

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Your degree in a nutshell



Over the course of your degree you will benefit from:

- **Small group teaching.** There will usually be no more than fifteen people in your seminar groups.
- **One-to-one essay tutorials.** Tutors will be available to discuss your written work with you individually.
- **Timely feedback on your work.** Written assignments will be returned to you with feedback within fifteen working days.

PART ONE

We have two 'core' modules taken by all students on English Literature programmes (except English Literature with Creative Writing): **Theories and Practice of Writing** and **Poetry in English**. Single honours students also take **Prose: Writing Identities** and **Introduction to Drama**. These modules allow you to explore the themes, topics and approaches that will inform your three-year study of English Literature.

Joint Honours students will take either **Prose: Writing Identities** or a choice between **Introduction to Drama** and one of our other optional modules. Please check the website for information on the core modules specified for individual joint honours programmes.

Theory and Practice of Writing (EN1TPW)

The module takes a different perspective on familiar ideas (genre and form, originality and authorship, audience and markets) and looks at creative and literary critical work together. We consider writing as something that happens within a community (of writers and critics, editors and reviewers). We practice writing in different genres, and we consider some of the key statements in literary theory that help inform our understanding of those practices.

Assessment methods: Portfolio of written work.

Poetry in English (EN1PE) helps you develop your close-reading skills while giving an overview of the history of poetry in English. This module covers major movements and ideas from the early Renaissance up to the present, and a range of genres including love poetry, political poetry, pastoral, satire, and the dramatic monologue. Poetry in English considers the English-speaking world more widely, including Ireland, the Caribbean and North America, and includes a diversity of voices from Thomas Wyatt and Ben Jonson, to William Butler Yeats, Philip Larkin, Derek Walcott and Thom Gunn.

Assessment methods: Coursework essay and exam.

Prose: Writing Identities (EN1PWI) looks at a range of forms of literary prose, both fiction and non-fiction from the eighteenth century to the present day. We will read these texts from a variety of critical perspectives to develop a better understanding of the ways in which these texts respond to, and help to shape, various cultural, aesthetic, and socio-political issues, paying particular attention to the discursive construction of identities such as 'race', gender, and class.

Assessment methods: Coursework essays.

Introduction to Drama (EN1IDR) will equip you with knowledge and understanding of a historical range of drama in English from the early modern to the modern periods. Focusing on four plays, we will look at the conventions of the dramatic form and explore how these vary over time, looking at elements of change and of continuity. As well as paying close attention to language and style, the module will focus on aspects of performance, by looking at staging, and of interpretation, considering how the plays have been read and re-read over time.

Assessment methods: Coursework essays.

Optional modules

Your choice of optional modules will depend on your programme of study. Single honours English Literature students take 6 English Literature modules in all (although they have the option to take an IWLP module instead of one of their English Literature options). Joint Honours students will need to take 60 credits worth of modules for both subjects, which is usually three modules per subject, but they will still have the chance to choose some of their spring term modules. You will receive lots of information and advice about your module choices after the exam results in August and during Welcome Week.

Modern American Culture and Counter-Culture (EN1MAC) explores a diverse range of work from twentieth- and twenty-first-century America, bringing together canonical texts with the less familiar, and covering various genres and subgenres, from poetry, the short story and drama, to film, popular music and the graphic novel. By looking at texts from this complex period of American history, you will learn about and begin to debate ideas of cultural, ethnic, class and racial difference in relation to competing ideas of US national identity.

Assessment methods: Online exam.

Shelf Life (EN1SL) is an introduction to English literature's material dimension, and to the library as a symbol. Literary study usually involves the interpretation of poems, novels or plays. This module complements this ordinary kind of reading by investigating books and other archival documents as physical objects. One half of the teaching on the module is seminar-based: you will use set texts to find out how writers have imagined libraries and archives in the past and present. The other half of the module is practice-based: you will go behind the scenes at the University of Reading's Special Collections department, and get to know a working rare books library.

Assessment methods: Coursework essay and portfolio of written assignments.

What is Comparative Literature? (EN1COMP) introduces some of the major critical and theoretical issues in the study of comparative literature – that is, literature that crosses linguistic, national and disciplinary boundaries. We will read a cluster of texts from different cultural and historical traditions, and reflect on the practices and consequences of reading transnationally.

Assessment methods: Coursework essay and exam.

Thinking Translation: History and Theory (EN1TRANS) explores historical and contemporary theories of translation. Through carefully selected case studies, we will assess the relationship between practice and theory, and will place this relationship within particular historical, cultural, intellectual and political contexts.

