On holiday. Department of English

Summer Reading Lists 2024-25

Below you will find suggestions for reading to do over the next few weeks as you prepare for your first year of university study. There is no expectation that you will read all these things, but it always helps to make a start!

Although this information is correct at the time of creation, and we will do all we can to keep changes to a minimum, we cannot guarantee that there will be no changes to this list at the start of the autumn term.

We like books, and we like to buy books, but we understand that you may not be able to buy everything. Wherever possible, therefore, we have indicated inexpensive options and free, online equivalents. Don’t forget that, once you are at Royal Holloway, you will have access to many of these books through the library!

If you’re taking a Joint Honours degree, you will have to contact your other department to find out about suggested reading for those modules, but for your English modules, find your Programme below (Single Honours English, Joint Honours English and History, etc), and then click on the links to see the information that has been provided by your module convenors. Many of them have provided an email address; if they have, don’t hesitate to contact them if you have questions. We look forward to welcoming you in September!

**Single Honours English**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Literature & Crisis](#EN1105) (EN1105)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Shakespeare](#EN1106) (EN1106)
* [Encountering Medieval Literature](#EN1001) (EN1001)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/American Literature**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Literature & Crisis](#EN1105) (EN1105)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)
* [Introducing America](#EN1401) (EN1401)

**Joint Honours English/Classics**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/Comparative Literatures and Culture**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/Creative Writing**

* [Introduction to Creative Writing](#CW1010) (CW1010)
* [Why Write?](#CW1020) (CW1020)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)
* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)

**Joint Honours English/Drama**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/Film Studies**

* [Literature & Crisis](#EN1105) (EN1105)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)

**Joint Honours English/History**

* [Literature & Crisis](#EN1105) (EN1105)
* [Shakespeare](#EN1106) (EN1106)
* [Encountering Medieval Literature](#EN1001) (EN1001)

**Joint Honours English/Languages**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/Music**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours English/Philosophy**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

**Joint Honours Drama/Creative Writing**

* [Introduction to Creative Writing](#CW1010) (CW1010)
* [Why Write?](#CW1020) (CW1020)

**Joint Honours American/Creative Writing**

* [Introduction to Creative Writing](#CW1010) (CW1010)
* [Why Write?](#CW1020) (CW1020)
* [Introducing America](#EN1401) (EN1401)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)
* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)

**English Major with Philosophy Minor**

* [Thinking as a Critic](#EN1011) (EN1011)
* [Re-Orienting the Novel](#EN1107) (EN1107)
* [Shakespeare](#EN1106) (EN1106)
* [Encountering Medieval Literature](#EN1001) (EN1001)
* [Introducing Poetry](#EN1112) (EN1112)

# **EN1011: Thinking as a Critic**

**(Autumn term, 2024)**

Module Convenor: Professor Robert Eaglestone ([r.eaglestone@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:r.eaglestone@rhul.ac.uk))

# Welcome to a huge community of people who love literature and want to talk, listen, write and read about it! You are already literary critics: this course will make you even better ones.

# There are questions you want to ask (or have probably already asked) about the subject of English: why do we have to read that? How do I know if a book is good? Does book mean what the author says it means? Can you make a poem mean anything? What’s the point of English? Will AI change literature? There are questions you want to ask about studying English: is there a right answer? how do I get a good mark? How do I write a good essay? How do I know what I am saying is sensible?

# These are incisive, important questions. Very many leading academic critics and theorists have been asking them for decades. This course evaluates the answers.

# We’re going to do this by ‘thinking as a critic’. This means conversations: with texts, with each other, with ourselves. It means communicating and collaborating with academics, peers, writers and thinking and writing critically and creatively

# **Summer Reading**

Robert Eaglestone, *Doing English: a guide for literature students* 4th edition (London; Routledge, 2017).

Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* 5th ed (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2021). I’ve put the most recent edition but, in this case, it doesn’t really matter what edition you read. There is a free online version here <https://archive.org/details/theysayisay3rdedition> Start with the essay ‘Hidden Intellectualism’ (p. 244) the circle back to the beginning.

# **EN1107 Re-Orienting the Novel**

**(Autumn & Spring term, 2024-25)**

**Course Convener**: Professor Judith Hawley ([j.hawley@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:j.hawley@rhul.ac.uk))

Re-Orienting the Novel aims to introduce students to the history and theory of the novel, and to ways of reading this popular genre critically as well as for pleasure. The course combines:

1. Close critical reading of key texts  
2. Thematic study  
3. Historical analysis of the origins and development of the novel  
4. Introductory study of key terms and concepts in narrative theory and criticism.

The course is divided into four blocks which focus on formal and contextual issues.

## Reading List (in the order in which we will study them):

### Term 1 Block 1: Form

1. Sara Collins, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton* (London: Viking, 2019).
2. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela* (1741), ed. by T. Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 and reprints).

### Term 1 Block 2: History

1. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2008).
2. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), ed. John Richetti (London: Penguin, 2001 and rpt.). [NB Do not buy the cheap Penguin version with no introduction. Not only is it the wrong text, it lacks explanatory footnotes.]
3. J. M. Coetzee, *Foe* (London: Penguin, 1984 and rpt.).

### Term 2 Block 3: Romance

1. Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian* (1797) Oxford World's Classics edition, ed. Nick Groom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
2. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), Norton Critical Edition, ed. Deborah Esch and Jonathan Warren (New York: WW Norton, 1999, 2nd ed.).
3. Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (1974) (various editions available).

### Term 2 Block 4: Realism

1. Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1854-55) Oxford World's Classics edition, ed. A. Easson, Introduction by Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
2. Sunjeev Sahota, *The Year of the Runaways* (London: Picador, 2015 and rpt.).

It would be useful if you have read at least the first two books by the start of teaching. We recommend that you use print copies of all these books. In our experience, students retain more information if they have read a book in hard copy rather than in digital form. It also makes discussion in seminars easier. Please use the editions we recommend. In many cases they have useful introductions and notes. They can be purchased at reasonable costs new or second hand, e.g. from [https://www.hive.co.uk](https://www.hive.co.uk/) [they support high street bookshops]; https://foyles.co.uk [they have a student discount scheme]; [https://www.bookfinder.com](https://www.bookfinder.com/) [a vast marketplace for second hand books].

Contents warning: Many of these texts contain descriptions of self-harm or racial and sexual violence.

**EN1106 Shakespeare**

**(Autumn term, 2024)**

**Module Convenor: Dr Harry Newman**, [harry.newman@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:harry.newman@rhul.ac.uk)

**Set Primary Reading**

The list below identifies the plays we will study on the course. Students should read the first three plays on the list in advance, although you are encouraged to read as many as possible before term starts. After an introductory week, we will study one play each week in the following order:

* *Henry IV, Part 1*
* *Henry V*
* *The Merchant of Venice*
* *Twelfth Night*
* *Hamlet*
* *Othello*
* *King Lear*
* *The Winter’s Tale*
* *The Tempest*

##### Students will need to obtain ***The Norton Shakespeare* (third edition), ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (2016)**, which is the key course text. If you decide to buy directly from their website—[www.wwnorton.co.uk](http://www.wwnorton.co.uk/)—we have arranged for a **20% discount**. The **discount code is WN136**, so you can apply this at checkout when purchasing. Follow [this link](https://wwnorton.co.uk/books/9780393263121-the-norton-shakespeare-e6f943b0-815b-4f3a-a707-c1e9b9a48f90) to the Norton webpage where you can purchase the third edition. (All new print copies come with free access to the interactive e-book too!) *The Norton Shakespeare* has good, brief introductions to the individual plays as well as useful background material. Single editions of plays in The Oxford Shakespeare, Arden Shakespeare, New Cambridge Shakespeare series are also recommended. Cheap second-hand editions are usually available online.

