

<b>Module Title:</b>	<b>Constructing the Self: Victorian to Modern Literature (Compulsory)</b>
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### **Module Overview**

This module develops the knowledge and skills introduced at level 1 and gives students a wider and deeper understanding of the traditional material of the Anglophone canon. It covers a chronological period which takes in Victorian writing and early-twentieth-century Modernism.

The module makes students aware of the historical contexts of these literatures, but the primary thematic focus is on identity and the way that the self is constructed and represented through literary discourses, and on how this representation changes over time. The module also ensures that students have a solid basis for understanding English literature from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. This knowledge will be extended and deepened through the optional modules at level 2 and subsequently at level 3.

This module will be assessed through two assignments: a 1500-word essay to be submitted at the mid-point of the course, and a two-hour exam at the end of the module. There will also be formative assessment in the form of seminar presentations, which will give students the opportunity to develop their thinking about the module and to receive feedback from their tutor and their peers.

### **Module Aims**

The module aims to deepen and expand students' understanding of:

- periods of English Literature from the Victorian period to Modernism;
- the developments within literary genres across these periods;
- the theoretical and critical methodologies that underpin the study of these periods;
- key writings and themes in English literature from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries;
- individual authors' writing;
- the development of literary, cultural and social ideas about the self and identity.

The module aims to develop and strengthen students' skills in:

- close reading, analysis and critical thinking;
- oral and written communication;
- independent work and group work in presentations and seminars;
- time management through group presentation planning and essay submission.

### **Learning Outcomes**

By the conclusion of the module students will have a wide knowledge of:

- the key periods, writers and themes of English literature from the Victorian period to Modernism;
- the way that ideas about identity develop and change from the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries;
- the primary theoretical and critical methodologies used to analyse these themes and ideas;
- how to use critical material and theoretical concepts in relation to close textual analysis and critical thinking;
- how to communicate orally in presentations and in written form in essays;
- working both individually and as part of a group;
- how to plan and implement timetables for group presentation work, essay deadlines and exam revision.

### **Module Content**

#### **Week 1**

Lecture

An introduction to the chronological range of the module and to the way in which ideas about identity developed and changed throughout this period. This session will also provide a brief introduction to:

- Victorian literature

- The growth of Modernism

The session will develop students' understanding of issues relating to historical context and literary genre; both were the focus of level 1 modules. A short description of the module's assessments will also be provided.

Seminar  
Module orientation

### **Week 2**

Lecture

This session begins a set of lectures on the nineteenth-century novel with a focus on the construction of the self in the writing of Charles Dickens.

Seminar  
Set text: Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837-8)

### **Week 3**

Lecture

This lecture will focus on Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*. We will explore the novel's depiction of Victorian provincial life, the oncoming 'threat' of industrialisation, and the role of gender in Victorian understandings of the self.

Seminar  
Set text: Elizabeth Gaskell, *Cranford* (1851)

### **Week 4**

Lecture

Building on the previous lecture, this session will continue to study Victorian notions of gender and personal identity through a reading of George Eliot's novel *The Mill on the Floss*.

Seminar  
Set text: George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860)

### **Week 5**

Lecture

The module's analysis of literary constructions of the self turns to Victorian poetry, focusing on how Alfred Tennyson develops and reworks Romantic concepts of the self in his poetry. All poems discussed will be available on Literature Online (LION).

Seminar  
Set texts: poems by Alfred Tennyson, to be chosen by tutors and seminar groups.

### **Week 6**

Lecture

This lecture concentrates on the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, examining the ways in which poetic representations of identity are shaped by contemporary social and political debates. All poems discussed will be available on LION.

Seminar  
Set texts: poems by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, to be chosen by tutors and seminar groups.

### **Week 7**

Lecture

This lecture will discuss the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and will analyse their poetry and their paintings in order to explore how both literary and visual art contributes to their constructions of the self. All poems discussed will be available on LION.

