Hello!

I hope you are having a lovely summer. I'm writing as your tutor for Literature in English, 1830-1910, to pass on the reading list for this paper along with the list for Early Medieval Literature, 650-1350, which you will also be studying this term with my colleague Dr Francis Leneghan.

Because the reading requirements for 1830-1910 are so heavy, I’ve attached the full schedule for the coming term, along with the topics that you will be asked to write on each week so that you know how to focus your reading of what are often very substantial and demanding works. Where a week says ‘tutorial’, you write a full 1500-word essay; ‘class’ means you’ll be asked to sketch out a short oral presentation that week.

Please try to complete as much of this reading as you can before you arrive in Oxford. The terms here are so concentrated (we have only these eight weeks on the Victorians/Edwardians before we move on to literature after 1910) that we expect students to do much of the term’s reading over the preceding vacation. Remember that you need to take notes as you go on everything you read. Approach each text as though this were your only chance to read it all the way through (which might well prove to be the case with long Victorian novels!). Document your ideas on each text, picking out anything that strikes you as especially interesting, and noting down connections across these texts and with other works from this period that you have read in other contexts. What’s below is divided into ‘required reading’ and ‘supplementary reading’: obviously you need to read what’s in the first section; the texts in the second section are a few approachable places to start your essay research when you get here.

All the primary material on the reading list is out of copyright, so you’ll probably be able to find it free online – just be aware that what you are paying for when you buy a good edition is the editorial apparatus like an introduction and explanatory endnotes. (Although with short odds and ends like essays it does make more sense to read them online rather than buy whole collections.) Norton Critical Editions have extensive notes, along with useful excerpts from critics; they’re more expensive than Penguin Classics and Oxford World’s Classics (which are also excellent), but you can often find second-hand copies.

If you have any questions, please do feel free to get in touch at marina.mackay@ell.ox.ac.uk. Meanwhile, enjoy what’s left of the summer – and good luck with your reading. I’ll look forward to seeing you again in October!

All very best wishes

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The asterisked novels are very long! Please make reading these a priority this summer if you know that you will not have time to work systematically through the list before the start of term. And, again, take good notes.

Week 1: Culture and Crisis (tutorial)

Required reading:

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* *
Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*
John Ruskin, ‘The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century’

Supplementary reading:


Essay questions:

- On the basis of their literature, it seems as though many Victorians believed that they were living through a period of unprecedented crisis. Where was that sense of crisis coming from, and what, if any, solutions did they offer for mitigating or overcoming it?
- How does their sense of crisis connect to the ways in which Victorian writers address relationships between human beings and their environment(s)?

Week 2: Poetry and Mind (class)

Required reading:

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *Maud*

Supplementary reading:


Class questions:

- Describe any unexpected or particularly significant uses of poetic form to represent mental processes, or the relationship between body and mind.
- How far is religion a source of anxiety rather than consolation for Victorian poets?

Week 3: Crime and Sensation (tutorial)

Required reading:

Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White *
Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds *

Supplementary reading:

(One to browse for the chapters on e.g.: The Woman in White; science, religion, race, class, medicine, disability, empire, the law, detection, etc.)
Andrew Mangham, The Cambridge Companion to Sensation Fiction (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). (Another to browse according to the angle that you’re taking on Collins.)

Essay questions:

- ‘When a woman is bumped off, her husband is always the first suspect – which gives you a little side-glimpse of what people really think about marriage’ (George Orwell). Is there anything significant or surprising about the presentation of marriage in Victorian sensation and mystery novels?
- ‘Inobtrusively supplying the place of the police in places where the police cannot be, the mechanisms of discipline seem to entail a relative relaxation of policing power. No doubt this manner of passing off the regulation of everyday life is the best manner of passing it on’ (D. A. Miller). Discuss the representation in these novels of formal/official legal procedures and/or what Miller calls ‘the regulation of everyday life’?

Week 4: The Brontës (class)

Required reading:

Anne Brontë, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall
Charlotte Brontë, Villette *
Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights
Supplementary reading:

Patricia Ingham, *The Brontës* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). (Chapters 7 and 8 are on *Villette*.)

Class questions:

- What, in your view, is the single most significant difference or most useful point of comparison among the Brontës’ novels? You may choose to focus on their individual narrative/formal choices, or on their treatment of a particular theme.
- Is there anything distinctive about the work done by visual description and/or the treatment of the visual arts in the Brontës’ novels?

