

Máster en Estudios Textuales y Culturales en Lengua Inglesa

60703 - Trends in Contemporary British fiction

Course 2014 - 2015

Curso: 1, Semestre: 2, Créditos: 7.5

Basic information

Teachers

- **María Dolores Herrero Granado** dherero@unizar.es
- **Susana Onega Jaén** sonega@unizar.es

Recommendations to attend this course

The main aim of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the main writers and narrative trends in the field of contemporary British/ Postcolonial fiction. Together with the optional courses "Main Trends in Contemporary US Fiction" and "Alternatives to the Canon", this subject introduces students to relevant critical approaches and the critical analysis of English texts belonging in different geographical and cultural backgrounds. It also seeks to develop students' critical response to these texts.

Course Schedule and Deadlines

Presentation and discussion of the narrative trends included in the programme and application of the main tenets of these trends to the analysis of various types of literary texts (see course planning).

Group analysis of a selection of literary texts from the perspective of the critical approaches presented in the theory sessions (see course planning).

Presentation of a 3,000-word essay: last day of the second semester.

Home

Learning outcomes that define this course

The student, in order to pass the course, will have to show her/his competence in the following skills:

1:

The student can use the basic critical tools to understand and analyse literary texts in English.

2:

The student is capable of testing the explanatory power of the most relevant critical approaches to literary

texts through their application to a corpus of literary texts in English.

3:

The student is capable of developing skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment.

4:

The student can provide a critical response to literary texts in English.

Introduction

Brief presentation of the course

The main aim of this subject is to offer students an introduction to the main writers and trends in the field of contemporary British and postcolonial narrative in English.

Competences

General aims of the course

The expected results of the course respond to the following general aims

The main aim of this course is to provide students with an introduction to the main writers and narrative trends in the field of contemporary British/ postcolonial fiction. The specific aims of this subject are the following: i) to provide the students with a good understanding of the main trends in contemporary British and postcolonial fiction. ii) to familiarise the students with the most relevant writers and works within these trends; iii) to situate these trends against the background of earlier trends in British literature; iv) to improve the students' skills in the use of English in a scholarly and critical environment, v) to reinforce the students' critical response to literary texts.

Context/Importance of the course for the master degree

The main aim of this subject is to provide students with basic knowledge on the main writers and narrative trends in the field of contemporary British/ Postcolonial literature in English. Together with the subjects "Main Trends in Contemporary US Narrative" and "Alternatives to the Canon", this subject introduces several theoretical approaches for the analysis of texts of various kinds so that students can produce their own critical interpretations.

After completing the course, the student will be competent in the following skills:

1:

Developing and applying original ideas in both a professional and research context.

2:

Understanding and applying acquired knowledge to solve problems related to professional and social contexts as well as to broader multidisciplinary contexts.

3:

Being able to interrelate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express informed critical views and provide conclusions in the form of written essays and oral presentations, in clear and appropriate English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences.

4:

After acquiring the required critical and methodological skills, students are expected to possess the ability to carry out a piece of research in an autonomous way.

Relevance of the skills acquired in the course

The proposed aims of this course are crucial to provide students with a sound theoretical and methodological background that will allow them to conduct research in English successfully. Similarly, the specific aims of this subject are essential skills to carry out the research process (i.e. using critical tools for understanding and analysing literary texts in English, applying critical approaches to a corpus of literary texts and developing a critical response to these texts).

The ability to develop and apply original ideas in a professional as well as in a research context is a fundamental skill to conduct successful research in the field of English studies. The same applies to the ability to interrelate knowledge from different subjects, handle complex information, apply the proper methodology and frameworks, express a critical view and provide conclusions in both written essays and oral presentations, in clear and appropriate English, aimed at both specialised and non-specialised audiences, and the ability to conduct work (research) in an autonomous way.

Evaluation

Assessment tasks

The student will prove that he/she has achieved the expected learning results by means of the following assessment tasks:

1:

I. FIRST OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

A) ONGOING ASSESSMENT

B) GLOBAL EXAMINATION (to be determined in the academic calendar):

Assessment task 1. Students are required to write **short critical essays** on literary works or films or on linguistic analyses of texts (depending on the subject) and present them orally in the class. In these essays students are expected to understand theoretical concepts and apply them to the texts under analysis. Correct use of academic spoken and written English (at a C1 level) is expected. These activities will credit students' achievement of learning objectives # 1, 2, 3 and 4. Short essays will be graded from 0 to 10, this grade representing **10%** of the final score of the student.

