

## **Máster en Estudios Avanzados de Literatura y Cine en Lengua Inglesa**

### **61653 - Main trends in contemporary British fiction**

**Course 2015 - 2016**

**Curso: 1, Semestre: 2, Créditos: 7.5**

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### **Basic information**

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#### **Teachers**

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#### **Recommendations to attend this course**

The main aim of this course is to offer the students a specialised knowledge of the most relevant writers and trends of contemporary British fiction. Given its in-depth character, this aim cannot be achieved in the Degree courses. The students should therefore bear in mind the fact that they are expected to have an overall knowledge of the canonical trends and literary texts in English before taking this course. They are also expected to have some knowledge of the historical and cultural contexts of the United Kingdom.

Secondly, and most importantly, the student should have read and worked on the compulsory readings before each session and bring them to class so as to be able to participate actively in the ensuing debates.

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#### **Course Schedule and Deadlines**

1. Presentation and discussion of the main narrative trends included in the programme
2. Application of the main tenets of these trends to the analysis of various types of literary narratives (see course planning).
3. Group analysis of a selection of literary texts from the perspective of the critical approaches and methods presented in the theory sessions (see course planning).
4. Presentation of short essays and of a 3,000 words essay. Deadline for the submission of the essays: as per exam schedule of the Faculty.

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## **Home**

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### **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 is able to find, analyse critically and synthesise literary texts in English
- 2:** The student can carry out a critical analysis and draw conclusions from the analysis of literary texts in English, making correct and adequate use of the English language both for a specialised and a non-specialised audience
- 3:** The student is able to understand the change of world-view brought about by postmodernist thought, the development of the post-structuralisms, and how this shows in British fiction from the decade of the 1960s onwards
- 4:** The student is capable of analysing correctly contemporary fictional British works, explaining the world-view underlining the combination of history and metafiction and their relationship with scientific theories, and the rise of alternative discourses to patriarchal discourse
- 5:** The student understands the concepts of parody, creative plagiarism and collective authorship and is able to argue over the factors that have contributed to subverting the traditional humanist discourses as reflected in recent British literature
- 6:** The student knows how to apply to his or her literary analysis and interpretation the key tenets of the novels written by women, addressing the subject from feminist and/or lesbian perspectives in recent British literature
- 7:** The student knows and is able to explain the key tenets of the "return to ethics" in the decade of the 1980s and relate it to the birth and development of the literature of trauma
- 8:** The student knows and has the capacity to explain the various elements that have contributed to the development and consolidation of the New Gothic narrative in English in the light of the thematic and formal transformations associated to the evolution of the relationship between history and the romance in the last decades

## **Introduction**

### **Brief presentation of the course**

This course provides specialized knowledge of some of the most relevant writers and narrative trends in contemporary British fiction. This is an optional course which can be seen as complementary to the compulsory course taught in the first term, "Working with Literature in English", in the sense that it widens knowledge on the theoretical approaches required for

the critical analysis of texts and their application to a number of texts representative of the various contemporary trends. It also complements the other second-term optional courses, "Main Trends in Contemporary US Fiction" and "New Literatures in English", in that it contributes to the establishment of the cultural similarities and differences between texts written in Britain, the US and Britain's former colonies.

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## **Competences**

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### **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 specialised knowledge on the main writers and narrative trends in the field of contemporary British literature, as well as with tools for the critical analysis of narrative texts representative of the aforementioned trends. The specific aims of this course are: 1. To provide students with in-depth knowledge of the main trends in contemporary British literature; 2. To familiarise them with the narrative techniques and the formal and ideological aspects that characterise the works of the authors to be studied as representative of these trends. 3. To place and relate the trends under study with earlier ones; 4. To improve the students' skills in their use of English in a critical and academic context; 5. To improve the students' critical response to literary texts.

#### **Context/Importance of the course for the master degree**

"Main Trends in Contemporary British Fiction" is one of the three optional literary courses the students must pass in the second term of the Master in Advanced Studies on Literature and Film in English if they wish to follow the line of specialisation in literature. The other two are "Main Trends in Contemporary US Fiction" and "New Literatures in English". These three subjects, which are complementary, have as their main aims the students' acquisition of specialised knowledge on the critical analysis of literary British texts (first subject), literary US texts (second subject), and postcolonial literary texts (third subject). Like the two other optional courses belonging in the line of specialisation in literature within this Master, this course is also coordinated with the first-term compulsory course, "Working with Literature in English".

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

**1:**

CG3: To express a critical view and draw conclusions from the analysis of literary and filmic texts in English, making correct and adequate use of the English language, both for a specialised and a non-specialised audience

**2:**

CE1: To understand the change of world-view brought about by postmodernist thought and the development of the post-structuralisms

**3:**

CE2: To explain the conception of reality underlying the combination of history and metafiction and its relation to scientific theories

**4:**

CE3: To understand the concepts of parody, creative plagiarism and collective authorship, and to argue over the factors contributing to subverting traditional humanist discourses

**5:**

CE4: To understand and apply feminist and/or lesbian tenets to recent British literature, and to grasp the underlying ideological tenets and the subversion of the typical generic conventions

**6:**

CE5: To know and be able to explain the key tenets of the "turn to ethics" in the decade of the 1980s, and the birth and development of the British literature of trauma

**7:**

CE6: To know and be able to explain the various elements contributing to the development and strengthening

of the New Gothic British narrative

## **Relevance of the skills acquired in the course**

The aims proposed in this course are crucial to provide students with a sound theoretical and methodological background that will allow them to conduct successful research in the field of English Studies. Similarly, the specific aims of the course (namely, making use of critical tools for the understanding, analysis and interpretation of British literary texts; applying critical approaches to a corpus of literary texts by contemporary British authors; and developing critical responses to these texts) are essential for developing a research piece in the field of English Studies successfully.

