



Boston University Study Abroad London

Boston University Study Abroad London Literature Research Seminar CAS EN 391 Fall 2017

Instructor Information

A. Name	Aleks Sierz with other faculty
B. Day and Time	Thursdays 1.15-5.15pm; then individual seminar sessions.
C. Location	
D. BU Telephone	
E. Email	
F. Office hours	By appointment

Course Objectives

This course aims to give students an informed sense of some of the wide variety of ways that are available to them in pursuing the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts. At the same time, it will guide them through the process of writing a lengthy and thorough research paper that reflects both the work done in class and the reading and analysis that the student has engaged in on their own. Some of the texts in question will involve the exploration of various aspects of the city of London.

Class sessions will involve the close study of a number of works in order to highlight some of the different possibilities of interpretation that are inherent in reading, and students will be encouraged to develop their awareness of how to orchestrate their own readings in such a way as to produce a substantial and sophisticated piece of undergraduate research work.

To facilitate this, the course will require students to choose an area of research that may well involve an author or topic outside the range of the texts covered in class. They will then engage in detailed discussion of their proposed work with the given supervisor that they have been assigned.

Naturally, classes will also involve excursions to various sites of historical significance, and as well as introducing students to some of the galleries and museums of the capital, special attention will be paid to highlighting the nature and extent of the collections in both the London Library and the British Library.

Methodology

The course will be taught over 15 weeks. The first six sessions will be devoted to lectures that illustrate various approaches to the interpretation and evaluation of literature while the rest of the term will be concentrating on research and writing.

During the research and writing phase students will have individual seminar sessions with their allotted supervisors. This will begin with a first session (in week seven) in which students will

present and discuss their draft proposals in small groups. This first airing of the proposal will then be followed by a detailed evaluation of the proposal in an individual seminar session, which in turn is to be followed by three hour-long seminars (spread over weeks eight to fifteen) in which students will be expected to read out parts of their work in progress and be prepared to discuss whatever areas of interest arise in seminar discussion. **NB Students will have their seminars on Wednesday or Thursday morning. Also, all students must submit their proposals in e-format to Aleks Sierz as well as submitting them to their respective supervisors.** Individual concerns and issues will be reviewed as their research paper progresses. These sessions will culminate in the completion and submission of the final research paper.

Assessment

Class participation — 10%

Proposal presentation — 10%

Draft Proposal for research paper (600 words) — 10%

Research Paper (4,000–5,000 words) — 70%

Grading

Please refer to the Academic Handbook for detailed grading criteria, attendance requirements and policies on plagiarism:

**Final Grades are subject to deductions by the Academic Affairs Office due to unauthorised absences.*

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Classes

All Boston University London Programme students are expected to attend each and every class session, seminar, and field trip in order to fulfill the required course contact hours and receive course credit. Any student that has been absent from two class sessions (whether authorised or unauthorised) will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their continued participation on the programme.

Authorised Absence:

Students who expect to be absent from any class should notify a member of Academic Affairs and complete an Authorized Absence Approval Form 10 working days in advance of the class date (except in the case of absence due to illness for more than one day. In this situation students should submit the Authorised Absence Approval Form with the required doctor's note as soon as possible). The Authorised Absence Approval Request Form is available from: <http://www.bu.edu/london/current-semester/>

Please note: Submitting an Authorised Absence Approval Form does not guarantee an authorised absence

Students may apply for an authorised absence only under the following circumstances:

- **Illness (first day of sickness):** If a student is too ill to attend class, the student must phone the BU London Student Affairs Office (who will in turn contact the student's lecturer).

- • **Illness (multiple days):** If a student is missing more than one class day due to illness, the student must call into to the BU London Student Affairs Office each day the student is ill. Students must also provide the Student Affairs office with a completed Authorised Absence Approval Form and a sick note from a local doctor excusing their absence from class.
- • Important placement event that clashes with a class (verified by internship supervisor)
- • Special circumstances which have been approved by the Directors (see note below).

