Class code: ENGL-UA 9060-001

Instructor Details: Dr. Courtney Hopf
Consultation times: M-F by appt.

Class Details: Major British Writers, Fall 2017

Prerequisites: None

Class Description: What are the boundaries of a narrative world? How and why do certain texts capture the cultural imagination and persist for generations or even centuries? This course attempts to tackle these questions by considering authors and texts with significant literary ‘afterlives’ that have persisted to the contemporary moment. What are the different ways in which iconic narratives get taken up by later authors to be adapted, expanded, and revised, and what do these revisions tell us about their historical moments? We will look at major works by Shakespeare, Austen, Woolf, and other great British writers to explore what makes their work so enduring. Excursions include a trip to the theatre, an exciting night-time tour, and the Geffrye Museum of the Home in Hoxton.

Desired Outcomes:
1. To foster an informed enjoyment of the literature of Britain, and to enable students to begin identifying their own connections between literary works, themes and forms.
2. To acquire a basic understanding of literary forms and techniques as well as a theoretical framework regarding literary adaptation and expansion; to develop sophistication as literary critics.
3. To acquire a sense of the historical and social contexts of the texts studied, and begin to see how their narratives interact with the spaces and places of Britain.

Assessment Components:
- Essay 1: "Poetry and Place" assignment – 1,300-1,800 words, 15%
- Essay 2: Research, comparative – 1,800-2,200 words, 35%
- Essay 3: Single text – 1,400-1,800 words, 20%
- Blog posts, graded as a whole – 500-1000 words each, 10%
- Participation (timely attendance, sophisticated contribution to discussion, etc.) – 15%

Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component results in failure of the class.

Assessment Expectations:

Grade A: Demonstrates a truly sophisticated grasp of the material and a concentrated, specific, interesting argument. Well-structured and clearly presented, with an excellent sense of language and tone. Incorporates textual and/or contextual evidence to great effect, with a solid understanding of form, context and genre. Virtually free of grammatical errors.

Grade B: Close engagement with text and/or context; good insights linked to evidence; generally well written and clear, but does not reach the heights of sophisticated critical analysis seen in an A paper.

Grade C: Demonstrates basic knowledge and some effort in close analysis; may have an argument that is poorly outlined/structured, or may lack central argument. May make poorly substantiated or subjective claims, or do a lot of summarizing.

Grade D: Errors of fact; no evidence that texts were read, slipshod or disorganised thinking; failure to relate generalisations to evidence; careless writing.

Grade F: Complete lack of organisation; no evidence of careful thought; culpably bad writing.
Required Text(s)

***Please note: Please purchase the required editions. Not only do they have useful critical apparatus, but it makes it much easier for us all to get on the same page during discussion.

Please also note: In many cases ebook editions contain textual errors and other differences (this is particularly the case with Cloud Atlas). While I understand you may want to get ebook versions to save money (and space), please if at all possible invest in the print editions listed below.


Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead by Tom Stoppard, Atlantic Books, ISBN 0802132758


The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson, Penguin, ISBN 0141439734

A Room of One’s Own by Virginia Woolf, Penguin Modern Classics, ISBN 978-0141183534

Fingersmith by Sarah Waters, Virago, ISBN 1860498833


Supplemental Texts(s) (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)


Kaye Mitchell (ed.) Sarah Waters: Contemporary Critical Perspectives (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) ISBN 1441199411


Internet Research Guidelines

You are strongly advised to use only those sources that you access through the NYU system, i.e., the MLA Bibliography database, Project Muse, JSTOR, LION (Literature Online), Cambridge Collections Online (where you will find all the ‘Cambridge Companions’ listed above [find via ‘Research’/’Databases’/ ‘Cambridge Collections’], etc.

Additional Req. Equipment

It is always useful to have a camera/your phone on hand for excursions – as well as an umbrella!

CLASS MEETINGS

– Reading and writing assignments are due for the class on which they are listed.
– Blog posts should be posted by 10 am on the day of class.

Session 1

Reading: ‘An Insatiable Market for Minor Characters: Genre in the Contemporary Literary
• Introduction to the course
• Introduction to periods of British literature
• Literary rewrites – key questions and contexts

Session 2
Reading: *Hamlet* – full play
Writing: Blog post 1 – Focus on a specific element of *Hamlet* (as listed out in class)

• Elizabethan England
• Introduction to reading and thinking about poetry
• *Hamlet* and his incarnations
• Essay 1 assigned – ‘Poetry and Place’

Session 3
Reading: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, plus “Poetry and Place” poems (download on NYUClasses)
Writing: Blog post 2 – Is this play a comedy?

• Expanding *Hamlet*
• How to write about poetry / close reading Romantic poetry

Session 4
Reading: First half of *Pride and Prejudice*, up to page 189 (end of ch. 34 / vol. II ch 11)
Writing: Blog post 3 – Close read a scene and consider one or more of the following: how social class functions, how people say one thing but mean another, how relationships are established

• Understanding class and propriety in the novel

Excursion: Visit to the Geffrye Museum, Hoxton – please bring your copy of *P&P* and notebook, etc. as we’ll be discussing the novel over afternoon tea in a meeting room at the museum after our visit.

Session 5
Reading: Second half of *Pride and Prejudice*, plus Guardian article: “Mary Bennet sequels? Jane Austen’s minor characters are neglected for a reason”
Writing: Essay 1 due

• Introduction to Romanticism
• The many afterlives of Jane Austen

Session 6
Reading: *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
Writing: Blog post 4 – If you have not read the novella before: how does the story differ from your mental picture of Jekyll and Hyde as built by the cultural consciousness? If you have: What really separates Jekyll and Hyde? How different are they?

