Boston University International Programs
London

Boston University British Programmes
Visionary Capital: The Writing of London
CAS EN XXX (Core course, Literature track, History and Literature Program)
Fall 2010

Instructor Information
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Course Description
This course sets out to guide the student through a wide variety of poems, plays and novels that all explore the imaginative potential of the great metropolis.

The course begins with a reading of Spenser’s evocation of visionary origins for the city in sections taken from his great epic The Faerie Queene. We will then move on to the very different and often bawdy representations of London to be found in the Elizabethan and Jacobean comedies of Dekker, Jonson and Massinger.

The Restoration saw new life breathed into the country and into the capital, and that despite a Dutch invasion fleet sailing up the Thames and the disaster that was the great fire. Students will be informed as to such contexts as they read sections of John Dryden’s Annus Mirabilis and Mac Flecknoe. Here, London as a site for civic and national pride will be explored as well as its capacity for satirical laughter.

Our consideration of texts from Dryden will be supplemented by the study of the powerfully divergent voices of Rochester, Swift and Johnson. The often squalid, harsh or downright appalling aspects of the city, form an important part of its literary and actual fabric, and are involved in many of the features to be found in the emergence of the modern novel in English, as seen in Defoe’s Moll Flanders.

From here we shall turn to an important Romantic text by Thomas De Quincey. Confessions of an English Opium Eater envisages the city as spectacle and phantasmagoria and also provides a unique exploration of the overcrowded poverty of early 19th century London alongside its dramatisation of the weird, imaginative impact of the metropolis on the creative mind.

The Victorian period is, of course, dominated by the superlative novels of Dickens, and at this stage the student will be asked to consider the relations that obtain between Great Expectations and several of the writings that preceded it, as well as looking forward in time to evaluate some of the shaping influences Dickens cast on subsequent writing of the city.
For the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, time past, present and future collide and merge in stretches of both *The Waste Land* and *The Four Quartets*, and T.S. Eliot’s contemporary Virginia Woolf, *revolutionises* the treatment of the city and of human consciousness in *Mrs Dalloway*. The course will conclude with a study of Ian McEwan’s novel of 2005, *Saturday*, during which students will be invited to assess the implications of the novel for contemporary life and life in London.

**Course Objective**

Firstly, the development of a first-hand acquaintance with a large range of works that dramatise and explore London in wide variety of aspects and through different phases of historical transformation.

Secondly, a familiarisation with various methods of interpretation and analysis that will inform and strengthen critical inquiry and evaluation.

**Assessment**

Students will be asked to produce a 2000-2500 word essay after consultation on the selection of a topic with the tutor. Selection of a topic will be confirmed with the tutor by Session 8. This essay is to be submitted in Session 13 and the grade for this essay forms 30% of the student’s final grade.

Students will also be expected to give presentations involving their reading of set texts and these presentations will be evaluated and given a grade which will form 15% of the final grade.

There will also be two examinations. The first will take place in the middle of the course, at the close of the sixth session, in which the student will choose three out of five short-answer questions covering materials studied up to that point. The grade for this exam will represent 20% of the final grade.

The final examination will involve questions covering all of the authors and texts studied and the grade for this forms 30% of the final grade. Here the exam is in two parts. The student will be expected to write an essay-length answer to questions from the first part of the exam and to give a close reading of a text chosen from those texts collected in part two. Copies of texts other than those given in the exam will not be allowed into the examination room.

Attendance is compulsory and participation in the teaching sessions forms 5% of the final grade.

**Grading**


**Course Chronology**

**Session 1:**  
*Edmund Spenser*  
**Reading:**  
*The Faerie Queene* (sections 3.IX.38-46 & 4.XI.24-29)  
*Prothalamion*
Sessions 2 & 3:  
Reading:  
Thomas Dekker and Ben Jonson  
*The Shoemaker’s Holiday*  
*The Alchemist*

Session 4:  
Reading:  
John Dryden, John Wilmot 2nd Earl of Rochester and Jonathan Swift  
*Anns Mirabilis* (stanzas 209-304)  
*MacFlecknoe*  
*A Letter From Artemisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country*  
*A Ramble in St. James Park*  
*A Description of a City Shower*  
*A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*

Session 5:  
Reading:  
Daniel Defoe  
*Moll Flanders.*

Sessions 6:  
Reading:  
Thomas De Quincey  
*Confessions of an English Opium Eater*  
& **mid term examination**

Sessions 7 & 8:  
Reading:  
Charles Dickens  
*Great Expectations.*

Sessions 9 & 10:  
Reading:  
T. S. Eliot  
*The Waste Land* (A Game of Chess & The Fire Sermon)  
*The Four Quartets.* (Burnt Norton III, East Coker III, The Dry Salvages II & V, Little Gidding II,III & IV.)

