangers on a Train* (1951)
- *Rear Window* (1954)
- *The Wrong Man* (1957)
- *Vertigo* (1958);
- *North by Northwest* (1959)
- *Psycho* (1960)
- *The Birds* (1963)
- *Marnie* (1964)
- *Frenzy* (1972)
- *Family Plot* (1976)

Further Reading:
Raymond Durgnat, *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* (Faber: London, 1974)
François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* [1968] (Granada, 1978)

The Internet Movie Data Base, of course: www.imdb.com
CONTEXTS: MODERNITY AND THE CITY

1.

Modernity and the City

Dr Julia Jordan

The purpose of this seminar is somewhat introductory to ‘Contexts’ as a whole; I have asked you to read some of the seminal Baudelaire metropolitan texts, and to look at some Sophie Calle. I will also likely distribute some other poems for close-reading in the seminar, ones that shed light on the particular intersection between urban encounter, sexuality and chance that will form the central topic of discussion. (It’s not that crucial whether you read the Baudelaire texts in French or English, and differences in translations, far from being avoided, may be in fact be worth raising for discussion. The primary aim of the seminar will be to think about these writers/artists as thinkers about the city and modernity.)

Primary Reading:

Sophie Calle, Double Game (Violette Editions, 2007). This text is quite expensive, but some of it is available online:

Poems to be close-read in class will be circulated: ‘To a Passer-by’ by Baudelaire; (https://fleursdumal.org/poem/224), ‘The Day Lady Died’ by Frank O’Hara, and T.S. Eliot’s ‘Preludes’.

If possible, please also read:

Further Reading (not necessary for the class, but may be of interest if you choose to pursue the topic further):
Lauren Elkin, Flaneuse: the (Feminine) Art of Walking in Cities (London: Chatto & Windus, 2016)
2.

**Underworlds**

Dr Owen Holland

Henry James, *The Princess Casamassima* (1886)

Further Reading:

3.

**Early Cinema and the City: City Symphonies**

Professor Matthew Beaumont

There will be a screening of Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* before the seminar (time and place to be confirmed), and readings (from Vertov, Eisenstein, Trotsky, and others) will be distributed.

Further Reading:
Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism* (OUP, 1994)
Susan McCabe, *Cinematic Modernism* (CUP, 2005)

4.

**The Wireless Imagination**

Dr Dennis Duncan

Virginia Woolf, “Craftmanship”; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zcbYo4JrMaU
Louis MacNeice, “The Dark Tower”;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VjVko1b_fo
Samuel Beckett, “All that Fall”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BY22jmHAS5E

Further Reading:
Todd Avery, Radio Modernism: Literature, Ethics and the BBC, 1922-38 (Ashgate, 2007)
Debra Rae Cohen et al., Broadcasting Modernism (University Press of Florida, 2013)

5.

Hauntings

Dr Owen Holland

Margaret Oliphant, A Beleaguered City (1880), in A Beleaguered City And Other Tales Of The Seen And The Unseen, ed. Jenni Calder (Canongate)

6.

Filming New York

Professor Philip Horne

Films by Martin Scorsese
Taxi Driver (1976)
The King of Comedy (1983)

Further Viewing:
Mean Streets (1974)
Italianamerican (1974)
New York, New York (1977)
Raging Bull (1980)
After Hours (1985)
GoodFellas (1990)
Bringing Out the Dead (1999)

Further Reading:
Peter Brunette (ed.), Martin Scorsese Interviews (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1999)
Ian Christie and David Thompson (eds), Scorsese on Scorsese (Faber, 2003)
Paul Schrader, Taxi Driver, screenplay (Faber, 1990)
Paul Schrader, Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer (Berkeley: University of California, 1972)
Martin Scorsese and Michael Henry Wilson, A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese through American Movies (Faber 1999; book of excellent long documentary)
Martin Scorsese & Nicholas Pileggi, Goodfellas (script), Faber
Amy Taubin, *Taxi Driver* (London: British Film Institute, 2000)
Michael Henry Wilson, *Scorsese on Scorsese* (Cahiers du Cinéma, 2011)
Paul Schrader, *Taxi Driver* (script) (Faber)
Amy Taubin, *Taxi Driver* (BFI Modern Classics)
Paul A. Woods (ed.), *Scorsese: A Journey through the American Psyche* (Plexus)
For early script for *The King of Comedy*, see

7.