• The many and varied afterlives of Jekyll and Hyde
• Film clips and textual excerpts

**EVENING EXCURSION:** *Jekyll and Hyde* at the Ambassadors Theatre, 7:30 pm

Session 7
Reading: *A Room of One’s Own* by Virginia Woolf, “Ulysses” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson and “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T.S. Eliot
Writing: Blog post 5 – Tennyson was a Victorian poet, Eliot a Modernist. Based on these two poems, along with Woolf’s arguments in *A Room of One’s Own*, speculate about how we might categorize the Modernist period and how it differs from the Victorian era.
Session 8
- Debrief on performance of *Jekyll and Hyde*
- From Victorianism to Modernism

Reading: Get started on *Fingersmith*, it’s a biggie! (I’d suggest you shoot to have 100 pages read this weekend – it’s a page-turner so that shouldn’t be too hard)

Make-up Class and Evening excursion – The Cloak and Dagger Tour
This is a new, interactive tour that combines traditional street tours with live theatre. We’ll meet at the historic George Inn in Southwark for a 6 pm start. Detailed instructions will be given in class.

Session 9
Reading: *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters, Part 1 (p. 175, but good luck not reading on at that point!)
Writing: none today

- Debrief of walking tour, re-reading/re-rewriting the Victorians

FALL BREAK – Friday, 27 October to Sunday, 5 November

Session 10
Reading: *Fingersmith* completed
Writing: Blog post 6 – Pick a way in which you feel the novel rewrites the Victorian and discuss
- Researching for literary criticism – please bring your laptops today

Session 11
Reading: None, but I’d suggest you get a head start on *Cloud Atlas*
Writing: full draft of research paper – bring in three copies
- Video clips
- Draft workshop of research papers

Session 12
Reading: *Cloud Atlas*, first four chapters (Ewing, Frobisher, Luisa Rey, Cavendish)
- Genres at work in Mitchell’s fiction
- Final essay assigned

Essay 2 due – please submit to NYU Classes/Turnitin by 2 pm.

Session 13
Reading: *Cloud Atlas*, completed
Writing: Blog post 7 – focus on anything you like
- Discussion of full text
- Film clips and comparisons

Session 14
Reading: nothing new, but bring in your copy of *Cloud Atlas*
Writing: Full draft of your final essay
Other: Come prepared to speak for 5 minutes on chosen text
- In-class draft workshop of final essay – please bring three copies
- Final thoughts, connections and questions

Session 15
No final exam – Final Essay due through NYU Classes/Turnitin by 5 pm on Monday, 11 December

Classroom
Please arrive on time at the start of class and after the break. You should also leave your phones
Etiquette

turned off for the duration of class. I prefer students to take notes the old-fashioned way and leave the laptops and tablets at home, but if you genuinely prefer to take notes electronically, please just let me know and I’m generally fine with it. I hope you will all participate actively in discussion, and I only ask that you treat others’ opinions with respect.

Required Co-curricular Activities

Performance of The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Ambassador’s Theatre (London) – round trip £4.80 by tube or £3.00 by bus (but it is also very walk-able)

Excursion to the Geffrye Museum (£4.80 round trip by tube)

Evening Southwark tour (round trip £4.80 by tube or you could walk it)

Suggested Co-curricular Activities

- Global Orientations trip in the Footsteps of Jane Austen, Sunday, 17 September
- Global Orientations trip to see King Lear at the Globe Theatre, Monday, 25 September

Your Instructor

I am an American ex-pat and have been living in London since 2010. Prior to that I lived in northern California, where I did my PhD, and Bordeaux, France, where I taught for a year. I also did my MA degree at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, and I studied abroad during undergrad at the University of Kent in Canterbury. I grew up in a very small town in upstate New York (pop. 5,000), which may go some way to explaining the above sentences.

I have taught literature and composition at the university level for over ten years. My research as an academic focuses on literary mass-collaborations (large groups of people writing a single narrative together), so you’ll find that collaboration in general is a big element of this course. I have published articles on collaboration and social media (see Rhizomes and Alluvium), and I have an essay on Cloud Atlas in the first collection of essays on author David Mitchell, titled, surprisingly, David Mitchell: Critical Essays (Gyphi Ltd, 2011), and I am currently co-editing another collection on David for Bloomsbury Ltd, in which I’ll be publishing an interview I did with him in June 2016.

NYU GLOBAL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Policies and procedures for Global Academic Centres, including policies on academic integrity and the Study Away Standard, can be found here: https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/student-services.html

Absences: Key information on NYU London’s absence policy, how to report absences, and what kinds of absences can be excused can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/attendance-policy.html

NYU London work submission policies can be found here: http://www.nyu.edu/london/academics/academic-policies.html

Classroom conduct: Academic communities exist to facilitate the process of acquiring and exchanging knowledge and understanding, to enhance the personal and intellectual development of its members, and to advance the interests of society. Essential to this mission is that all members of the University Community are safe and free to engage in a civil process of teaching and learning through their experiences both inside and outside the classroom. Accordingly, no student should engage in any form of behaviour that interferes with the academic or educational process, compromises the personal safety or well-being of another, or disrupts the administration of University programs or services.

Please refer to the NYU London Disruptive Student Behaviour Policy at https://goo.gl/Nvt5Vu for examples of disruptive behaviour and guidelines for response and enforcement.