Please also **WATCH** any of the above plays – on stage, in the cinema, on TV/DVD, or online.

**Secondary reading**

Reading the plays and the introductions in *The Norton Shakespeare* should take priority. But students can also prepare by reading one or more of the following critical works. Emma Smith’s *This is Shakespeare* (2019) is particularly recommended.

David Bevington, *Shakespeare* (Blackwell, 2002)

Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Blackwell, 1986)

Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare’s Language* (Allen Lane, 2000)

Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (Arden Shakespeare, 2005)

Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Palgrave, 2002)

Emma Smith, *This is Shakespeare* (Penguin, 2019), also available as an [audio-book](https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/310131/this-is-shakespeare/9780241405901.html)

**Podcasts / online interviews / audiobooks**

Emma Smith’s excellent book *This is Shakespeare* (Penguin, 2019), is available as an [audio-book](https://www.penguin.co.uk/books/310131/this-is-shakespeare/9780241405901.html). You can listen to podcast lectures on Shakespeare on Shakespeare by Emma Smith here: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/approaching-shakespeare>. It’s also worthwhile listening to her recent [BBC Radio 4 series, “Taking Issue with Shakespeare”](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001l23q) (five episodes, 15 mins each).

Shakespeare Unlimited is a podcast of the Folger Shakespeare Library: <https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/>. It features interviews with scholars, directors, actors and others about all things Shakespeare. Episodes of particular interest may be “How Shakespeare Thought About the Mind,” with Helen Hackett ([here](https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/elizabethan-mind-hackett/)); “Shakespeare’s Language and Race,” with Patricia Akhimie and Carol Mejia LaPerle ([here](https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/language-race-akhimie-laperle/)); and “The King’s Men” [Shakespeare’s acting company], with Lucy Munro ([here](https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/munro-kings-men/)).

**Content notes**

Some of the texts on this course include the following themes: suicide, mental illness, physical violence, sexual violence, racism and ethnic abuse, pejorative terms aimed at illness or disabilities. When preparing for the course, students are asked to research the reading lists and raise any concerns with their Personal Tutor or the course convenor/leader.

**EN1001: Encountering Medieval Literature**

**(Spring term, 2025)**

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Course convenors: Dr Jennifer Neville ([j.neville@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:j.neville@rhul.ac.uk))

This course will introduce you to the earliest literary writings in English, covering a span of eight hundred years, from 700-1500. To put that period of time in perspective, from the time of Shakespeare up to today is only four hundred years. We cover an extensive range of genres, themes, texts and topics. By the end of the course you will be well acquainted with the range of medieval literature in English.

You may be surprised at how vital and sophisticated the finest of this material is, and how much it has inspired more recent authors such as Seamus Heaney (see his translation of *Beowulf*), Derek Walcott (who cites Langland as his greatest inspiration), and Ian McEwan (who voted Chaucer as his ‘Man of the Millennium’).

### **Required Textbooks**

You will need to own the following **required** textbooks by the start of Spring term (i.e. January 2025):

* Marsden, Richard, ed., *The Cambridge Old English Reader*, 2nd edn(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
* Burrow, J. A. and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, 4th edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2020).
* Any translation of *Beowulf*. Most popular recently has been Seamus Heaney's translation, but you may wish to consult a prose translation to provide a model for your own work, such as E. Talbot Donaldson, *Beowulf: A Prose Translation*, ed. by Nicholas Howe (London: W. W. Norton, 2002). There are many other translations available in the library and bookshops.
* Any translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Good choices include Simon Armitage’s recent translation and the Oxford World’s Classics translation (by Keith Harrison; note especially the introduction by Helen Cooper).

All your set texts (listed below) are included in these textbooks.

### **Set Texts**

Try to read as many of these as possible in translation (and, if you're brave, have a look at them in the original languages, too!).