The capacity to develop and apply original ideas in an academic and research context is also fundamental for conducting research in literary studies in English. Furthermore, specific skills such as the capacity to relate concepts starting from different themes, make use of complex information, reach relevant conclusions making use of the English language clearly and adequately (both for a specialised and a non-specialised audience), and be able to develop a research line in an autonomous way are crucial skills for the researcher to be.

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## **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 (if applicable)
- b) Global examination (to be determined in the academic calendar)

**Assessment Task 1: Prepare and write brief critical essays on the required readings and films that have been set during the course.** Students will be assessed on their capacity to understand theoretical concepts and to apply them to the texts to be analysed, as well as on their correct use of academic English (at a C1 level). These activities are directed towards achieving learning objectives 1, 2, and 3 = 10%.

Deadline for the submission of the brief written essays: as per exams schedule of the Faculty.

**Assessment Task 2: Write an essay in English.** Students are required to write a 3000 word essay on an aspect related to the contents of the course using correct English (at a C1 level). The topic of the essay will be previously agreed on with the

teacher. This essay is expected to demonstrate that the students have achieved the course's global objectives (1, 2, 3, and 4). The essay will be graded 0-10, and will account for 90% of the student's final mark.

Deadline for the submission of the essay: as per exam schedule of the Faculty.

### **Assessment criteria**

- Definition of key concepts. Initial hypothesis. Use of a theoretical framework and methodology. Use of primary sources. Literature review. Well-argued discourse and relevant conclusions = 40%.
- Independence, originality and critical examination = 10%.
- Information structure and organization of the essay. Text layout. Correct use of English language and style appropriateness = 20%.
- Reasoning capacity to exemplify, illustrate, propose textual evidence and defend the student's own point of view critically = 30%.

## **II. Second Official Announcement**

**Assessment Task 1: Prepare and write brief critical essays on the required readings and films that have been set during the course.** Students will be assessed on their capacity to understand theoretical concepts and to apply them to the texts to be analysed, as well as on their correct use of academic English (at a C1 level). These activities are directed towards achieving learning objectives 1, 2, and 3 = 10%.

Deadline for the submission of the brief written essays: as per exams schedule of the Faculty.

**Assessment Task 2: Write an essay in English.** Students are required to write a 3000 word essay on an aspect related to the contents of the course using correct English (at a C1 level). The topic of the essay will be previously agreed on with the teacher. This essay is expected to demonstrate that the students have achieved the course's global objectives (1, 2, 3, and 4). The essay will be graded 0-10, and will account for 90% of the student's final mark.

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## Activities and resources

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### 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 and, more concretely, has been designed to provide students with specialised knowledge of the most important writers and trends in the field of contemporary British literature, all of which will be illustrated through the analysis of texts representative of these trends. For this reason, the course is organised in three stages: 1. Identification and characterisation of the most representative trends and authors of contemporary British fiction; 2. Analysis and discussion of narrative texts representative of these trends and authors; and 3. Writing on a research topic (in the form 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.

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## Outline of the Programme

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

**1:**

a) Class activities:

- Onsite lectures (30 hours, 1,2 credits) in which the teacher will make a presentation of the main critical approaches to literature.  
- Onsite resolution of problems and case studies (30 hours, 1,2 credits). In these classroom activities teacher and students will carry out the close reading and critical analysis of a selection of literary texts from the corpus of compulsory readings under the supervision of the teacher. This activity includes the following tasks: collective comments guided by the teacher; discussion by small student groups of some given aspects of the analyses to be later presented to the rest of the class; or the writing of individual responses to questions posed by the teacher to be later presented by the student to the rest of the class as a basis for further discussion. It goes without saying that every student must have read and worked on the texts before attending the classes.

b) Guided Activities:

Essays: 45 hours/1,8 credits (online and offsite)

c) Autonomous activities:

Study: 82,5 hours/3,3 credits (online and offsite)

Syllabus

1. The change of worldview in the 1960s, the transition to postmodernism and the birth of British historiographic metafiction.
2. Narration, parody and the construction of the female self.
3. Creative plagiarism, collective authorship and the world as book.
4. The “ethical turn”, the trauma paradigm and the literature of trauma.
5. History, romance and the New Gothic.

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## Course planning

### Calendar of actual sessions and presentation of works

In a typical ten-week-course, two weeks, i.e. four two-hour sessions, will be allotted to each of the five topics in the programme. Deadline for the submission of the essays: as per exam schedule of the Faculty.

Sessions 1 to 12: In these sessions the teachers will explain the change of world-view that takes place in the Western world in the decade of the 1960s, and the birth and development of postmodernism, the poststructuralisms, and the feminist and postcolonial movements. This will be followed by a delving into the relationship between these movements and the development of new literary trends in the period under discussion, always through the study of a selection of representative authors and works.

Sessions 12 to 20: In these sessions the teachers will explain the “turn to ethics” in the fields of moral philosophy and critical theory that took place in the decade of the 1980s, and the relationships that could be established, on the one hand, between the ethics of affects and the ethics of truth, and on the other, the birth of Trauma Studies, the “memory boom” and other related critical trends (ecocriticism, theory of resilience, etc.). After this, we will study the effect of the development of these movements in the shaping of new literary trends. Class activities will centre on the identification of the main characteristics of these trends through their representative authors, and on the discussion and analysis of the various types of literary narrative texts in the field of present-day British literature.

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## **Bibliographic references of the recommended readings**