Assessment task 2. Students will also be required to write a **3,000 word essay** in correct academic English on a specific aspect of the course contents, on a topic previously agreed on with one of the teachers. With this essay the students are expected to demonstrate that they have assimilated the critical approaches presented by the teachers and to prove their ability to use those approaches in the analysis of specific texts. The textual analysis and critical discussion of the readings will credit students' achievement of learning objectives # 1, 2, 3 and 4. This essay will be graded from 0 to 10, this grade representing **90%** of the final score of the student in the course. A pass mark in this essay is a *sine qua non* condition to pass the subject.

Assessment criteria:

Definition of key concepts. Initial hypothesis. Use of a theoretical framework and a methodology. Use of primary sources. Literature review. Argumentation and conclusions = 70%

Independence, originality and critical examination = 10%

Information organization structure of the essay. Layout of the text. Accuracy in the use of language and appropriateness of style = 20%

2:

II. SECOND OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

GLOBAL EXAMINATION (to be determined in the academic calendar):

Assessment task 1. Students will be required to write a **3,000 word essay** in correct academic English on a specific aspect of the course contents, on a topic previously agreed on with one of the teachers. In this essay the students are expected to assimilate the critical approaches to literary texts, films or corpus of texts

presented by the teachers and to prove their ability to use those approaches in the analysis of those texts. The textual analysis and critical discussion will credit students' achievement of learning objectives # 1, 2, 3 and 4. This essay will be graded from 0 to 10, this grade representing **70%** of the final score of the student in the course. A pass mark in this essay is a *sine qua non* condition to pass the subject.

Assessment task 2. **Interview in English.** The student will debate with the teachers relevant aspects of the analysis and interpretation of the compulsory readings. In the interview, the students are expected to apply the theoretical approaches and the analytical methods studied to the analysis of various types of literary, filmic or linguistic texts. The textual analysis and the critical discussion of the readings will prove that the students have achieved learning objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4. The interview will be assessed following the established assessment criteria and the established level of exigency. It will be graded from 0 to 10, this grade representing **30%** of the final score of the student in this subject.

Assessment criteria for Global Examination (both for essay and for the interview):

Use a C1 level of English (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically, in analyses, explanations and discussions of aspects and issues related to the subject/discipline = 30%

Use relevant theoretical frameworks critically and apply methodological approaches appropriately to a corpus of texts in English = 40%

Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustrations, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims and defend critically one's point of view = 30%

Guidelines

Guidelines for preparing the essay and participating in seminars

The students may find it useful to follow the following guidelines:

"Documento de referencia para la elaboración del ensayo"/"Guidelines for writing the essay"

1. Define appropriate key concepts and apply them appropriately to the field of research.
2. Prepare the literature review (i.e. what other scholars have stated about the topic of the essay, or about related topics). Make sure that the literature review is sufficient in scope and relevant regarding the topic under investigation.
3. Define a thesis statement / Define the research questions.
4. State and justify the theoretical framework.
5. Define clearly the analytical categories (where appropriate, indicating overlapping or problematisation of those categories).
6. Describe the analytical methodology used for the study of the topic of the essay.
7. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
8. State a conclusion in accordance with your arguments and relate it to a wider context.
9. Show independence in reading and researching, originality and critical examination.
10. Follow the information and style conventions of the subdisciplinary field (literature, film studies, cultural studies or linguistics).

"Documento de referencia para el desarrollo de los seminarios teóricos y analíticos"/"Guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars"

1. The theoretical part of the seminar, imparted by the teacher, will provide an active learning environment in which students can develop the ability to read/view/analyze critically and conceptually, and therefore to speak and write in the classroom.
2. The seminar will provide general introductions to theoretical frameworks or an application of a given research methodology/framework to a selection of texts/films.
3. Students should bring to the seminar a draft or notes on the text or film under analysis and participate actively in the classroom discussion.
4. Questions can be posed to improve the quality of discussion.
5. Assignment of formal presentations and critical comment may also be requested for stimulating discussion.

(Adapted from www.oid.ucla.edu/students/cutf/cutfguidelines.doc)

Guidelines

The students may find it useful to follow these guidelines:

"Documento de referencia para la elaboración del ensayo"/"Guidelines for writing the essay"

1. Use a C1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically.
2. Define appropriate key concepts and apply them adequately to the field of research.
3. Prepare the literature review (i.e. what other scholars have stated about the topic of the essay, or about related topics). Make sure that the literature review is sufficient in scope and relevant regarding the topic under investigation.
4. Define a thesis statement / Define the research questions.
5. State and justify the theoretical framework.
6. Define clearly the analytical categories (where appropriate, indicating overlapping or problematisation of those categories).
7. Describe the analytical methodology used for the study of the topic of the essay.
8. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
9. State a conclusion in accordance with your arguments and relate it to a wider context
10. Show independence in reading and researching, originality and critical examination.
11. Follow the information and style conventions of the subdisciplinary field (literature, film studies, cultural studies or linguistics).
12. Participants are expected to use a C1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically.