* *The Wanderer\**
* *Beowulf\**
* *The Dream of the Rood\**
* *The Battle of Brunanburh\**
* Middle English lyrics
* *Sir Orfeo*
* *The Reeve's Tale*
* *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*
* *The York Play of the Crucifixion*

The Old English texts (marked with \* above) can also be found in anthologies. You don't have to buy one, but many are cheaply available online or in a library. Some commonly found anthologies include:

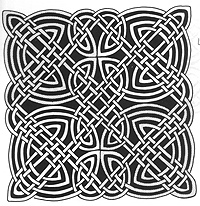
* Bradley, S. A. J., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1982)
* Crossley-Holland, Kevin, trans., *The Anglo-Saxon World (*Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1982)
* David, Alfred and James Simpson, eds, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume A: The Middle Ages*, 8th edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2006) [note this also has modernised versions of some of our Middle English poems, too]
* Delanty, Greg and Michael Matto, eds, *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation*, foreword by Seamus Heaney (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011)
* Gordon, R. K., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, rev. edn (London: Dent, 1954)
* Kennedy, Charles W., trans., *An Anthology of Old English Poetry*  (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960)

### **Here’s a week-by-week outline of the module:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Week 18 | *The Battle of Brunanburh* 1-28a |
| Week 19 | *The Wanderer*45-72 |
| Week 20 | *Beowulf:*‘The Fight with Grendel’s Mother’ 1-39 |
| Week 21 | *Beowulf*: ‘The Fight with Grendel’s Mother’ 40-84 |
| Week 22 | *The Dream of the Rood* 27-65a  **First Assignment due (25%).** |
| Week 23 | Study Week |
| Week 24 | *Middle English Lyrics* |
| Week 25 | *Chaucer, The Reeve's Tale* |
| Week 26 | *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Fitt 1  **Second Assignment due (25%).** |
| Week 27 | *Sir Orfeo* |
| Week 28 | *The York Crucifixion* |

**Background Reading**It can be really helpful to do some background reading, especially if, like many of our students, you’ve never read any medieval literature before. There are many excellent introductions to the period’s literature; the following are merely examples.

* Alexander, Michael, *A History of English Literature* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), chapters 1 and 2
* Brown, Peter, *A Companion to Medieval Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)
* Burrow, J. A., *Medieval Writers and their Work* (Oxford, 1982)
* Fulk, R.D. and Christopher M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)
* Godden, Malcolm and Michael Lapidge, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
* Johnson, David and Elaine Treharne, *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
* Pearsall, Derek, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1977)
* Saunders, Corinne, *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010)
* Turville-Petre, Thorlac, *Middle English Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)



**EN1112 Introduction to Poetry**

**(Spring term, 2025)**

Module Convenor: Dr Will Montgomery ([will.montgomery@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:will.montgomery@rhul.ac.uk))

Course description

This course is designed to introduce first-year students to a variety of major poems in English. The course ranges widely from the Renaissance to the present day, involving practice in close reading while also engaging with issues of historical understanding and critical judgement. Throughout the term, we hope you will develop the confidence to engage with a range of stylistic elements in relation to poetry, and that you will seek to develop a critical awareness of the complex ways in which poetry relates to social and political events. As the course progresses, you will develop your critical awareness of the different kinds of responses that certain poems elicit, in relation to aspects of their historical reception by previous readers. The course is organised thematically rather than chronologically: we will look at a variety of poems from different periods each week.

Preparation

Over the summer, please purchase a copy of the latest *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, which is the 6th edition.

We suggest that you read widely and often in this book, starting with the poets you know already and reading outwards as your interests lead you (if you’re at a loss, then start with Emily Dickinson and Frank O’Hara!). The notes and appendices are very useful. In addition to the Norton anthology, we make regular reference throughout the course to [Poetry: The Basics](https://www-dawsonera-com.ezproxy01.rhul.ac.uk/abstract/9781315742137) by Jeffrey Wainwright (London: Routledge, 2016), which is a set text. This will be available directly through the library as an e-book when you have completed registration.