The Directors will only in the most extreme cases allow students to leave the programme early or for a significant break.

Unauthorised Absence:

Any student to miss a class due to an unauthorised absence will receive a **4% grade penalty** to their final grade for the course whose class was missed.

This grade penalty will be applied by the Academic Affairs office to the final grade at the end of the course. As stated above, any student that has missed two classes will need to meet with the Directors to discuss their participation on the programme as excessive absences may result in a 'Fail' in the class and therefore expulsion from the programme.

Religious Holidays

Boston University's Office of the University Registrar states:

'The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.'

Special Accommodations

Each student will need to contact the Office of Disability Services to request accommodations for the semester they are abroad. Students are advised by BU-ODS not to expect the same accommodations as they receive on campus.

BU London can only uphold special accommodations if we have received the appropriate documentation from the BU-ODS. We cannot accept letters from other universities/centres.

All disabilities need to be known to the ODS in Boston if they are to be used as a reason for requiring a change in conditions, i.e. reduced internship hours or special accommodations for the internship schedule.

Lateness

Students arriving more than 15 minutes after the posted class start time will be marked as late. Any student with irregular class attendance (more than two late arrivals to class) will be required to meet with the Associate Director for Academic Affairs and if the lateness continues, may have his/her final grade penalized.

Course Chronology

CORE PHASE (LECTURES)

Session 1: Fri 8th September

Introduction: Literature, Liberal Humanism and National Identity (Aleks Sierz)

Following an introduction to the course, this session will look at the much-discussed issue of how English Literature creates images of English national identity. And at the tradition of liberal humanism, with its techniques of close reading. Using examples from the novels of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf and Martin Amis we will examine how close reading works. There will also be an in-class showing of a BBC video documentary in which novelist Martin Amis discusses Englishness.

Class reading: Excerpts from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Martin Amis's *London Fields*. (Extracts to be handed out in class.)

Preparatory reading: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 11-37.

****NB: Visits to the London Library and to the British Library TBC.**

Session 2: Thurs 14th September

Literature and Psychoanalysis: Repression, Pleasure and Interpretation (Phil Baker)

After considering the revolution of the unconscious, and attempting to see Freud in his historical context, we will consider some of the major concepts of psychoanalysis and look at varieties of psychoanalytic reading across a range of texts including detective fiction and Samuel Beckett.

Class reading: Sigmund Freud, 'The Dream of Irma's Injection' and 'The Dream of the Botanical Monograph' from *The Interpretation of Dreams* [S.E.IV]; the 'Wolf Man' case [S.E.XVII], and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* [S.E.XVIII]; Samuel Beckett, *From an Abandoned Work*. Reference will be made to a number of other works including R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. (Extracts to be handed out in class.)

Preparatory reading: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 92-115. R. L. Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Session 3: Thurs 21st September (NOTE START TIME OF 1.45pm)

Literature and Gender (Julie Charalambides)

The extraordinary literary output of feminist academics in the 1970s and the 1980s has changed the way we approach, analyse and assimilate the written word and has given rise to both women's studies and gender studies. Through a discussion of one of the most familiar tales in Western literature – *Frankenstein* – we will be considering how viewing a text through a prism of feminism can illuminate and sometimes warp the narrative. We will be looking at significant passages of Mary Shelley's novel (to be handed out and read in class) and considering a couple of the many cinematic adaptations, as well as considering the wider implications of well-known narratives.

Class reading: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. (Extracts to be handed out in class.)

NB This session will run from 1.45-5.45pm.

Preparatory reading: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 116-133. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*.

Session 4: Fri-Sun 22nd–24th September (Lake District Trip)

Excursion to Brontë Parsonage, Haworth, and Dove Cottage, Grasmere

Home of the Brontë family at Haworth; and then the home of William and Dorothy Wordsworth in Grasmere. This is the major excursion of the course and students need to be aware of the fact that they will be away from London for three days.