"Documento de referencia para el análisis y la discusión de las lecturas obligatorias" / "Guidelines for the analysis and discussion of compulsory readings"

1. The theoretical part of the seminar, taught by the teacher will provide an active learning environment in which students can develop the ability to read/view/analyse critically and conceptually and, therefore, to speak and write in the classroom.
2. The seminar will provide general introductions to theoretical frameworks or an application of a given research methodology/framework to a selection of texts.
3. Students should bring to the seminar a draft or notes on the text or film under analysis and participate actively in the classroom discussion.
4. Questions can be posed to improve the quality of the discussion.
5. Assignment of formal presentations and critical comment may also be requested for stimulating discussion.
6. Participants are expected to use a C1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically.

(Adapted from www.oid.ucla.edu/students/cutf/cutfguidelines.doc)

"Documento de referencia para el desarrollo de los seminarios teóricos y analíticos"/ "Guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars"

1. Use a C1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically, in analyses, explanations and discussions of aspects and issues related to the subject/discipline.
2. Deal effectively with the most relevant critical approaches through their application to a corpus of texts in English.
3. Address and apply critical theories and methodologies relevant to the analysis of texts in English.
4. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
5. Approach the analysis of different texts critically.

"Documento de referencia para el desarrollo de entrevistas" / "Guidelines for interviews"

1. Use a C1 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) to hold one's own, critically and academically, in analyses, explanations and discussions of aspects and issues related to the subject/discipline.
2. Deal effectively with the most relevant critical approaches through their application to a corpus of texts in English.
3. Address and apply critical theories and methodologies relevant to the analysis of texts in English.
4. Provide an effective argument (factual evidence, exemplification, illustration, citations, etc.) in order to make convincing claims.
5. Approach the analysis of different texts critically.

Activities and resources

Course methodology

The learning process that has been designed for this course is based on the following activities:

This course has been specifically designed to train researchers in literary criticism and theory in the field of English Literature. For this reason, the proposed activities (the analysis of literary texts by means of critical tools and the comments on, presentation of, and reflections on these analyses from a theoretical perspective) are aimed at the application of the fundamental principles of the most relevant critical and theoretical approaches to the analysis of various sorts of representative literary texts in English.

The course is organized in three stages: 1. Learning of the critical approaches and analytical tools; 2. Application of the learnt concepts through the analysis and collective discussion of the selected texts in English; and 3. Writing of an individual critical essay, applying the theoretical approaches and methods learnt, as well as the specific tools employed for the development of the selected topic of research.

Outline of the Programme

The programme offered to the students to help them achieve the learning results includes the following activities :

1:

Seminars on “the main trends in contemporary narrative in English” (30h, 15 sessions, 1,2 cr.).

Theoretical and analytical seminars aimed at introducing the main theoretical approaches and critical techniques for the analysis of literary texts in English. The seminar will also revise the key concepts of literature studies in English.

These seminars will be conducted following the “guidelines for the development of theoretical and analytical seminars”

2:

Tasks/activities (30h, 15 sessions, 1,2 cr.)

Classroom activities will provide students with models for textual and critical analysis. In these tasks students will discuss both individually and in group the textual and critical analyses of a selection of literary texts. The aim of the tasks/activities is to learn how to use/apply the critical and textual analytical tools and theoretical approaches dealt with in the course.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for the analysis and discussion of compulsory and recommended readings”.

3:

Writing of the essay (40h, 1,6 cr.).

The concepts explained and developed in the theoretical sessions will be revised so that the student can write an essay by applying them to the analysis of specific texts from the program. The topic will have been previously discussed with the teacher, who will offer the student constant assistance in the elaboration of the essay.

These activities will be conducted following the “guidelines for preparing the essay”.

4:

Individual study (87,5h, 3,5 cr.).

The student will read/ study the compulsory (printed/ online) texts in the program. The teacher will advise her/him how to use them. Some of these texts will also be available on the subject’s Moodle site.

