

Programme Specification

1	Awarding body	University of London				
2	Teaching Institution	Birkbeck College				
3	Programme Title(s)	MA Contemporary Literature and Culture				
4	Programme Code(s)	TMACOLIT_C				
5	UCAS code (if applicable)	N/A				
6	Home Department	English, Theatre and Creative Writing				
7	Exit Award(s)	PG Cert, PG Dip				
8	Duration of Study (number of years)	1 year full time; 2 years part time				
9	Mode of Study	FT	X	PT	X	DL
10	Level of Award (FHEQ)	7				
11	Other teaching depts or institution	N/A				
12	Professional, Statutory Regulatory Body(PSRB) details	N/A				
13	<u>QAA Benchmark Statement</u>	N/A				

14	Programme Rationale & Aims
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This interdisciplinary programme offers the unique opportunity to engage in the specialized study of literature and culture after 2000. The programme's emphasis on the last decade enables students to think beyond debates about postmodernism that have tended to dominate discussion of the contemporary at least since the 1960s, and to instead think about new cultural and aesthetic developments that have complicated and challenged that model. • This MA circulates around three key critical questions: how might we conceptualize and define the 'contemporary'? How might we characterize artistic and theoretical responses to the contemporary world? And how has contemporary literary art evolved – via its interactions with other aesthetic developments and new technologies – to best reflect on and express the present moment? • This programme encourages students to engage both with imaginative texts that express and reflect on the contemporary, and with key theorists (for example Žižek (2002), Agamben (2009)) who have recently explored issues of contemporaneity and their significance for understanding art and wider cultural questions. The programme therefore exposes students to possible positions on the 'contemporary' which enables them to explore and develop their own particular interests and frameworks for reading contemporary literature and culture. In this vein the contemporary is treated as both a conceptual construct and as a periodizing term. • Core course 1, 'Reading the Contemporary', introduces students to a wide variety of contemporary literary and cultural works, encompassing the novel, memoir, genre fiction,

	<p>poetry, film, graphic text, blogs and more. This range enables the exploration of cutting edge contemporary literature and visual culture, both as it is more traditionally conceived and as it has been transformed by new technologies, particularly the internet. This course thus provides a forum for both conceptualizing the contemporary and for shaping debate about the ways in which artists, theorist and critics characterize the constantly shifting and ephemeral nature of the ‘now’. As a way of opening up suggestive possibilities for students reflecting on these questions, the course adopts a two-part structure, the first of which explores ‘the aesthetics of disintegration’ and the second of which explores ‘the aesthetics of return’. This framework is designed to encourage students to read contemporary texts as works that might simultaneously adopt a deterritorializing impulse towards categories like the real, the historical, the nation, while also enacting their spectral return.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core course 2, ‘Postwar to Contemporary’, provides the essential intellectual groundwork for the more recent exploration of the contemporary that will take place in core course 1. This second course provides some crucial literary and historical contexts from 1945 onwards, addressing the contexts of post-war reconstruction, decolonisation, the fate of avant-garde art, and theories of postmodernity and globalization. Shared with the MA Modern and Contemporary Literature, this course enables students a wider lens through which to view contemporary literature, while the literary focus complements the more interdisciplinary focus of core course 1. • Through a range of literary and interdisciplinary options, students have the opportunity to pursue their own interests, whether they lie in developments in contemporary poetics, US, British, or postcolonial literatures, contemporary theoretical approaches to art or socio-historical approaches to the literary and cultural constructions of vectors like nation, race, diaspora, gender, sexuality, class. The MA provides a comprehensive programme of study that covers the aesthetic, historical and political dimensions of contemporary literature and culture. • The programme offers part-time, evening, face-to-face study.
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15	Entry Criteria
	A second-class honours degree (2:2) or above in literature, cultural studies, history or another relevant subject. Where normal entry requirements are not met, the programme will follow the School of Arts’ Admission procedure in considering professional experience and other qualifications relevant to the course.

