

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

Name, title and level of final qualification(s)	MA English Literature and Culture (Level 7)
Name and title of any exit qualification(s)	PG Dip English Literatures and Cultures PG Cert English Literatures and Cultures
Is the programme offered with a Foundation Year (if applicable)?	N/A
Awarding Body	University of London
Teaching Institution(s)	Birkbeck, University of London
Home Department/other teaching departments	School of Creative Arts, Culture and Communication
Location of delivery	Central London/Online (in-person, flexible and online pathways)
Language of delivery and assessment	English
Mode of study, length of study and normal start month	Full-time (1 year) Part-time (2 years) September
Professional, statutory or regulatory body	N/A
QAA subject benchmark group(s) Higher Education Credit Framework for England	N/A
Birkbeck Course Code	- TMAENLIP_C on-campus study - TMAENLIX_C flexible study - TMAENLON_C online study
HECoS Code	100320
Start date of programme	2025/6
Date of programme approval	2011
Date of last programme amendment approval	November 2024
Valid for academic entry year	2025-26
Date of last revision to document	08/11/2024

Admissions requirements

Our standard postgraduate entry requirement is a second-class honours degree (2:2 or above) from a UK university, or an equivalent international qualification. Your first degree does not have to be in English Literature.

Please find details of entry requirements and equivalencies for over 120 countries worldwide.

We will review every postgraduate application to Birkbeck on its individual merits and your professional qualifications and/or relevant work experience will be taken into consideration. We actively support and encourage applications from diverse backgrounds and mature learners.

On your application form, please list all your relevant qualifications and experience, including those you expect to achieve.

We welcome applicants without traditional entry qualifications as we base decisions on our own assessment of qualifications, knowledge and previous work experience. We may waive formal entry requirements based on judgement of academic potential.

Course aims

- To deliver a postgraduate course in English Literature and Culture in a supportive and flexible learning environment, including in-person and online delivery.
- To generate a set of frameworks to read the literature, culture and theories of modernity from 1800 to the present day.
- To allow students to specialise within the MA, developing depth of knowledge in Romantic, Victorian, Modern or Contemporary Literature through option choice and research dissertation topic.
- To train students in postgraduate level research skills, including use of digital resources and the unique array of research libraries and archives in the Bloomsbury area.

Course Structure

To complete the course, students do one compulsory course, three options and a dissertation.

The compulsory framing course is 'Becoming Modern: Literature and Culture 1800 to the Present', an introduction to ideas of modernity from philosophical conceptions of the Enlightenment, via various responses to the problem of being a modern in Victorian and Modernist culture, to theories of late or post-modernity in the contemporary period. We work with literature but also other cultural forms including painting, film, book illustration, critical theory, philosophy and digital materials. The course covers cultural reflections on the meanings of modernity and addresses a range of themes from the political critiques of modernity from 1800 to the present, including the impact of the industrial revolution, debates about the changing role of women, the transformation of the urban experience, the rise and fall of colonialism across the long arc of history, and thematics that have recently included trauma theory, the Anthropocene, digital narratives, posthumanism, and various ways of theorizing the 'postmodern' contemporary. We also use this compulsory course to upgrade your research and writing skills to a Masters level.

You then choose three options from across the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, and finish with supervised dissertation research.

In the autumn and spring term, we offer a range of options which are pooled from across the MAs run by the faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. We offer options that cover different aspects of modern and contemporary culture. Students can put together a historical trajectory

from 1800 to the present, or choose to specialise. The autumn term slate of options usually includes broad survey courses, including 'Post-War: 1945 to the Present' and 'Modernising Victorians' so that with these courses students gain a full background in their route through literary and critical study from 1800 to contemporary literature.

Teachers and researchers from a range of specialisms will explore different critical angles on how we read, interpret and interrogate our concept of what it means to be a 'modern' through a range of specialist options. These research-led options vary each year, but have recently included modules on gender and sexuality, decadence, Victorian London, contemporary American fiction, Freud and psychoanalysis, trauma fiction and theory, posthumanism, medical humanities, Gothic horror in fiction and film, and aspects of critical theory.

Other options associated with the course allow students to move across a wide range of cognate subjects, building their own areas of expertise. These can include options from history, art history, media studies, film, or psychology.

Finally, the course provides one-to-one supervision for a dissertation, framed by a dedicated dissertation skills course that runs in the summer term.