Seminar  
Set texts: poems by the Pre-Raphaelite poets, to be chosen by tutors and seminar groups.

**Week 8**

## Lecture

'Art for art's sake': this lecture examines the hedonistic Dorian Gray who sells his soul in order to remain young and beautiful forever. Investigating the themes of decadence and aesthetics, this session will explore questions of identity and beauty in the context of the *fin-de-siecle*.

## Seminar:

Set text: Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891)

**Week 9**

## Lecture

This lecture will study the Modernist poetry of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats in order to show how nineteenth-century notions of psychology and identity are developed and challenged by Modernism. All poems discussed will be available on LION.

## Seminar

Set texts: poems by T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and W.B. Yeats, to be chosen by tutors and seminar groups.

**Easter Vacation****Week 10**

## Lecture

This lecture deals with changes in the conception of identity that occurred in the twentieth century. The focus of the lecture will be the Woman Question and it will trace developments in ideas of female selfhood from the nineteenth century through to the suffragettes. The texts studied will be Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and *A Room of One's Own*.

## Seminar

Set texts: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

**Week 11**

## Lecture

This session looks at the challenge to realist representations of the self in the Modernist novel and explores the way that Modernist writing questions conventional notions of identity in terms of form and content. The focus will be on James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

## Seminar

Set text: James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).

**Week 12**

## Revision

**Week 13**

## Exams/Assessment

**Week 14**

## Exams/Assessment

**Week 15**

## Exams/Assessment

**Methods of Teaching/Learning**

One one-hour lecture and one one-hour seminar each week. The lectures offer a wide coverage of material and it is expected that tutors will focus on selected material from the lectures in the seminars. Seminars will be both tutor- and student-led.

**Selected Texts/Journals****Essential Reading**

Literature Online (LION):  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning (selected poems)  
T.S. Eliot (selected poems)  
Ezra Pound (selected poems)  
Pre-Raphaelite poets (selected poems)  
Alfred Tennyson (selected poems)  
W.B. Yeats (selected poems)

Other Texts:

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008)  
Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006)  
George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2006)  
James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000)  
Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2004)  
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 2000) and *A Room of One's Own* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 2002)

**Recommended Reading**

Armstrong, Isobel, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Politics, Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1993)  
Armstrong, Tim, *Modernism: A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005)  
Bristow, Joseph (ed.), *The Victorian Poet: Poetics and Persona* (London: Croom Helm, 1987)  
David, Deirdre, *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001)  
Edmond, Rod, *Affairs of the Hearth: Victorian Narrative Poetry and the Ideology of the Domestic* (London: Routledge, 1988)  
Fletcher, Ian (ed.), *Decadence and the 1890s* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979)  
Flint, Kate, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993)  
Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993)  
Gilmour, Robin, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature, 1830-90* (London: Longman, 1994)  
Helsing, Elizabeth, Robin Lauterbach Sheets and William Veeder, *The Woman Question: Society and Literature in Britain and America, 1837-1883*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983)  
Johnsen, William A., *Violence and Modernism: Ibsen, Joyce and Woolf* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003)  
Keating, Peter, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1971)  
Kolocotroni, Vassiliki (ed.), *Modernism: an Anthology of Sources and Documents* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998)  
Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism in the Fin de Siecle* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997)  
Leighton, Angela (ed.), *Victorian Women Poets: a Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)  
Levenson, Michael (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999)  
The Modern Word (<http://www.themodernword.com/>)  
Nicholls, Peter, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995)  
Poovey, Mary, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)  
Poovey, Mary, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)  
Pykett, Lyn (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siecle Fictions* (London: Longman, 1996)  
Rainey, Lawrence (ed.), *Modernism: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)  
Tate, Trudi, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1998)  
Trotter, David, *The English Novel in History, 1895-1920* (London: Routledge, 1993)  
Tucker, Herbert F. (ed.), *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999)  
The Victorian Web (<http://www.victorianweb.org>)  
Wheeler, Michael, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period* (London: Longman, 1994)  
Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1958)