Week 5: The Realist Novel: American and British (tutorial)

Required reading:

George Eliot, *Middlemarch* *
Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* * and his review of *Middlemarch* *(Find it here: [http://www.complete-review.com/quarterly/vol3/issue2/jameshmm.htm])

Supplementary reading:


Essay questions:

- ‘But why always Dorothea? Was her point of view the only possible one with regard to this marriage?’ Discuss the significance of perspective in the realist novel and/or how and to what effect realist novels foreground the limits of their famous ‘omniscience’.
- ‘We’re each of made up of some cluster of appurtenances’, Madame Merle tells Isabel Archer: ‘What shall we call our ‘self’? Where does it begin? Where does it end? It overflows into everything that belongs to us—and then it flows back again . . . I’ve a great respect for things.’ Make an argument for the significance of material ‘things’ in Eliot and James – either a particular object or a related group of objects.
Week 6: Beyond Realism: American and British (class)

Required reading:

Nathaniel **Hawthorne**, *The House of the Seven Gables*

Charles **Dickens**, *Our Mutual Friend*

Supplementary reading:


David Paroissian, *A Companion to Charles Dickens* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008). (One to browse: chapters on biography, literary contexts, Dickens in relation to topics such as contemporary law, gender, family, government, Christianity, etc.)


Class questions:

- ‘The world is everywhere heavy with the debris of history . . . . the great inescapable weight of history’ (J Hillis Miller on *Our Mutual Friend*). Discuss the significance of ‘debris’ and/or ‘the weight of history’ in Hawthorne and Dickens.

- *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Our Mutual Friend* keep returning to ideas of repetition, reproduction, and recycling. Why do Dickens and Hawthorne find images of doubling so useful?

Week 7: Subversion and the Stage (tutorial)

Required reading:

George Bernard **Shaw**, *Arms and the Man*

Oscar **Wilde**, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

J. M. **Synge**, *The Playboy of the Western World*

Supplementary reading:

Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). (Chapters 2, 3, and 10 are on Wilde, Shaw, and Synge respectively.)


Richards, Shaun, *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Irish Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. (Chapters 6, 8, and 9 are on Synge, Shaw, and Wilde respectively.)
Tutorial questions:

- One way or another, all these male-authored plays include women’s erotic or romantic fantasies about men. What might that be significant?
- How far would it be fair – or, alternatively, would it be unhelpfully reductive – to suggest a connection between these playwrights’ shared Irish background and the satirical and/or qualities of their work?

Week 8: Late Imperial Adventure (class)

Required reading:

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*
Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*
Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*

Supplementary reading:


Class questions:

- ‘Once a Sahib, always a Sahib’, says a character in *Kim*. What’s the relationship between cultural ‘purity’ and cultural hybridity in the turn-of-the-century adventure novel?
- ‘The [turn-of-the-century adventure story] was presented as restoring the manhood of British fiction’ (Nicholas Daly). How far can we see these novels as propaganda or training manuals for normative models of imperial masculinity?
- These three novels run a kind of spectrum from the popular children’s book (*Kidnapped*) to the early modernist classic (*Lord Jim*). How far would you want to complicate or retain any of the distinctions these categorisations imply, for example: ‘easy’ versus ‘difficult’; ‘formally traditional’ versus ‘formally experimental’; ‘nostalgic’ versus ‘unsettling’, and so on?
Prelims Paper 2: Early Medieval English Literature (650-1350)

This paper will be taught across all three terms. The aim of the paper is to introduce you to earliest English literature, composed in the period stretching from the conversion of the migrant Anglo-Saxons in the sixth and seventh centuries through to the High Middle Ages. We call the language of the Anglo-Saxons ‘Old English’; after 1066, English came into contact with Anglo-Norman, producing the phase in the language that we call ‘Early Middle English’. Old English literature provides us with a very wide range of genres including epic, dream vision, riddle, chronicle, battle poem, lament and saints’ life, while the Early Middle English period sees the flourishing of beast fable, lyric and romance.

We will focus mainly on the Old English period (650-c. 1100), though we will also look at some Early Middle English texts. The set texts we will translate are The Wanderer, The Dream of the Rood, The Battle of Maldon and an extract from Beowulf (the fight with Grendel). All are included in this edition, which you must get hold of:


You will probably find the section on Old English language challenging. A more user-friendly book on the same topic which you should also get a copy of is this:


Before you come to Oxford for Michaelmas Term you should read a selection of Old English texts in translation. In particular, read a translation of Beowulf. For a good verse translation, try this:


You might also wish to compare the (very different) verse translations by Seamus Heaney or Michael Alexander.

A very useful book, which prints a both Old and Early Middle English texts with facing-page, prose translation:

- Elaine Treharne, Old and Middle English c.890-c.1400: An Anthology, 3rd edition (Oxford, 2009)

Further recommendations include:


- A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse, transl. Robert Hamer (Faber, 2006) (facing page verse translations of major short poems; very cheap on amazon)

- Anglo-Saxon Prose, ed. and transl. Michael Swanton (Everyman, 1993)

In order to get a sense of who the Anglo-Saxons were and what Old English literature is like, have a look at some of these books:


More detailed information about the course, including a sample exam paper, reading lists and other useful resources, can be found by clicking this link on the English Faculty’s webpage: https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/site:humdiv:engfac:prelims-2

If you have any questions about the course, please do not hesitate to get in touch (my email address is below). I look forward to meeting you in October.

Dr Francis Leneghan

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