**TV and the City: The Wire**

Professor Matthew Beaumont

David Simon et al., *The Wire*, Season One (13 episodes, 2002)

Further Viewing:


Further Reading:

Alvarez, Rafael, *The Wire: Truth Be Told* (Canongate, 2009)
*Criticism*, 52.3 (2010): 373-98
Jameson, Fredric, ‘Realism and Utopia in *The Wire,*’ *Criticism*, 52.3-4 (2010):
359-372
and the Socially Conscious Text’; in T. Potter and C.W. Marshall (eds), *The
Wire: Urban Decay and American Television*, (Continuum, 2009), 177-189
Marshall, C.W. and Potter, T., “I am the American Dream”: Modern Urban
Tragedy and the Borders of Fiction,’ in Marshall and Potter (eds), *The Wire:
Urban Decay and American Television*, (Continuum, 2009), 1-14.

8.

**Print Culture**

Dr Dennis Duncan

Ezra Pound, “Small Magazines” (available online here:
https://library.brown.edu/cds/mjp/pdf/smallmagazines.pdf)

Further Reading:

Faye Hammill and Mark Hussey, *Modernism’s Print Cultures* (London: Bloomsbury,
2016)
9.

**Psychogeography**

Professor Matthew Beaumont


Further reading

Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography' (1955)

10.

**Blackness and the City**

Dr Christine ‘Xine’ Yao

Nella Larsen, *Passing*
Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun*

Further Reading:
  - William A Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*
  - Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*
  - Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”
SPRING TERM
AUTHORS

1.

Patricia Highsmith
Dr Matthew Sperling

Patricia Highsmith, *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1955)

Further Reading and Viewing:

- Film adaptations: Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Strangers on a Train* (1952); René Clément (dir.), *Purple Noon [Plein Soleil]* (1960); Wim Wenders (dir.), *The American Friend* (1977); Anthony Minghella (dir.), *The Talented Mr Ripley* (1999); Liliana Cavani (dir.), *Ripley’s Game* (2002); Todd Haynes (dir.), *Carol* (2015)

2.

Sylvia Plath
Dr Linda Freedman

Collected Poems (Faber 1981)

Further Reading:

- *The Bell Jar* (1966)
- *Johnny Panic and the Bible of Dreams and other prose writings* (1979)

*Sylvia Plath* edited and with an introduction by Harold Bloom (1989)
3.

**James Baldwin**

Dr Nick Spengler

*Notes of a Native Son* (1955)

Further reading


4.

**Ann Quin**

Dr Julia Jordan


Further Reading

Alice Butler, ‘Ann Quin’s Nighttime Ink: A Postscript’, June 2013,


5.

**Maxine Hong Kingston**

Dr Christine ‘Xine’ Yao


Further Reading:

6.

**Toni Morrison**

Dr Hugh Stevens


Further Reading:

Trudier Harris, *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991)

7.

**Octavia Butler**

Dr Christine ‘Xine’ Yao

Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979)

Further Reading:

Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016)
8.

**J.M. Coetzee**

Dr Scarlett Baron


Further reading


9.

**Alison Bechdel**

Dr Christine ‘Xine’ Yao

Alison Bechdel, _Fun Home_ (2006)

Further Reading:

Judith Butler, _Bodies That Matter_ (1993)
Alan Hollinghurst

Dr Scarlett Baron


Further Reading


Michele Mendelssohn and Denis Flannery (eds), *Alan Hollinghurst: Writing Under the Influence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

SPECIAL TOPICS

1.

