

Oxford University Summer Programme in English Literature 2009

Introduction to Middle English Literature

This course offers an opportunity to explore the rich and varied literature of medieval England. Moving through a range of genres including dream vision, elegy, romance, lyric and drama, we will discuss Middle English literature in the light of linguistic, historical and literary contexts. We will also explore how different critical traditions have attended medieval literature and will consider how our best guide to interpretation is often to be found in the manuscript contexts in which the works survive. Texts will include Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, and the morality play *Everyman*.

Tutor: **Dr Roger Dalrymple** is Senior Lecturer in Education at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College and was formerly Fellow and Tutor in English at St Hugh's College, Oxford.

Shakespeare and Politics: Performances Then and Now

All performances of Shakespeare's plays are bound up in the politics of their time, but at given points in history some have seemed more obviously 'political' than others. In this seminar we shall discuss screen extracts from productions of plays that have particular political dimensions today: *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merchant of Venice*. We shall also consider Shakespeare's own dangerous brush with Elizabethan politics in a historic performance of *Richard II*; speculate on his contribution to Sir Thomas More, and explore Macbeth's connection with a plot to assassinate King James the First.

Tutor: **Dr John O'Connor** is Senior Visiting Lecturer at Cornell University, USA, and was formerly Principal Lecturer in English at Westminster College, Oxford.

Shakespeare: The Drama of Literary Contexts

Nearly all of Shakespeare's plays derived from earlier literary sources and plots. This course will consider the literary contexts and traditions influential upon Shakespeare, examining what these can tell us about his aims and techniques for his plays, particularly as literature for performance. We will consider *The Winter's Tale*, *As You Like It*, *Othello*, and *Julius Caesar*, for what they reveal about the tensions between literary originality, popular narratives, and historical knowledge. The classes will examine the sometimes perfunctory, sometimes surprising, sometimes contradictory, yet always compelling ways in which Shakespeare used the sources he did. Ultimately, we will address the question of what made Shakespeare, rather than his sources, the most successful playwright of all time.

Tutor: **Johanna Harris** teaches sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English literature for Oxford University.

The English Romantic Poets

The 'Romantic' period (c1780-1840) saw one of the great flowerings of creativity in England, particularly in poetry, alongside a great radicalization of politics. The course will consider the major poets of the period in their intellectual context, exploring their formal innovations and interests in older traditions, and their new ideas of selfhood and politics. We

will focus on the works of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lord Byron, and John Keats, with opportunities to explore the works of Walter Scott, Percy Shelley, Mary Robinson, William Blake, John Clare, and others.

Tutor: **Dr Tom MacFaul** is a lecturer at Merton College, Oxford, where he teaches English literature from the Renaissance to Romanticism.

Jane Austen

In this course we shall be reading the work of Jane Austen with close critical attention in order to explore the qualities that have kept her novels among the world's favourite fiction for nearly two hundred years. We shall explore the structure and analyse the style of the six major novels, and extracts from some of the early works and fragments. We shall focus on the English language of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the narrative voice, focalisers and perspective, irony, dialogue, characterisation, and elements of style such as lexis and syntax.

Tutor: **Dr Sandie Byrne** is Director of the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education English literature and creative writing international summer schools, and tutor for OUDCE online courses in English literature; she was formerly Fellow and Tutor in English at Balliol College, Oxford, and Professor of English at the University of Lincoln.

Victorian Fiction

Novelists in the middle decades of the Victorian period produced searching analyses of their society, exploring its penchant for conformity, as well as its volatile mix of ideas about religion, politics, industry and empire. Representing the lives of all classes, the works of Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy provide a cross-section of views in the contexts of the metropolitan, provincial and rural worlds. This course will examine three of these writers' masterpieces – *Bleak House*, *Middlemarch* and *The Return of the Native*.

Tutor: **Dr John Ballam** teaches English literature and creative writing for Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, and is a Visiting Fellow at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

Modernist Fiction

In this course we will be exploring key prose works of the modernist movement, including Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and selections from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Seminars will explore how trends in psychology and psychoanalysis influenced literary form and language, and consider how fiction of the period drew on, as well as reacted against, the Victorian realist novel. Other writers discussed will include Joseph Conrad, Henry Green, and Katherine Mansfield.

Tutor: **Dr William May** is Teaching Fellow in twentieth-century literature at Southampton University, and was formerly Lecturer in English at St Anne's College, Oxford, and Visiting Lecturer at Bath Spa University.

Contemporary British Fiction

Through close study of texts by Ian McEwan, Angela Carter, Martin Amis, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Zadie Smith, this course will explore the stylistic innovations and major themes of British fiction from 1975-2000. We will examine how these texts use postmodern devices such as magic realism and metafiction, how they explore questions about identity, history,

and science, and how they reflect contemporary issues concerning race, gender, class, art, and the approaching millennium.

Tutor: **Dr Jennifer Dunn** is Lecturer in English at Oxford University, and tutor for Oxford University Department for Continuing Education online courses in English literature.

Provisional Seminar Timetable

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09.00-10.30	Plenary lecture	Plenary lecture	Plenary lecture	Plenary lecture	Plenary lecture
11.00-13.00	Middle English Literature Shakespeare and Politics Jane Austen	Shakespeare: The Drama of Literary Contexts The English Romantic Poets	Middle English Literature Shakespeare and Politics Jane Austen	Shakespeare: The Drama of Literary Contexts The English Romantic Poets	
14.00-16.00	Modernist Fiction	Victorian Fiction Contemporary British Fiction	Modernist Fiction	Victorian Fiction Contemporary British Fiction	