Reading: Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*/William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805 version).

Session 5: Thurs 28th September**Literature and Post-colonialism (Ruvani Ranasinha) (NOTE START TIME OF 1.45pm)**

The contribution of novelists whose heritage involves the relationship between Britain and the former British Empire, especially those from the Indian Subcontinent, is an exceptionally significant development in contemporary English literature. This session will look at some aspects of the history of migration from the countries of the Commonwealth, and will study some important examples the work of writers such as Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Monica Ali.

Class reading: (Extracts to be handed out in class).

NB This session will run from 1.45-5.45pm.

Preparatory reading: Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, pp. 185-195. Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

Session 6: Thurs 5th October**Urban Secrets: Psychogeography and images of London (Lia Ghilardi)**

Psychogeography is a concept developed by the French Situationists in the 1950s, and has recently been elaborated by British urban thinkers such as Iain Sinclair and Stewart Home, as well as by the novelist Peter Ackroyd. This session will look at the meaning of the theory of psychogeography and at its application to the work of sci-fi novelist JG Ballard and performance poet Kate Tempest.

Class reading: (Extracts to be handed out in class).

Preparatory reading: JG Ballard, *Concrete Island* (1974) and Kate Tempest, *Brand New Ancients* (2013).

Special workshop: researching, writing and correctly referencing your paper.

ELECTIVE PHASE (RESEARCH AND WRITING)**Session 7: Weds or Thurs 18th or 19th October**

Presentation and discussion of student's draft proposal in small group sessions with assigned supervisors. **(NB The date and time of seminar sessions will vary, depending on the supervisor and this syllabus only indicates a chronological outline.)**

Session 8: Weds or Thurs 25th or 26th October

Detailed analysis and evaluation of student's draft proposal in individual sessions with assigned supervisors.

Session 9: Thurs 2nd November

Deadline for student's draft proposal.

**** Excursion:** Group visit to the Dickens House museum.
(2nd November TBC PM)

Session 10: Weds or Thurs 8th or 9th November

Student seminars.

**** Excursion:** Group visit to Dr Johnson's house.
(9th November TBC PM)

Session 11: Weds or Thurs 22nd or 23rd November

Student seminars.

**** Excursion:** Group excursion around *Mrs Dalloway*'s London.
(Weds 22nd November TBC PM)

Session 12: Weds or Thurs 29th or 30th November

Final student seminars.

Session 13: Tue 12th December

Deadline for student's research paper 5.00pm.

Readings

The primary reading text for each session is indicated in the chronology section. The reading assigned is the basis for discussion in that class session.

Additional reading may be found on Blackboard: <http://learn.bu.edu>

Choosing a Research Topic: Some suggestions by former course leader Dr Mark Allen

You will already be aware of the fact that your time studying in London is centrally focused on the various authors who have lived and worked here and on texts that have explored and dramatised the capital itself.

You will also be aware of the enormous range and variety of writings involved in the history of the city, to say nothing of the places around and beyond it. A literary history as densely populated as this one creates its own problems for a student who approaches the topic of a research paper without any idea as to what it is they wish to write about.

Leaving aside those who already have a clear idea of what it is they want to work on or who are thinking about selecting one topic from the several possibilities that they already have in mind, the student who is absolutely at sea as to what to go to work upon could ponder the following:

Think about whether or not there are any authors or works that you have already read or looked at that really grabbed your attention. It may well be that, alongside a particular author you also have a special interest in one or more subjects that seem to impinge upon a particular work in an interesting way. This could well involve you thinking about something that may appear to be not predominantly literary in nature (though it well might) but also about things that might strike you as being of primarily historical or political or psychological interest.