Course planning

Calendar of actual sessions and presentation of works

Dr. Susana Onega Jaén

Session 1-18: These sessions will be devoted to: the study of the change of world-view in the 1960s, the transition to postmodernism, and the birth of British historiographic metafiction (John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; story-telling, parody and the making of the (lesbian) self (Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*); creative plagiarism, collective authorship and the world-as-book (Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton*).

The individual assignments will be presented during the sessions of practice, following the sessions on theory.

Dr. María Dolores Herrero Granado

Session 19-30: These sessions will be devoted to: Coming to Terms with the Antipodean dream/nightmare (David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*): Ethics, Memory, History and the Multicultural Self; the Empire writes back: postcolonial aesthetic forms and socio-political issues as reflected in Meena Alexander's "Stone-Eating Girl" and a selection of short stories from Ben Okri's *Stars of the New Curfew* and Merlinda Bobis's *White Turtle*.

The individual assignments will be presented during the sessions of practice, following the sessions on theory.

PROGRAMME OF THE SUBJECT

1. Introduction: The change of world-view in the 1960s and the transition to postmodernism. The birth of British Historiographic metafiction: John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.
2. History, story-telling and the making of the (bisexual) self: Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* and *Sexing the Cherry*.
3. Creative plagiarism, collective authorship and the world-as-book: Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton*.
4. Coming to Terms with the Antipodean dream/nightmare. David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*: Ethics, Memory, History and the Multicultural Self.
5. The Empire writes back: Postcolonial aesthetic forms and socio-political issues as reflected in Meena Alexander's "Stone-Eating Girl" and a selection of short stories from Ben Okri's *Stars of the New Curfew* and Merlinda Bobis's *White Turtle*.

COMPULSORY AND SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHY

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COMPULSORY READINGS

Unit 1

- Barth, John, 1967 "The Literature of Exhaustion", *The Atlantic Monthly* (August), pp. 28-34.
- Barth, John, 1980 "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction", *The Atlantic Monthly* (January), pp. 65-71.
- Fowles, John, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969).
- HUTCHEON, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction: Chapters I "Theorizing the Postmodern", pp. 3-21; Chapter VII "Historiographic Metafiction: The Pastime of Past Time" and Chapter VIII "Intertextuality, Parody and the Discourses of History"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 106-123; pp. 124-140.

Unit 2

- COSSLETT, Tess, "Intertextuality in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*: The Bible, Malory, and *Jane Eyre*". In Helena Grice and Tim Woods (eds), 'I'm Telling You Stories': Jeanette Winterson and the Politics of Reading. *Postmodern Studies* 25 (Amsterdam-Atlanta, G. A.: Rodopi 1998), pp. 15-28.
- Onega, Susana, Jeanette Winterson: "Introduction", pp. 1-16 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).
- Winterson, Jeanette, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (London: Pandora, 1985).
- Winterson, Jeanette, *Sexing the Cherry* (1989; London: Vintage, 1990).
- Winterson, Jeanette, "Introduction" to the Vintage edition of *Oranges* (London: Vintage, 1990), pp. xi-xv.

Unit 3

- Ackroyd, Peter, *Chatterton* (1987, London: Abacus, 1988).

- Barthes, Roland, "The Death of the Author" and "From Work to Text", in *Image-Music-Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. London: Fontana (1987 [1977]), pp. 142-48 and 155-64.
- Martínez Alfaro, María Jesús, "Intertextuality: Origin and Development of the Concept", *Atlantis* Vol. 18. no.1-2 (1996), pp. 268-285. Accessible at http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/listaarticulos?tipo_busqueda=VOLUMEN&revista_busqueda=176&clave_busqueda=18
- Onega, Susana, *Metafiction and Myth in the Novels of Peter Ackroyd* (Columbia: Camden House, 1999): "Introduction", pp. 1-11; and Chapter 2, pp. 59-73.

Unit 4

- Cribb, T. J. "Transformations in the Fiction of Ben Okri". In Anna Rutherford, ed., *Commonwealth to Postcolonial* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 145-51. Peter, "Problems of Historicity in David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*", *Classical and Modern Literature*, 20:1 (2000): 1-17.
- Griffiths, Gareth, "An Imaginary Life: The Post-Colonial Text as Transformative Representation". *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 19 93 Spring, 16:2: 61-69.
- Malouf, David, *An Imaginary Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978, 1996).
- Morton, Peter, Morton, Peter, "Problems of Historicity in David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*", *Classical and Modern Literature*, 20:1 (2000): 1-17.
- Stephens, John, "Beyond the Limits of our Speech ... David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*", *Commonwealth Novel in English*, 1990 Fall, 3:2: 160-169.