Students have access to some of the best library resources in the world, including the University of London Library and the British Library, just a few minutes away from the College buildings in Bloomsbury. Cultural research is enhanced by access to galleries, museums, the National Theatre, the British Film Institute, Tate, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Warburg Institute's gallery and library and a host of other cultural institutions. Birkbeck has very active research centres and institutes that add further ways of deepening knowledge of modern literature and culture.

Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credit	Comp Core/ Option	Likely teaching term(s)
Full-time – 1 year					
7	ENHU049S7	'Becoming Modern: Literature and Culture 1800 to the Present' (<i>hyflex</i>)	30	Compulsory	1
7	ENHU050S7	Option 1	30	Option	1
7		Option 2	30	Option	2
7		Option 3	30	Option	2
7	AREN295Z7	Dissertation Skills(<i>hyflex</i>)	0	Compulsory	3
7	AREN145D7	Dissertation (<i>hyflex</i>)	60	Core	3
Part-time – 2 years					
Year 1					
7	ENHU049S7	'Becoming Modern: Literature and Culture 1800 to the Present' (<i>hyflex</i>)	30	Compulsory	1
7		Option 1	30	Option	2
7	AREN295Z7	Dissertation skills (<i>hyflex</i>)	0	Compulsory	3
Year 2					
7	ENHU050S7	Option 1	30	Option	1
7		Option 2	30	Option	2
7	AREN145D7	Dissertation (<i>hyflex</i>)	60	Core	3

Option choices from a list that currently includes:

AREN166S7_Modernising Victorians (*hyflex*)

AREN043S7 Victorian London (*hyflex – tbc*)

AREN284S7 Victorian Femininities (*hyflex – tbc*)

AREN233S7 Decadence (*hyflex – tbc*)

ENHU053S7 Contemporary US Fiction (*hyflex*)

AREN197S7 Freud in the world: psychoanalysis, literary writing and the legacies of history

AREN118S7 The Horror, the Horror (*hyflex*)

Note: options marked as 'hyflex' are planned to be delivered in 2025/6 using hyflex technology (with live synchronous in-person and online seminars)

Options will vary annually. You may also choose options outside the course from across the faculty of humanities and social sciences, depending on compatibility and availability. Options outside the course may have prerequisites or limit numbers, but there are many cognate courses on our other MAs in literature, cultural studies, and, for instance, in film, history of art, and specialist courses on psychoanalysis. There will always be an online pathway available, but not every option will be available online and so option choices for those following a fully online route may be limited.

Each summer term has a structured set of Dissertation Skills classes to support one-to-one supervision of MA dissertations. There is also a series of guest lectures from visiting writers, critics, and others, and the course benefits from close proximity to the programme of events arranged by the Institute of English Studies and other School of Advanced Study research groupings.

How you will learn

You will be taught by leading scholars of the Romantic, Victorian, Modern and Contemporary periods. Your learning and teaching is organised to help you meet the aims of the course. As a student, we expect you to be an active learner and to take responsibility for your learning, engaging with the material and sessions arranged for you.

Each course is divided into modules. Each module has a dedicated online virtual learning site (called a Moodle page) which will have a weekly breakdown of the course, including reading, video guides, and often reading resources. Each page will tell you what to expect, the work you need to prepare each week, links to reading lists, and all the information about how and when you will be assessed. The Moodle page is also where you submit your written work.

Teaching on this course is a combination of lectures and in-person seminars. Some courses may offer the chance of online seminars, meaning that you do not have to attend in person. We try to provide a pathway which means you can take the course remotely (restrictions apply to international students, however, who have to attend in person).

Lectures are designed to provide you with an outline or overview of the topic, to engage you with the material and direct you to other resources. They are a springboard for your own learning.

Seminars are group sessions where you will be asked to contribute to discussion or group work around the topic, with material set in advance for which you need to prepare.

We have designed the programme so full-time students are in classes twice a week in Autumn and Spring terms, and part-term students only once a week. Classes usually take place in the evenings at Birkbeck, although there can be day-time options also, again to maximise choice.

How we will assess you

To introduce you to writing at masters level, we use formative assessments in the first term of your studies, which include short written exercises, constructing critical bibliographies, and some courses also include student presentations.

The course is assessed through writing four essays of 5000 words, one for the compulsory course and three for your options. These summative essays are handed in after the completion of the teaching of the module (usually in 3 windows: January, April and September).

The dissertation is of 15000 words and completed in the summer term and over your final summer on the course, being handed in usually in mid-September.

Essay and dissertation preparation and supervision is programmed into the MA.

Assessment is designed to enhance your learning rather than simply to test it. We often allow students to develop their own critical questions, usually in consultation with teachers, which allows for individually tailored research work to be produced.