**EN1401: Introducing America**

**(Autumn & Spring term, 2024-25)**

Module Leader: Dr Kristina West ([kristina.west@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:kristina.west@rhul.ac.uk)) and Dr Lewi Mondal ([lewis.mondal@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:lewis.mondal@rhul.ac.uk))

**Course Description:**

This course is has two aims: to give students a sense of some central topics in American literature; and to provide a selective survey of the literature written between 1600 and 1900.

You will read a mixture of canonical texts, popular writings, and writings by Native Americans, African Americans and women, some of which have only recently begun to be widely studied. As well as examining how texts respond to and mediate their cultural, historical and political context (America’s foundational myths, gender, race), the course will discuss more formal topics such as genre (the rise of the short story in America; the importance of the essay; the formal features of the slave narrative), poetic form, and the uses of emotion in literature.

**Texts for Purchase:**

*The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Volume B.* ed. Robert Levine (2022) 978-0-393-88613-9 [YOU DO NOT NEED ANY OTHER VOLUMES]

Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig*, ed. Henry Louis Gates and R.J. Ellis. (London: Penguin) ISBN ISBN 9780393892222

**Summer Reading**

The text is taught in 4 blocks over 2 two terms. Please read the texts from Block 1, and as much from Block 2 as you can before you arrive as that will make your first term a lot easier.

Texts marked with an asterisk (\*) can be accessed online by through the course Moodle page. All other texts, except for *Our Nig*, are in the Norton anthology.

Block 1: What is an American? What is American Literature?

Week 2: Being/Becoming American

Reading/Listening: Extracts from “The Declaration of Independence,”; Jean de Crevecoeur, “What is an American?” from *Letters from an American Farmer*; Lin Manuel Miranda, “My Shot,” from *Hamilton*; Amanda Gorman, “The Hill We Climb”.\* [5-8 pages total]

Week 3: Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”\* [Short story]

Week 4: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature,” “The American Scholar,” “Self-Reliance” [Three essays. Emerson’s style can make these a challenge so give yourself time to digest.]

Week 5: Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” and “Preface” to *Leaves of Grass* [One long poem and essay]

Week 6: Sui Sin Far, “Mrs Spring Fragrance,”\* “Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian”\* [Two short stories]

READING WEEK

Block 2: Settling America: Colonial Violence, Indigenous Voices

Week 8: Puritans, Pocahontas and Pioneers: Early Settlement and the Frontier in US Culture

Extracts from: John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia*; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*\*; Extract from Laura Ingalls Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*\* [8-10 pages]

Week 9: Mary Rowlandson, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs Mary Rowlandson*\* [Short novel-length]

Week 10: Samson Occom (Mohegan), “Autobiography”\*; William Apess (Pequot), *A Son of the Forest,*Chapter 1; Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Dakota) Extracts from *The School Days of an Indian Girl*\* [Three short story-length extracts]

Week 11: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* [novel]

Week 12: *The Witch* (2015, dir. Robert Eggers), and Essay Advice

WINTER VACATION

Term 2 Block 3: Slavery and Its Legacies

Week 17: Print and Visual Cultures of Slavery

*No Required Reading*

Class Texts: Examples of slavery/antislavery images

Suggested pre-reading/watching: Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Routledge, 2003); *13th* dir. Ava DuVernay

Week 18: Frederick Douglass, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* [Short novel-length autobiography]

Week 19: Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig* [novel]

Week 20: Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” [Longer short story]

Week 21: Charles Chesnutt, “Dave’s Neckliss,” “Po’ Sandy,” “The Wife of His Youth,” “The Passing of Grandison”\* [Four short stories]

READING WEEK

Block 4: Modernity and Its Critiques

Week 23: Public Sphere and Private Sphere

Emily Dickinson: Selected Poems from the Norton Anthology (8-10 short poems)

