

Modern British Classics



Course Description

In this course students will read a range of classic literary works in the British tradition. Spanning from some of the earliest novels in the English language such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and up to contemporary critically acclaimed works like Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000). In surveying these British classics we will explore the development of Anglophone literacy since the 18th Century, as well as the various ways that literature has served as a cultural register of the major shifts and transformations shaping British society during the modern era. In this latter vein, historical topics examined will include: the rise and fall of the British Empire, the social processes of urbanization, industrialization and de/colonization, the trauma of two world wars, and changing norms regarding gender and sexuality.

Special attention will be paid to questions of national identity and cultural belonging in modern Britain. That is, debates over what it means to be "English" or "British," and what defines "English-ness" or "British-ness." Similarly, attention will be paid to the changing social character of London—the symbolic center of modern British life, and frequent backdrop for these debates about national culture and identity—and its growth from imperial capital and industrial urban center, into a global metropolis and financial hub.

While reading these "great books" students will be urged to reflect upon the role of the "literary canon" itself, and consider its relation to current debates about historical representation and political bias in social and cultural institutions like the publishing industry and the university.

Required Texts

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*, Penguin. (1813)
 Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*, Oxford UP. (1899)
 Defoe, Daniel. *Robinson Crusoe*, Oxford UP. (1719)
 Dickens, Charles. *Great Expectations*, Oxford UP. (1861)
 Eliot, George. *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*, Oxford UP. (1861)
 Fielding, Henry. *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, Penguin. (1742)
 Joyce, James. *Dubliners*, Oxford UP. (1914)
 Lawrence, D.H. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Penguin. (1928)
 Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Signet. (1949)
 Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*, Random House. (1981)
 Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*, MIT Press. (1818)
 Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*, Vintage. (2000)
 Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mariner. (1925)

Grade Breakdown

Your grade will be based on the weighted breakdown below.

Assignment	Weighted Value
Mid-Term Exam #1	20%
Mid-Term Exam #2	20%
Final Exam	40%
-In Class Portion	-20%
-Take Home Portion	-20%
Class Participation	20%

Schedule

Week 1 – Course Overview

Colley, Linda “Introduction,” from *Britons: Forging The Nation 1707-1837* pp.1-10;
 Said, Edward “Narrative and Social Space” from *Culture and Imperialism* pp.62-79
 Williams, Raymond, “When Was Modernism?” and “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism” from *The Politics of Modernism* pp.31-48;

Tues 01/16 – Questioning the Canon: What Makes A Classic?

Thurs 01/18 – Beginnings: Modernity and the British Tradition

Week 2 – The Origins of The English Novel

Defoe, Daniel *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

Tues 01/23 – Defoe; pp. 5-193

Thurs 01/25 – Defoe; pp. 194-258

Week 3 – The Comic Picaresque

Fielding, Henry *Joseph Andrews* (1742)

Tues 01/30 – Fielding, Book I-III; pp. 61-274

Thurs 02/01 – Fielding, Book IV; pp. 275-334

Week 4 – Gender and/in “Society”

Austen, Jane *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

Tues 02/06 – Austen, Volume 1-2; pp.5-232

Thurs 02/08 – Austen, Volume 3; pp. 235-367

Week 5 – The Gothic and Romantic Science

Shelley, Mary *Frankenstein or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818)

Tues 02/13 – Shelley, Volumes I-II; pp. 1-126

Thurs 02/15 – Shelley, Volume III; pp. 127-188

Guest Discussants: Avery J. Wiscomb and Jack Quirk

Week 6 – Mid-Term #1

Tues 02/20 – *NO CLASS*: Mid-Term Review

Thurs 02/22 – Mid-Term Exam #1

Week 7 – The Victorian Novel

Dickens, Charles *Great Expectations* (1861)

Tues 02/27 – Dickens, Volume I-II; pp. 3-296

Thurs 03/01 – Dickens, Volume III; pp. 299-442

Week 8 – Industry and Empire

Eliot, George *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe* (1861)

Conrad, Joseph *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Tues 03/06 – Eliot ALL; pp.3-161

Thurs 03/08 – Conrad ALL; pp. 103-187

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 09 – Sex and The Working Classes

Lawrence, D.H. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928); Joyce, James selections from *Dubliners* (1914)

Tues 03/20 – Lawrence ALL; pp. 5-302

Thurs 03/22 – Joyce, “The Sisters,” “An Encounter,” “Araby,” “Eveline,” “After the Race,”
“Two Gallants,” “The Boarding House” pp. 3-52; “Counterparts,” “Clay,” “A
Painful Case,” pp. 66-90; “A Mother,” “Grace,” pp.106-137

Week 10 – Modernity and Consciousness

Woolf, Virginia *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925)

Tues 03/27 – Woolf, TBD

Thurs 03/29 – Woolf, TBD

Week 11 – Mid-Term Exam #2

Tues 04/03 – ***NO CLASS***: Mid-Term Review

Thurs 04/05 – Mid-Term Exam #2

Week 12 – Trauma and Dystopia

Orwell, George *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

Tues 04/10 – Orwell, Part 1-2

Thurs 04/12 – Orwell, Part 3

Week 13 – The Post-Colonial Novel

Rushdie, Salman *Midnight's Children* (1981)

Tues 04/17 – Rushdie, Book One; pp.3-138

Thurs 04/19 – *NO CLASS*: Carnival

Week 14 – The Post-Colonial Novel, cont.

Rushdie, Salman *Midnight's Children* (1981)

Tues 04/24 – Rushdie, Book Two; pp. 141-410

Thurs 04/26 – Rushdie, Book Three; pp. 413-552

Week 15 – A Contemporary Classic

Smith, Zadie *White Teeth* (2000)

Tues 05/01 – Smith, Ch.1-13; pp. 1-301

Thurs 05/03 – Smith, Ch.14-20; pp. 302-448

Week 16 -- Finals Week

Final Exam Date TBD