Some might want to explore the poetic appropriations of London that are found in certain canonical authors like Spenser or Wordsworth, but others may wish to explore the social and psychological dimensions within the bawdy of Jacobean city comedy or look at the questions of gender and consciousness that are to be found in Virginia Woolf, or investigate the problematic nature of Englishness and/or Britishness as it is found in so many contemporary post-colonial authors. Your work, however, **doesn't** have to revolve around the city, and if you choose to concentrate on an author who didn't write in or about London, then you should feel free to develop your interests in that direction.

You certainly do not have to restrict yourself to any of the writers or works you have already studied, but if you find yourself wanting to really develop something you have written upon elsewhere that may well be a promising avenue to explore.

Try asking yourselves the following questions: why exactly you would like to study this piece of literature, what questions you would like to ask about it and exactly why you think that the answers matter. In other words, what is at stake in your project?

In order to acquire a sense of what secondary literature there is that might be related to your topic or author, it is usually a very good idea to use the online Modern Languages Association International Bibliography, which you might find more helpful in the early stages of research than JSTOR. In old-fashioned book form, there is *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, which is a multi-volume work of reference that covers a huge amount of territory. As well as giving detailed lists for areas of writing as diverse as newspapers, magazines and household bills, it also covers the more predictable categories such as drama and the novel. *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* also gives an author-by-author listing that details the information you might well need to know something about regarding the various critical editions of works, letters, journals and biography. (The second edition of *The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, edited by George Watson, is now being replaced by the 3rd edition, and the first volume in the new series, edited by Joanne Shattock, covers 1800 – 1900.)

It might also be helpful to you to know some of the topics for research chosen by students over the last few years. The list of subjects that people have written about included the following: English graveyard poetry, ideas of madness and of hysteria and of the presentation of London in Virginia Woolf, Keats's idea of poetry and the feminine, notions of beauty and strangeness in Wordsworth and Wilde, free will in *Paradise Lost*, T. E. Lawrence and ideas of national identity, backgrounds to *Jane Eyre* and *Agnes Grey*, religious ideas in T. S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party*, love and nature in the sonnets of Shakespeare and Meredith, the dramatisation of emotion in the plays of Terence Rattigan, women in *Daisy Miller* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, Morality Play conventions in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, language and control in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, masculinity in Joyce's *Dubliners*, sexual repression in McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*, the treatment of enforced marriage in *Pride and Prejudice*, homosexuality, Greek love and aestheticism in Oscar Wilde, incestuous patterns in *Wuthering Heights*, views of childhood in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, background to Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, images of the feminine in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, identity and national mythology in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, aesthetic ideas in Joyce's *Dubliners* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, aspects of degeneration in H. G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, opium and the writing of De Quincey, power and the feminine in some of Shakespeare's female characters.

Obviously any catalogue of possibilities is endless, but, in thinking through the topics and/or authors that you may already have an interest in, and in discussing these possibilities with your supervisors you will hopefully be able to narrow down your list of potential topics to something that is both rewarding and workable.

The city itself has any number of resources that could be of benefit here, such as museums, galleries and libraries and every student should make a point of finding out what is on offer. This course does require a good deal of individual initiative on the part of every student and also the capacity to do significant amounts of reading and research by yourself. Any student who feels that they have lots of free time on their hands **isn't** doing the amount of work they should be doing...

Good luck!

Criticism and Theory: Suggestions for reading by Dr Mark Allen

Referring to a fashionable theoretical work will never turn a turgid essay into a scintillating piece of work and using buzz words because you think they sound impressive is a recipe for obscuring real thinking with undigested vocabulary. That said, it is certainly true that exploring various critical approaches and theoretical formulations can provide interesting perspectives on literary texts. You may also uncover powerful explanatory tools that enable you to make sense of all manner of elements in a given text in ways that you hadn't considered before.