Week 24: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Man of the Crowd,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Man Who Was Used Up”\* (Three short stories)

Week 25: Henry David Thoreau, Extracts from *Walden* (Short-novel length)

Week 26: Rebecca Harding Davies, “Life in the Iron Mills” (Short story)

Week 27: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, “The Yellow Wallpaper”\* (Short story)

**Course Structure:**

* This course is taught over two terms, and is divided into four blocks of five weeks.
* Each week you have one lecture and one seminar on the set text or texts. You will need to have read, and though about the text carefully before both the lecture and the seminar. Questions are circulated in advance to help you start thinking about texts.

**Content Notes:**

Texts on this course contain: graphic descriptions of violence, sexual violence, self-harm and suicide. Detailed content notes for each text will be provided on the Moodle pages.

Content notes are not provided for the presence of racial slurs and/or hate speech. This is because such terms are ubiquitous in American literature before 1900, even in texts that can be read as critiquing or challenging white supremacy. Such terms appear across the course on a regular basis, and will be discussed with sensitivity.

If you have concerns about, or wish to discuss the content of any of the set readings, you are welcome to email me.

**Summer Reading and Preparation**

* Read as much before term begins as you can. You will struggle to keep up if you need to read all the texts for the first time in term time. Guidance is given on the length of texts so you can prioritize your Summer reading.
* The historical contexts for these texts will be unfamiliar to most or all of you, so you may find it useful to read some early and nineteenth-century US history. The following websites are good places to start:
* *New York Times* – 1619 Project: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>
* *Library of Congress*: *American History Timeline*: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>
* Google around the following concepts/events: the Mayflower and Colonial America; the American Revolution (listen to *Hamilton*, if you haven’t already); the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights; Indian Removal; manifest destiny; the frontier; transcendentalism; the market revolution; Seneca Falls Convention; separate spheres; chattel slavery in the US; the US Civil War; Reconstruction; immigration to the US in the nineteenth century.

**CW1020 Why Write:   
The Theory and History of Creative Writing**

**(Autumn & Spring term, 2024-25)**

Module Convenor: Dr Doug Cowie ([douglas.cowie@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:douglas.cowie@rhul.ac.uk))

**Course Outline and Summer Reading Recommendations.**

Below is a week by week outline of the course reading. Some essays are short, and some are longer. You may wish to read ahead this summer.

All of the texts are available either online or in the university library, but in some cases, it will be helpful to buy your own copy of the book (usually when the reading assignment is a little longer). **These titles are marked in bold. Please try to buy the recommended edition, because it will make your life slightly easier.**

The other great thing you can do to prepare yourself for studying on a degree in creative writing is read as many novels and short stories, poems, and plays as you can. You’ll be writing in all these forms, and thinking about how and why to write in these forms, for the next three years, so read at least one short story, at least one novel, at least one play, and half a dozen poems this summer, and think about what you like about each of them, what you don’t like about each of them, and—importantly—why you like or don’t like those things. “I don’t know, it just wasn’t relatable” isn’t really a reason why. Why? Why? Why? Pretend you’re three years old and keep asking that question, and see where it takes you.

**Week Two:** George Orwell, 'Why I Write', in *Why I Write*, Penguin Great Ideas (Penguin, 2004)

**Week Three:** James Baldwin, ‘Autobiographical Note’ , in *Collected Essays.*

**Week Four:** Patricia Smith, ‘Foreward’, Mahogany L. Browne, ‘Introduction’, Idrissa Simmonds, ‘Introduction’, and Jamila Woods, ‘Introduction’, all from *Black Girl Magic* Topics

**Week Five: Plato, *Republic*** 2-3 and 10. Penguin Classics, translated by Desmond Lee.

**Week Six: Aristotle, *Poetics***. Penguin Classics, translated by Malcolm Heath.

**Week Eight:** Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry'.

**Week Nine:** Audre Lorde, ‘Poetry Is Not a Luxury’.

**Week Ten:** Matthew Arnold, 'Sweetness and Light' in *Culture and  
Anarchy*, and Oscar Wilde, 'Preface to *A Picture of Dorian Gray*'.