Psychoanalysis and Modern Culture

Dr Benjamin Dawson


1. INTRODUCTION: CULTURE and MASS PSYCHOLOGY
   Freud, ‘Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices’ (1907) SE 9

2. ENCRYPTION and DECODING
   Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Chapter 6 'The Dream Work', SE 4 (or any recent translation (i.e. OUP, Penguin), §§ (a) The Work of Condensation, (b) The Work of Displacement, (c) The Means of Representation in Dreams, (d) Considerations of Representability, and (i) Secondary Revision. (NB. in the OUP translation of the original 1900 edition, 'Secondary Revision' is §(h))
   ‘Submarine Telegraphy’, *Scientific American* vol. LXXI, no. 8 (Aug 25. 1894), 122

3. ANXIETY and DANGER
   Otto Rank, ‘Infantile Anxiety’ (1924), in *The Trauma of Birth* (London: Kegan Paul, 1929)
   Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), SE 20
   Ernst Junger, ‘On Danger’ (1931), *New German Critique* 59 (1993), 27-32

4. WAR and MASCULINITY
Freud, ‘Thoughts for the Time on War and Death’ (1915) & ‘On Transience’ (1915)
Freud, ‘Why War?’ (1933), SE 14 and 22, Pelican Freud, 12
Joan Rivière, ‘Hate, Greed, and Aggression’ (1937), in Joan Rivière and Melanie Klein, Love, Hate and Reparation (Norton, 1964)

5. MONOTHEISM and TRAUMA
Freud, Moses and Monotheism (1934-38), SE 23, Pelican Freud 13, also in New Penguin Classic, Mass Psychology
Leanne Howe, Savage Conversations (Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 2019)
Freud, ‘Remembering, Repeating and Working Through’ (1914), SE 12
Queer Literature, Queer Theories

Dr Hugh Stevens

This series of seminars will consider a range of works from the late nineteenth century that will help us think theoretically and historically about gender identities, about sexual identities, and about the relationship between gender and sexual desire. On the one hand there is a well-established history of same-sex desires and ‘homosexual’ identities. On the other hand we are becoming ever more aware of a history of gender identities that challenge the binary between masculinity and femininity. Is there a relashionship between sexual dissidence and gender dissidence? These are big questions, and we probably won’t get around to answering them, but we will at least ask them!

Every week we will try and explore relationships between literary material and political and theoretical questions. A fuller reading list will be available in the Autumn term.

Week One: Closet.

Today we consider two American fictions that have been read in relation to the ‘closet’ – Herman Melville’s short novel or novella, Billy Budd (begun in 1888, but first published posthumously in 1924) and Henry James’s short story ‘The Beast in the Jungle’ (1903), and we will ask why these works spoke so powerfully to queer critics in the 1980s and the 1990s. What was the ‘closet’, and how did it shape the expression and constitution of sexual identities. How is it possible to write a novel about a sexual identity when that sexual identity remains a secret? What kinds of relationships between visibility and silence are created by the closet?

Primary reading:
(I recommend editions below but do feel free to use other editions)
Herman Melville, Billy Budd, Sailor, in Billy Budd, Bartleby and Other Stories, ed. Peter Corviello, Penguin, 1997.

Extra reading:
Other fiction: Robert Louis Stevenson, Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1886);
Oscar Wilde, The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890)

Week Two: Coming Out.

Primary reading:
E. M. Forster, Maurice, ed. P. N. Furbank, Penguin, 1971

Week Three: Queer at the Movies

Viewing:
My Beautiful Laundrette (1985)
**Week Four: AIDS: Drama and Activism**

**Week Five: New Formations.**
CHANCE AND THE AVANT GARDE: ACCIDENT, ERROR AND CATASTROPHE IN LITERATURE AND CULTURE FROM 1960 TO THE PRESENT.

Dr Julia Jordan

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION: ALEATORY NARRATIVE. Please read B.S. Johnson, The Unfortunates and listen to John Cage, Music of Changes [on YouTube]

WEEK 2: LUDIC LITERATURE. Please read Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire; images and text from Sophie Calle, Double Game provided in class, as the book is quite expensive!

WEEK 3: ACCIDENTAL TEXTS I. Please read Brigid Brophy, In Transit.

WEEK 4: ACCIDENTAL TEXTS II. Please read J. G. Ballard, Crash.