There are now legions of books that set out to give an introductory survey of recent developments in critical theory. Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (3rd rev. ed., Manchester University Press, 2009) and Hans Bertens's *Literary Theory: The Basics* (Routledge 2008) and are both accessible preliminary surveys for those who are totally unfamiliar with the terrain, whilst *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction* edited by Ann Jefferson and David Robey is a bit more demanding (2nd rev. ed, Batsford 1986). Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle adopt a very different approach in their *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory* (4th rev. ed., Longman 2009). This book moves through a large number of ideas and themes chapter by chapter in a way that is both provocative and readable. *Studying Literature: An Essential Companion* (Hodder Education, 2nd rev. ed., 2010) by Paul Goring, Jeremy Hawthorn and Domnhall Mitchell covers a good deal of material in the form of longer articles as well as glossary style entries on various authors and ideas and is also a book that many students find user-friendly as a general introduction to the subject.

If you want to pursue a particular concept or approach, you could do worse than read the relevant pages of a good glossary or literary encyclopedia before turning to more specialised works. Some of the best of these include the well-known and very good book by M. H. Abrams (and others) *Glossary of Literary Terms* (new, international edition published by Heinle Languages, 2008.) There is also *Critical Assumptions* (Cambridge 1979) by K. K. Ruthven, which is still worth reading and *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (University of Chicago Press, 2nd ed., 1995) by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin which uses longer essay-style articles to explore recent theoretical preoccupations and concepts. The results can be uneven but some of the pieces are very good indeed. The one-stop bible for literary terms remains *The New Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton University Press, rev. ed., 1993), edited by Alex Preminger, Terry V. F. Brogan and Frank J. Warnke.

From here you should move on to studies that allow more space to the analysis of themes and approaches, and at this point it would be as well to mention two useful series of books that most students should be familiar with. The New Accents series (edited by Terence Hawkes, published by Routledge) has a range of titles that cover a good deal of recent theoretical territory. Some of these are very good, some less so, but they will at least introduce you to main figures and ideas and they usually provide good bibliographies. The other series is the Critical Idiom series, now in a second incarnation (the New Critical Idiom series published by Routledge and edited by John Drakakis). The first version of this series covered fairly traditional topics (i.e., Genre or Romance) whereas the new series also includes topics like historicism and intertextuality. Inevitably, there are some duff titles (in both versions) but the best of these little books are excellent and many students find them more useful than anything else.

For anthologies that offer a good selection of central theoretical pieces, you could look at the two edited by David Lodge; *20th Century Literary Criticism: A Reader* (Longmans 1972) and *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (2nd rev., ed., Longman 1999). There is also the generous and intelligent selection edited by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (Blackwells, 2nd rev. ed., 2004).

Finally, every student should be aware of what the best editions are for the works they are interested in, and should be using the notes in those editions in their close reading of the texts. Time and again, even very good students often waste a good deal of their time by not paying attention to footnotes. Even if you end up disagreeing with an editor's annotations — as you well might- thinking through the implications of, for example, a gloss on an obsolete term from Shakespeare, is always worthwhile.

If you aren't already familiar with it, then please get friendly with the full, unabridged version of the Oxford English Dictionary, which is the only dictionary in the English language to cover as much ground with as much illustrative material as it does.

Preparation of Research Proposals:

The first group meeting (in week seven) will involve you reading a draft proposal to your fellow seminar students. This could be quite short and must only take 10 minutes (at most) to read. The group may then want to ask questions that you will respond to and you will want to make extra copies of this draft proposal, so that your fellow students and supervisor can all consult a hard copy in class. Following class discussion you will then have a couple of weeks to work on this proposal before handing in a final version of around 600 words. BOTH versions of your proposal need to establish what text or texts you wish to study and will give a general idea of your proposed approach, detailing, at least, the editions you plan to use and whether or not there are, for instance, any relevant areas of journals, notebooks or letters that you will be referring to. Information should also be given regarding any criticism that you think might be relevant. BOTH your presentation and your written proposal will be graded.

• Aleks Sierz, and all the faculty, hope that you will enjoy the course, Fall 2017