**Week Eleven: Friedrich Nietzsche**, excerpts from ***The Birth of Tragedy*** (“An Attempt at Self-Criticism” and Sections I-V, XI-XII, XIV, XXIII). Oxford Univerisity Press.

**Week Twelve:** Joan Didion, ‘Why I Write’.

**Week 18: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.**

**Week 19:** Henry James, Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*.

**Week 20:** T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”

**Week 21:** William Carlos Williams, “Spring and All”, in *Imaginations.*

**Week 22: Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues.***

**Week 24:** Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”.

**Week 25:** W.H. Auden, “The Virgin and the Dynamo” and “The Poet and The City”, from *The Dyer’s Hand and Other Essays.*

**Week 26:** Adrienne Rich, ‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’.

**Week 27:** Ralph Ellison, “Introduction to *Invisible Man*”.

**Week 28:** Aleksandar Hemon and Colum McCann, “On Writers and History”, from *Pretext 7* (Spring/Summer 2003)*.*

**CW1010: Introduction to Creative Writing**

**(Autumn & Spring term, 2024-25)**

**Module Convenor: Dr Prudence Bussey-Chamberlain** (Prudence.Chamberlain@rhul.ac.uk)

In order to prepare for this course please read as widely as you can from the following list.

**Introduction (Term One, weeks 1 - 5)**

In weeks 1 – 5 we will be reading and writing across a range of genres. You could prepare by reading any of the following:

* Caryl Churchill, *Escaped Alone,* (NHB Modern Plays), 2016.
* Ursula Le Guin, *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* (Terra Ignota) 2019.
* George Saunders, *Fox8,* Bloomsbury, 2018.
* Claudia Rankine, *Citizen,* 2015.
* Reading widely across different forms in poetry: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/browse#page=1&sort_by=recently_added&topics=45> and consider how meaning / form and content relate. You will also be using the *Norton Anthology of Poetry* for your poetry course in term 2 so read widely in this anthology over the summer.

**Poetry (Term One, weeks 6 – 11)**

We will be looking a range of writers and related poets. Do investigate the work of these poets online and if possible through the collections mentioned. These are recommended rather than essential to purchase.

* William Blake, *Complete Poems*, Penguin Classics.
* Camille Dungy, *Trophic Cascade* (Wesleyan Poetry Series) 2017.
* Frank O’Hara, *Lunch Poems*, City Lights Press, 1964.\**If you are not able to get hold of this edition then look up his work on the poetry foundation or try to borrow the collected poems from the library or any other edition.*
* Joy Harjo. *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems 1975-2001: New and Selected Poems 1975-2002*, 2009.

In preparation look-up at least three of the following poets. You can do this on the poetry foundation website or elsewhere online and follow up with individual collections in relation to your own interests and ideas:Charles Olson, Mina Loy, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Emily Dickinson, Anne Carson,Bernadette Mayer, Rae Armantrout, Susan Howe, Audre Lorde, Juliana Spahr, Tracy K. Smith, Fred Moten, Maggie Nelson, Alice Oswald, Jorie Graham. Some will appeal to your interests more than others – try to make detailed notes on poems that you like and think about what you might like to draw on as you develop your own work.