WEEK 5: 21ST CENTURY CATASTROPHE. Please read Tom McCarthy, Remainder; and listen to William Basinski, Disintegration Loops [available on YouTube, please listen in advance]

Metaphors of chance and the accidental can be said to dominate the post-’45 period of literature and art. In a postwar period characterized by fragmentation, with a backdrop of the new science of uncertainty and the emergence of chaos theory, scientific and cultural disciplines move towards an interest in the competing forces of order and disorder. Indeed, postmodernism itself can be understood as part of this shift, as culture moves away from a modernist mourning for lost meaning and instead begins to articulate an affinity with indeterminism and uncertainty. Novels are broken up to become shuffleable; in the visual arts artists work with found objects, and with paint thrown randomly onto canvases; John Cage and Samuel Beckett let the accidental determine the precepts of their artistic composition.

In the period from 1960s to the present, then, chance and the accident become fundamental to cultural production, and this course will investigate the extent to which this is particularly true of post-1960 literature and literary theory. We will read texts that take aleatory precepts as central organizing factors (the shuffleable narrative of B.S. Johnson, the ludic experimentation of Nabokov and Calle, the collisions, crashes and catastrophes of Brophy and McCarthy) and explore concepts such as jouissance and the clinamen. In doing so we will discuss the extent to which the commonly held crisis of representation that seems to take place in this period is fundamentally a crisis of uncertainty, as Robert Coover writes: ‘All of us today are keenly aware that we are undergoing a radical shift in sensibilities. We are no longer convinced of the nature of things, of design as justification. Everything seems itself random.’

Further Reading
Ross Chambers, Loiterature (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999)
Joseph M Conte, Design and Debris: A Chaosics of Postmodern American Fiction
(Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002)


Metafiction and the Novel After 1945

Dr Andrew Dean

‘Novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of the Author.’ So said John Barth about some of his own writing. ‘If this sort of thing sounds unpleasantly decadent,’ he continues, ‘nevertheless it’s about where the genre began, with Quixote imitating Amidis of Gaul, Cervantes pretending to be Cid Hamete Benengeli (and Alonso Quijano pretending to be Don Quixote [...].’ Barth’s reminder that the novel has its roots in metafiction reorients the common-sensical accounts we may carry around with us about the history of the form. Here, it is not realism, but rather metafiction, that signals the emergence of the novel. It is a perspective that, to say the least, challenges the claims that have been made on behalf of that endlessly debated genre of writing, ‘postmodern metafiction.’ For those who think that self-reference represents the final victory of a particular moment in capitalism, or that it makes the form newly responsible to the historically marginalized, or that it has any determinate position at all – the longer history of metafiction will forever be a difficult problem to navigate.

In this option we will seek to understand the origins, poetics, and potential value of a distinctive – but anything but unique – global form of writing that became particularly prestigious after 1945. In the first two weeks we will examine the critical reception of ‘postmodern metafiction,’ consider well-known examples of such writing, and develop a language for addressing different kinds of metafictional endeavour. In the remaining weeks, we will be examining in particular the careers of three major metafictional authors, whose work only fits obliquely into the genre – Philip Roth, Janet Frame, and J. M. Coetzee. Reading deeply into the careers, we will be able to draw out the different possibilities and achievements of such writing, as well as how it might help authors to address issues specific to their oeuvre and writing contexts. What emerges is a much more variegated understanding of self-reference in the novel after 1945.

Week 1: Introduction

Reading:

1) It would help to have read widely in the history of the novel, and particularly works that might be considered to be ‘metafictional’. By way of introduction, read one or more of the following texts that you have not already read. Please note that this reading will not be addressed directly in class.

   Cervantes, Don Quixote; Lawrence Sterne, Tristram Shandy; Carlyle, Sartor Resartus; Henry James, ‘The Turn of the Screw’, ‘The Figure in the Carpet’, ‘The Private Life’; Oscar Wilde, A Picture of Dorian Gray, ‘The Critic As Artist’; James Joyce, The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man; Vladimir Nabokov, Pale Fire; Thomas Pynchon, V., The Crying of Lot 49.

2) The seminar will be divided into two sections.
a) The critical reception of metafiction (critical reading to be provided).
b) We will discuss selections from J. L. Borges's *Labyrinths* and *Don Quixote*.

**Week 2: The Heroic Moment of Metafiction**

Reading: Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse*...

Criticism: selections from 1960s and early 1970s criticism, centring on Barth and Gass.