Learning outcomes (what you can expect to achieve)

At the end of this course, you should be able to:

Knowledge

- evidence master's level knowledge and critical understanding of literary and cultural studies as they currently stand in the field.
- discuss, analyse and appraise literary, cultural and critical works since 1800.
- read closely and analyse critically texts and discourses, with attention to specific cultural forms, using concepts and terminology appropriate to the study of literature and culture.
- demonstrate a conceptual understanding that allows you to evaluate some of the key cultural, historical and critical frameworks in the study of literature and culture since 1800.

Skills

- demonstrate skills as a reflective, independent, lifelong learner that can be carried into professional contexts and personal development.
- Conduct detailed critical analysis of a research question, undertake independent research and come to critically informed and evidence-based conclusions in both written and verbal form.
- use critical and research resources to masters level competency, able to deal with complex cultural issues critically and creatively.

Values

- understand how literary and cultural study can enhance nuanced reflection on complex issues in a diverse, global context.
- appreciate the diversity of literary and cultural forms and respond empathetically to cultural difference.
- demonstrate the importance of research and evidence for working in an area of study where synthesis of research, opinion and argument are central to reaching sound conclusions.

Careers and further study

English graduates are trained to be effective researchers with good communication skills and an ability to sift and critically assess a wide range of textual and other cultural materials. Graduates emerge from the degree with an enhanced range of subject-specific skills and wider transferable and employability skills.

You will find graduates of this MA in the following kinds of roles:

Journalism

Professional Writing (including creative writing careers)

Arts administration or research
Civil Service
Law and business professions
Publishing roles
Teaching in schools or as lecturers in further and higher education
Museum and Cultural Heritage work
Curation
Cultural education or information officers

A number of our Masters students go on to study at PhD level following the course. We provide structured support and guidance to MA students interested in continuing their studies to the next post-graduate level, including programmed advice sessions. We can also advise on the best way to specialise within the MA to enhance your knowledge to take it to doctoral level.

We also have many MA students already in professional work who are taking the degree to enhance their skills at work, or even just to follow a passion for reading but take the chance to study in a structured way.

Birkbeck offers a range of careers support to its students. You can find out more on the careers pages of our website: <https://www.bbk.ac.uk/student-services/careers-service>.

Academic regulations and course management

Birkbeck's academic regulations are contained in its Common Award Scheme Regulations and Policies published by year of application on the Birkbeck website.

You will have access to a course handbook on Moodle and this will outline how your course is managed, including who to contact if you have any questions about your module or course.

Support for your study

Your learning at Birkbeck is supported by your teaching team and other resources and people in the College there to help you with your study. Birkbeck uses a virtual learning environment called Moodle and each course has a dedicated Moodle page and there are further Moodle sites for each of your modules. This will include your course handbook.

Birkbeck will introduce you to the Library and IT support, how to access materials online, including using Moodle, and provide you with an orientation which includes an online Moodle module to guide you through all of the support available. You will also be allocated a personal tutor and provided with information about learning support offered within your School and by the College.

[Please check our website for more information about student support services](#). This covers the whole of your time as a student with us including learning support and support for your wellbeing.

Quality and standards at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's courses are subject to our quality assurance procedures. This means that new courses must follow our design principles and meet the requirements of our academic regulations. Each new course or module is subject to a course approval process where the proposal is scrutinised by subject specialists, quality professionals and external representatives to ensure that it will offer an excellent student experience and meet the expectation of regulatory and other professional bodies.

You will be invited to participate in an online survey for each module you take. We take these surveys seriously and they are considered by the course team to develop both modules and the overall courses.

We conduct an annual process of reviewing our portfolio of courses which analyses student achievement, equality data and includes an action plan for each department to identify ongoing enhancements to our education, including changes made as a result of student feedback.

Our periodic review process is a regular check (usually every four years) on the courses by department with a specialist team including students.

Each course will have an external examiner associated with it who produces an annual report and any recommendations. Students can read the most recent external examiner reports on the course Moodle pages. Our courses are all subject to Birkbeck Baseline Standards for our Moodle module information. This supports the accessibility of our education including expectations of what information is provided online for students.

The information in this programme specification has been approved by the College's Academic Board and every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information it contains.

Programme specifications are reviewed periodically. If any changes are made to courses, including core and/or compulsory modules, the relevant department is required to provide a revised programme specification. Students will be notified of any changes via Moodle.

Further information about specifications and an archive of programme specifications for the College's courses is [available online](#).

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