Unit 5

- Alexander, Meena, "Stone-Eating Girl". In *Fault Lines: A Memoir* (The Feminist Press at the University of New York [1993] 2003): 77-89.
- Armstrong, Andrew, "Speaking through the Wound: Irruption and memory in the Writing of Ben Okri and Festus Iyayi", *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 2000, 13:2: 173-183.
- Bhabha, Homi K., "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism". In *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 66-84.
- Bhabha, Homi K., "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse". In *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 85-92. Morton, Peter, "Problems of Historicity in David Malouf's *An Imaginary Life*", *Classical and Modern Literature*, 20:1 (2000): 1-17.
- Okri, Ben, *Stars of the New Curfew* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1989).
- Bobis, Merlinda, *White Turtle* (Melbourne: Spinifex, 1999).
- Slemen, Stephen, "Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse". In Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, eds., *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (Durham and London: Duke U.P., 1995), pp. 407-426.

E-LEARNING PLATFORM

Moodle University of Zaragoza

<http://moodle.unizar.es>

The basic contents and bibliographical resources of the subject will be available on this e-learning platform.

Bibliographic references of the recommended readings

- Ackroyd, Peter. Chatterton / Peter Ackroyd . London : Abacus, 1991
- [Unit 1] - Barth, John "The Literature of Exhaustion". En: Atlantic . Boston : The Atlantic Monthly Company, 1932-1971 [Publicación periódica], (August 1967), pp. 28-34
- [Unit 1] - Barth, John, "The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction". En: Atlantic . Boston : The Atlantic Monthly Company, 1981-1992 [Publicación periódica], (January, 1980), pp. 65-71
- [Unit 1] - Fowles, John. *The French Lieutenant's woman* / John Fowles . London : Pan Books in association with Jonathan Cape, 1987
- [Unit 1] - Hutcheon, Linda. *A poetics of postmodernism : history, theory, fiction* / Linda Hutcheon . 1st pub., repr. New York ; London : Routledge, 1989 [Chapter I "Theorizing the postmodern", pp. 3-21. Chapter VII "Historiographic metafiction : the pastime of ast time", pp. 106-123. Chapter VIII "Intertextuality, parody and the discourses of history", pp. 124-140]
- [Unit 2] - Cosslett, Tess, "Intertextuality in oranges are not the only fruit : the bible, Malory and Jane Eyre". En: "I'm telling you stories" : Jeanette Winterson and the politics of reading / edited by Helena Grice and Tim Woods . Amsterdam [etc.] : Rodopi, 1998, pp. 15-28
- [Unit 2] - Onega, Susana. *Jeanette Winterson / Susana Onega* . Manchester : Manchester University Press, cop. 2006, pp. 1-16

- [Unit 2] - Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges are not the only fruit* / Jeanette Winterson . London : Vintage, 1996
- [Unit 2] - Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges are not the only fruit* / Jeanette Winterson . London : Vintage, 1996 [Introduction, pp. XI-XV]
- [Unit 2] - Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the cherry* / Jeanette Winterson . London : Vintage, 2001
- [Unit 3] - Barthes, Roland. *Image, music, text* / Roland Barthes ; essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath . 1st ed., 6th imp. London : Fontana, 1990 ["The death of the author" and "From work to text", pp. 142-148 and 155-164]
- [Unit 3] - Martínez Alfaro, María Jesús, "Intertextuality: origin and development of the concept". En: *Atlantis : Revista de la Asociación Española de Estudios Anglo-Norteamericanos*. Alicante : Universidad de Alicante, Departamento de Filología Inglesa, 1979- [Publicación periódica], Vol. 18, Nº 1-2 (1996), pp. 268-285
- [Unit 3] - Onega, Susana. *Metafiction and myth in the novels of Peter Ackroyd* / Susana Onega . 1st ed. Columbia : Camden House, 1999 ["Introduction", pp. 1-11; and Chapter 2, pp. 59-73]
- [Unit 4] - Cribb, T.J. "Transformations in the fiction of Ben Okri". En: *From Commonwealth to Postcolonial* / Anna Rutheerford, ed.. Sydney : Dangaroo Press, 1992, pp. 145-151
- [Unit 4] - Griffiths, Gareth, "An imaginary life: the post.colonial text as transformative". En: *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, Nº. 16.2 (Spring 1994).
- [Unit 4] - Morton, Peter, "Problems of Historicity in David Malouf's: an Imaginary Life. En: *Classical and modern Literature*, 20:1 (2000), pp. 1-17