**Playwriting (Term Two, weeks 17 – 21)**

Try to read at least two of the following over the summer*.*

*Fleabag*, Phoebe Waller Bridge

*Chewing Gum Dreams*, Michaela Cole

*Oedipus Rex,* Sophocles

Lungs, **Duncan MacMillan**

*Seven Methods of Killing Kylie Jenner*, Jasmine Lee Jones

Love song, Abi Morgan

**Fiction (Term Two, weeks 23-27)**

Lorie Moore, ‘How to become a writer’

Rus Litten, ‘Slowly’ in *We Know What We Are*

Curtis Sittenfield, ‘The Prairie Wife’

Caleb Azumah Nelson, ‘Pray’ in *The BBC National Short Story Award 2020*

George Saunders, ‘The Semplica Girl Diaries’ in *Tenth of December*

Daisy Johnson, ‘Starver’ in *Fen*

**What should I read over the summer?**

You should read as widely as you can from the primary texts listed above. If you have time do look at the further reading and consult the books in the general bibliography at your library. Don’t worry if you don’t have time to read everything listed. Some detailed notes and ideas on what you have read is what matters.

**What should I write over the summer?**

As much as you can across a range of forms and styles. Try to think about some of the techniques and approaches used by the writers listed above and set yourself the task of writing in the mode of as many of them as you can. A diary and or a notebook is always a useful place to begin and can be returned to later on for phrases and ideas that you only had time to sketch at the time. Try to allow some time to begin to reflect on the process of writing itself and to think about the role of the writer in the world today.

**What should I bring to my first seminar?**

A pen and paper and your notes from the reading you have done over the summer. Look out for more detailed instructions nearer the time.

**We look forward to working with you in the Autumn. Have a happy and productive summer.**

**A picture containing clothing, person, black and white, person

Description automatically generatedEN1105 Literature & Crisis**

**(Autumn & Spring term, 2024-25)**

Module Convenor: Dr Harvey Wiltshire ([Harvey.wiltshire@rhul.ac.uk](mailto:Harvey.wiltshire@rhul.ac.uk))

What is crisis? How does literature respond to crisis? Why does literature matter?

During this year long course, we’ll explore how, what, and why literature offers writers and communities a way of responding to and thinking through various kinds of crisis.

You’ll get the chance to think about the role of literature in the world across different historical periods and geographies, with a broad selection of texts organised around specific political or planetary crises or flashpoints.

You’ll be challenged to reflect on the complex relationships between literature, history and politics, and will be asked to think about the agency or shaping force of literature in political and historical experience, to consider the role of aesthetics in the communication and analysis of world events as well as the ways in which our political and social environment impacts on literature.

The exposure to the range of literatures and ideas facilitated by the course will help you in your future course choices. The module is organised thematically, with five-week blocks by theme.

**Reading List — you will need to source copies of the texts indicated.**

**The Sonnet – A Form in Crisis?**

A course reading pack will be made available at the beginning of the course. Reading can be completed week-by-week, so no advanced reading is required. This block will be divided into the following weeks: **1)** ‘Little Songs’ — The Origin of the Sonnet, from Petrarch to Shakespeare **2)** Divine Meditations — Man and God in the Seventeenth-Century Sonnet **3)** 'A Moment’s Monument' — The Romantic Revival of the Sonnet **4)** The Victorian Sonnet and the African American Sonnet Tradition **5)** Love and War — The Evolution of the Sonnet in the 20th century

**Literature in Times of Conflict**

Battle of Maldon & the Sermon of the Wolf [Texts provided on Moodle]

William Shakespeare, 'Richard III' [Available in Norton Anthology of Shakespeare]

Civil War and Civil Strife — Poetry of the English Republic [Texts provided on Moodle]

Elizabeth Bowen - Wartime Stories [Texts provided on Moodle]

Lorrie Moore, *A Gate at the Stairs* [Please purchase]

**Race, Empire, Migration**

*The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands* (1857) [Please purchase]

Poetry and Empire [Texts provided on Moodle]

Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance [Texts provided on Moodle]

Leila Aboulela, *The Museum* [Text provided on Moodle]

Zadie Smith, *Swing Time* [Please purchase]

**Literature and the Environment**

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* [Please purchase]

Alice Oswald, *Dart* [Please purchase]

Noreen Masud, *A Flat Place* [Please purchase]

**Please try to read the texts highlighted in green over the summer, to get ahead.**