Sessions 11 & 12:  
Reading:  
Virginia Woolf  
*Mrs Dalloway.*

Session 13:  
Reading:  
Ian McEwan  
*Saturday*

Session 14:  
*Final Examination*

*Contingency Class Date: TBC.* Should any class dates need to be rescheduled, students are obligated to keep this date free to attend classes.

**Students must check their email and the weekly Student Newsletter for field trip updates and reminders, if any are to be included.

Final Exam:  
TBC. Exam times and locations will be posted on the BU London website and in the Student Newsletter two weeks before exam dates.

Readings

The **required reading** for each class session is indicated in the Course Chronology and utilises the following editions. **Copies of all poetry to be studied will be handed out in class.**


Additional readings may be posted on the course webpage: http://www.bu-london.co.uk/academic/[course number] (you must be logged in to view materials).
Supplementary and Secondary Reading:

Many of the following texts will be invaluable for researching papers and presentations, and for preparing for the final examination. All books will be available in the BU London Library or other academic libraries in London (Students will have a meeting on libraries in London during orientation week). There will be an opportunity for students to meet with the lecturer to discuss reading lists for their selected paper topics.

**General**

P.Ackroyd *London: The Biography* (200)
D.Bruster *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (2005)
D.Grantley *London in Early Modern English Drama: Representing the Built Environment* (2008)
J.Lindsay *Monster City: Defoe’s London, 1688-1730* (1978)
N.Freeman *Conceiving the City: London, Literature, and Art 1870-1914* (2007)
R.Williams *The Country and The City* (1973)

**Spenser**

A.C.Hamilton *The Structure of Allegory in the Faerie Queene* (1961)
C.S.Lewis *The Allegory of Love* (1936)
T.P.Roche *Kindly Flame* (1964)

**Dekker**

A.Brown ‘Citizen Comedy and Domestic Drama,’ in *Jacobean Theatre* ed., J.R.Brown (Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies, 1, 1960)
L.S.Champion *Thomas Dekker and the traditions of English Drama* (1985)
K.E.Mcluskie *Dekker and Heywood: Professional Dramatists* (19993)
S.Wells ‘Thomas Dekker and London’ in the same author’s *Shakespeare and Co.,...* (2007)

**Jonson**
A.Barton *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (1984)
R.A.Cave *Ben Jonson* (Macmillan English Dramatists, 1991)
A.Leggatt *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (1973)
E.B.Partridge *The Broken Compass*.. (1958)
P.Womack *Ben Jonson* (ReReading Literature Series, 1986)

**Dryden**
I.Jack *Augustan Satire* (1952)
E.Minor *Dryden’s Poetry* (1967)
A.Roper *Dryden’s Poetic Kingdoms* (1965)
C.Wall *The Literary and Cultural Spaces of Restoration London* (2006- also use for Swift and Defoe.)
J.A.Winn *John Dryden and His World* (1987)

**Rochester**
D.H.Griffin *Satires Against Man: The Poems of Rochester* (1973)

**Swift**
J.I.Fischer *On Swift’s Poetry* (1978)

**DeFoe**
H.Gladfelder *Criminality and Narrative in Eighteenth-Century England: Beyond the Law* (2001)
G.A.Starr *Defoe and Spiritual Biography* (1965)
E. Zimmerman *Defoe and the Novel* (1975)

**De Quincey**
J. Barrell *The Infection of Thomas De Quincey*... (1991)
E. Baxter *De Quincey’s Art of Autobiography* (1990, ch., 1)
C. J. Rzepka *Sacramental Commodities...* (1995)

**Dickens**
P. Collins *Dickens and Crime* (1962)
K. Flint *Dickens* (1986)
J. H. Miller *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (1958)
A. Sadrin *Great Expectations* (1994)

**Eliot**
C. Bedient *He Do the Police in Different Voices...* (1987)
H. Gardner *The Composition of The Four Quartets* (1978)
H. Kenner *The Invisible Poet, T. S. Eliot* (1959)
A. Tate ed., *T. S. Eliot, the Man and his Work* (1967)

**Woolf**
N. T. Bazin *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (1973)
M. Di Battista *Virginia Woolf’s Major Novels* (1980)
A. Fleishman *Virginia Woolf, A Critical Reading* (1975)
M. A. Leaska *The Novels of Virginia Woolf* (1977)
S. Reid *Mrs Dalloway & To The Lighthouse* (New CaseBooks) (1993)

**McEwan**
D. Head *Ian McEwan* (Contemporary British Novelists series) (2007)
For more on *Saturday* see the Reviews and Interviews listings below the page dedicated to the novel on Ian McEwan’s website; www.ianmcewan.com