16	Learning Outcomes
	<p><i>On successful completion of this programme a student will be expected to be able to:</i></p> <p>Subject specific:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Demonstrate comprehensive grounding in some of the key trends and texts in the field of contemporary literature and culture. 2. Engage in debates about the conceptualization of the contemporary, deploying the

	<p>appropriate vocabulary and critical paradigms.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Identify and engage with the key features and characteristics of new forms of writing that have emerged as a result of new technologies, particularly the internet. 4. Engage with theoretical and critical texts and apply their findings to close analysis of literary and cultural forms. 5. Identify appropriate research methods for the study of contemporary literature and culture. 6. Demonstrate a critical understanding of the historical contexts in which literary paradigms and forms emerge. <p>Intellectual:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Develop a multidisciplinary approach to the study of contemporary literature and culture. 8. Demonstrate the ability to think the literary alongside other cultural forms (such as visual media). 9. Show the ability to apply theoretical and critical materials to self-chosen examples. 10. Read texts closely and critically. 11. Demonstrate the ability to mount an argument independently and with an awareness of a critical field. 12. Engage in critical debate with peers in seminar situations. <p>Practical:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Present work in seminar situations. 14. Develop skills of expression and argument in writing and also discussion and presentation skills. 15. Enhance bibliographic research skills. 16. Where appropriate devise interdisciplinary research skills (including other forms of data gathering, archival work, use of interviews, and methods appropriate to other media). <p>Personal and social:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Encounter a range of students from different disciplinary, international and ethnic backgrounds. 18. Plan and pursue independent study and realize intellectual goals. 19. Work as part of a group. 20. Conduct discussion and listen to others' opinions in a productive and mutually supportive manner. 21. Reflect on one's learning process. 22. Respond to feedback in a constructive way. 23. Enhance time-management skills.
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17	<p>Learning, teaching and assessment methods</p> <p>The course is mainly taught through seminars which are supplemented by lectures – these lectures bring together a range of expert voices in contemporary studies.</p> <p>Participation is encouraged by small-group teaching, and the teaching and learning methods encourage the personal development of students because the assessment modes of assessed discursive essays and the dissertation are all directed by the students' own interests. Individual tutorials will enable the students to relate their ideas cogently to the literary and theoretical aspects of the programme.</p>
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	Formal assessment for the two course modules and for most of the option modules is a 5,000 word essay. The dissertation is 15,000 words. Teaching and learning is supported by Moodle, Birkbeck's virtual learning environment.
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18	Programme Description
	<p>Birkbeck's MA Contemporary Literature and Culture offers students the opportunity of specializing in 21st century literature and culture, as well as exposing them to the most important literary and theoretical developments of the last few decades. This MA includes consideration of the philosophical legacy of postmodernism, the effects of new technologies on narrative form, and the aesthetic, spatial and political coordinates of writing produced in an increasingly networked and globalized world.</p> <p>Through a range of literary and interdisciplinary options, students have the opportunity to pursue their own interests, whether they lie in exciting developments in contemporary poetics, in US, British, or postcolonial literatures, in contemporary theoretical approaches to art or in socio-historical approaches to the literary and cultural constructions of vectors such as nation, race, diaspora, gender, sexuality and class. The MA provides a comprehensive programme of study that covers the aesthetic, historical and political dimensions of contemporary literature and culture.</p> <p>Students take two 30-credit core modules and two 30 credit options, and then do a 60-credit dissertation module to complete the 180 credits for the award of the MA.</p>

19	Programme Structure			
Full Time programme – 1 year				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	AREN095S7	Reading the Contemporary	30	Core
7	ENHU050S7	Post-War to Contemporary	30	Core
7		Optional Module	30	Optional
7		Optional Module	30	Optional
7	AREN145D7	Dissertation - MA Contemporary Literature and Culture	60	Core
Part Time programme – 2 years				
Year 1				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	AREN095S7	Reading the Contemporary	30	Core
7		Optional Module	30	Optional
Year 2				
Level	Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Status*
7	ENHU050S7	Post-War to Contemporary	30	Core
7		Optional Module	30	Optional
7	AREN145D7	Dissertation - MA Contemporary Literature and Culture	60	Core

Status*

CORE – Module must be taken and passed by student; COMPULSORY – Module must be taken, mark can be reviewed at sub-exam board; OPTIONAL – Student can choose to take this module

Year of entry: 2021/22



24	Programme Director	Dr Grace Halden
25	Start Date (<i>term/year</i>)	Autumn 2011
26	Date approved by TQEC	Spring 2011
27	Date approved by Academic Board	Summer 2011
28	Date(s) updated/amended	September 2015