Overview

Title

MA English Literature: Contemporary Literature and Culture

About the Course

The Contemporary Literature and Culture pathway allows advanced study of contemporary literature in all its diversity. We examine popular genres, the 21st century novel, contemporary innovations, postcolonial literatures, postmodern poetics and more. Designed to develop advanced theoretical understanding of cultural, social, intellectual and aesthetic contexts, it allows students to engage with some of the most exciting writing of the last forty years.

At Brunel, you'll attend classes focusing on Zadie Smith, Esther Freud, John Ashbery, Salman Rushdie, J H Pryrne, Amitav Ghosh, Ian McEwan, Bollywood films and gangsta rap. An extensive programme of Writers Talking allows you to hear important contemporary writers discussing their own work. The Brunel Centre for Contemporary Writing organises research seminars, or you can make use of the substantial archival holdings of the Brunel University Library. And an excellent team of research-active tutors and practising writers will give you insights into a range of genres and creative practices you may never have encountered before.

To apply for this course, make an application for MA English Literature. In your personal statement you may wish to indicate that you are interested in this pathway. At induction, you will then be given the opportunity to enrol for the Contemporary Literature and Culture pathway.

Aims

The wide-ranging syllabuses for our taught modules aim to confront contemporary literature and culture in their excitement and diversity. In workshops and seminars, students engage in discussion, present their own interpretations and raise new questions for debate. You will develop your skills and expertise in the Dissertation, a major project focusing on the literature of your choice.

On completing our MA English: Contemporary Literature and Culture, you will have skills which are vital for careers in publishing, print and electronic media, the culture industries and education. If you wish to continue your studies at doctoral level, you will have essential research skills, and the opportunity to join a flourishing research culture at Brunel. Additionally, there are financial benefits offered to alumni of the Brunel MA programmes to help you on your way.

Course level

Postgraduate

Study mode

1-year full-time, 2-year part-time
UCAS / PG code

Q300PENGHLIT

Related courses

MA English Literature

MA Creative Writing: The Novel

Special Features

- Taught by well known specialists in the field
- Theoretically informed by the latest work in the field
- Provides a sophisticated framework of cultural and intellectual contexts
- Special emphasis on 21st century and cutting edge writings
- The location of Brunel University in West London places it in the heart of contemporary literary and cultural life
- Important writers and creative practitioners in the School of Arts contribute to teaching the programme and research culture
- You can draw on the School’s new archive of contemporary writing, Archive of the Now, and its Centre for Contemporary Literature

Course Content

You will take two compulsory modules and two optional modules and write a 15,000 word Dissertation.

Compulsory modules

Reading Cultures

This unique, concept-led compulsory module will introduce you to four key dimensions of the critical study of literature and culture, and allow you to explore these – and their connections to each other – through literary and theoretical texts. ‘Reading Power’ opens up questions about the relationship of literature and culture to power, politics, and ideology; ‘Reading Selves’ explores the way in which cultural discourses mediate and construct social identities, and the relation of these processes to power; ‘Reading Others’ considers the other side of the formation of identity, which constructs differences against which identities are defined both within and outside the body politic and ‘imagined community’; ‘Reading Texts’ considers some fundamental aspects of textuality, such as the historical development of reading practices and technologies, the formation of old and new reading communities, and the relation of the text to the contexts explored in the other three sections of the module. This module is split into two blocks (Reading Cultures 1 and Reading Cultures 2) and runs through both teaching terms. It will enable you to develop your own critical methodology as the course develops, building up to the dissertation.

Research and Study Methods

This module will enable you to develop and refine advanced research skills that are fundamental to the study of literature and culture at Masters level and beyond. Sessions will include help with using online resources and maximising access to research libraries; writing ‘research questions’ and project management; advanced written and oral presentation skills; using archives; writing for publication; and preparing for your dissertation.
This module has been designed to meet the requirements of the Arts and Humanities Research Council in terms of preparation of graduate students for advanced level study and doctoral research.

Electives (two from)

Writing Now:
This module introduces some key writers and theoretical debates informing the composition and reception of innovative poetry and prose. It is unique in focusing on 21st century literatures, and on the ways in which cutting-edge literatures expose the contradictions in contemporary culture.

Postcolonial Literature:
This module analyses the emergence of post-colonial literatures during and after European colonialism, and their massive impact on contemporary writing and culture in Britain, the US and Europe.

Popular genres and fictions:
This module examines contemporary popular fictions, and the roots of genres such as Science Fiction, Romance, Detective Fiction, the Western and Travel writing, to investigate how 20th century traditions are renovated for life in the 21st century.

Literature and Philosophy
This module is designed to provide a historical, contextual and analytical grounding for the study of literary theory and aesthetics in the twenty first century. It aims to present the most current ideas in literary theory, aesthetics and philosophy as the result of the sustained interaction between literature and philosophy, and between modern ideas and their historical origins. This is a unique course in the UK taught by world-leading experts in the field working to rethink what the study of ‘literature’ could come to mean.

Dissertation (compulsory for the award of MA)
The MA programme culminates in the production of a 15,000 word dissertation, which will enable you to construct a programme of in-depth research into a chosen aspect of literature and culture of the past 40 years. You will be personally supervised by a member of the English subject team who will assist you in planning and executing the research project.

Teaching and learning
The MA is taught through workshops and seminars, moderated by distinguished research-active staff working in the field. You will be expected to contribute to discussions, present your own interpretations and raise new questions for debate.

Assessment
Students will be assessed using a variety of methods including written work (essays and dissertation), oral presentations, seminar attendance and performance, and organisation and planning of the dissertation. Some assessments will be formative, ie students will be given feedback but not graded; this will enable students to improve and work towards graded assessments.

Careers
On completing the MA, you will have skills which are vital for careers in publishing, print and electronic media, the culture industries and education, as well as other professions such as law, the civil service, advertising, market research and marketing, and financial services and business.

**Entry Criteria**
See MA English Literature