**Week 3: Ghosts**

Reading: Seminar discussion will focus on *The Ghost Writer*. It would help to have read *Goodbye Columbus* (selections), *Portnoy’s Complaint*, and *The Facts*. Selections from Roth’s early critical reception will be provided.

**Week 4: Faces in the Water**

Reading: Seminar discussion will focus on Janet Frame’s *Faces in the Water* and her autobiographies. It would help to have read ‘Jan Godfrey’, *Faces in the Water*, and *Living in the Maniototo*. Selections from Frame’s early critical reception will be provided.

**Week 5: Foes**

Reading: Seminar discussion will focus on *Life & Times of Michael K*. It would help to have read: *Dusklands*, and selections from Coetzee’s criticism and essays in *Doubling the Point*. Some archival material will be provided.
The idea of a machine that can write of its own accord goes back to Swift and beyond. However, in the wake of the cybernetic boom that followed the Second World War, it acquired a new urgency. In popular fiction, in avant-garde writing, and in the emerging fields of computing science and critical theory, the notion of the literature machine resonated powerfully at midcentury. This course will look at some of the key works that address the automation of the creative process along with its corollary, the author who cedes agency to procedures or constraints. Alongside these, we will read some of the ways in which the literature machine has been theorized, both at the time and subsequently.

**Week 1: Precursors**
It would be a mistake to think that the literature machine arrived out of nowhere at the dawn of the modern computing era. In the first session we'll consider some precursors, including the tables and volvelles of Ramón Llull's *Ars Magna*, and the literature machines of Swift, Mallarmé, and Borges.

**Reading:**

**Week 2: Cybernetics**
This week, we'll look at some of the theoretical underpinnings of the twentieth century literature machine, notably the link between cybernetics and structuralism.

**Reading:**

**Week 3: The Physical Book**
This week we'll look at the physicality of the book itself and a variety of works which treat it—cutting it up, unbinding it, or defacing it—in order to produce a reading experience which goes beyond the agency of the original author.

**Reading:**
Week 4: Constraint
Self-imposed constraints on what an author can or can’t write are as old as rhyme and metre. But among the experimentalists of the 1960s they are ratcheted up to an almost impossible degree. A novel that denies itself the letter e: the author is almost squeezed out of the creative process. This week we’ll look at the shifting conceptions of authorial agency that underpin these experiments in restriction.

Reading:

Week 5: Where Are We Now?
In the age of neural networks and Big Data, treatments of the literature machine are notably darker than those we have seen so far. We’ll finish off by looking at the responses to a computer-generated poem published in an august literary journal, and at Tom McCarthy’s *Satin Island* which wonders whether the machine might not already be with us.

Reading:

Selected Reading
6.

**Contemporary Poetry**

Dr Matthew Sperling

This module offers an introduction to some major voices in British and Irish poetry from the last few decades. Focussing on works by two writers per week, we will consider the relation of contemporary poetry to personal and social histories; to landscapes both urban and rural; to grief and remembrance; to fractures of identity that run along lines of class, race and gender; and to the nature of language and subjectivity. The module offers the opportunity to study the work of experimental writers as well as writers working in more traditional forms, and to engage with work that has received considerable scholarly attention alongside more recent work that has so far received very little. We will pay close attention to the linguistic and formal qualities of poems and to their social, historical and political contexts. We will also consider the importance of the ways in which writers are situated within literary culture, in relation to poetic movements and networks; to magazines and publishing houses; to educational institutions; and to literary prizes and the shaping of public reputations.

**Week One: Archives of History**


Jay Bernard, *Surge* (Chatto & Windus, 2019)

**Week Two: Place / Space**


Alice Oswald, *Dart* (Faber & Faber, 2002)

**Week Three: Speaking Selves**


**Week Four: Intersections**


Sarah Howe, *Loop of Jade* (Chatto & Windus, 2015)

**Week Five: Postmodern Elegies**


Denise Riley, ‘A Part Song’ (2012), available online from the *London Review of Books* and collected in *Say Something Back* (Picador, 2016)

**Selected Further Reading**

Neal Alexander and David Cooper (ed.), *Poetry and Geography: Space and Place in Post-War Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013)