Assessment methods: Coursework essays and reflective report.

PART TWO

By the end of Part 1, you will have extended your knowledge of the different periods and genres that you will examine in more detail at Part 2.

In the second year, you can choose modules (six for single-honours students; three for joint-honours students) from a range of options.

Most Part 2 modules are organised by historical period (**Victorian Literature**, or **Modernism**) or according to a unifying theme or subject (**Writing America**, or **Writing in the Public Sphere**). Most of these modules are taught by lectures and seminars; there are a range of assessments, including coursework essays, presentations, research reports as well as exams.

Below is the list of module options for Part 2 that we expect to run from 2024-25. It is possible that there will be alterations to this list.

Module options for Part 2:

Critical Thinking: This module investigates some of the most important concepts in modern literary study, through an examination of theoretical and critical debates.

Contemporary Fiction covers a selection of fiction in English from the 1980s to the present day, highlighting the formal, thematic and cultural diversity of Anglophone fiction produced in this period. Texts are studied in and against a number of social, political and historical contexts, including multiculturalism, feminism and globalisation.

Myth, Legend and Romance: This module explores storytelling in medieval England. It takes in fantastical tales of ancient heroes, drama that blends comedy and religious devotion and works that use magic and supernatural beings to explore key themes.

Writing America: Perspectives on the Nation is concerned with literary constructions of American identity in American literature, focusing on some of the ways in which imaginative writers have perceived and defined the New World in relation to the Old and helped to shape or contest the nation's sense of cultural distinctiveness.

Victorian Literature explores the diversity of Victorian writing. During this period authors began to think about people's place in a world without God; the workings of the mind; and the role of class and gender in the construction of identity.

Early Modern Texts in Context introduces a wealth of literature from the Renaissance period, or sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It considers a range of texts, including drama, poetry and prose, in their historical and literary contexts.

Modernism: This module examines the concepts of modernity and modernism, and relates them to the history of early twentieth-century poetry and fiction.

Writing in the Public Sphere studies literature written in order to prompt social and political change. This includes speeches, pamphlets, tracts, and political posters from the early modern period to the present, and we consider how they continue to shape debates about class, race, religion, nationality, and women's rights across the four nations of Britain and Ireland.

Enlightenment Revolution and Romanticism: This module explores texts from the age of Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, William Blake and Jonathan Swift, from the Age of Enlightenment (c.1680-1790) to the Romantic period (c.1790-1830), considering their historical and literary contexts.

The Business of Books: This module aims to equip students with an understanding of the history and future of the book as a form of technology.

Creative Learning through the Arts considers the importance of creative learning through practice and enables students to engage in creative projects in art, drama and creative writing.

PART THREE

Dissertation

You can tailor your degree to meet your personal interests through your dissertation. This is an individually supervised research project in your third year that enables you to produce a work of significance and originality. It is a 'double-weighted module' (worth twice as much as a regular Part 3 module) and is taught by workshops, lectures, and one-to-one supervisions.

Some of the dissertations written by our students in recent years include:

- Sexual transgression in the Gothic
- 'Liminal space' in Jorge Luis Borges' fiction
- The adaptation of Daphne Du Maurier texts into films by Alfred Hitchcock
- Italian Cultural and Literary Influences on Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*
- Women's voices and the representation of women in War Poetry
- Masculinity in the works of Jane Austen
- The Beat Generation and the birth of American Counterculture in the mid-twentieth century
- Representations of London in Grime, Gunaratne, and Femi
- 19th Century Literature and its impact on contemporary African and diasporic literary representations of Africa
- Victorian Detective Novels – Dickens and Wilkie Collins
- Misogyny disguised as medicine: madness and consumption in Victorian literature
- Miscommunication and fate in Thomas Hardy
- Concepts of Heroism in Old English Literature
- Gender perspectives on African American slave narratives in Jean Rhys's *Good Morning Midnight* and *Voyage in the Dark*

Research-led modules

At Part 3, students choose from up to 40 research-led modules (four modules for single-honours students; two for joint-honours students).

Part 3 modules are taught intensively in small seminar groups. They reflect the research specialisms of our staff, so you will be taught by world-class experts in your chosen field. We use a variety of different assessment methods: coursework essays, projects, learning journals and oral presentations, depending on the learning outcomes for each module.

Some of the Part 3 modules available in recent years have included:

Lyric Voices, 1340-1650

Children's literature

Utopia and Dystopia in English and American Literature

Decadence and degeneration: The literature of the fin de siècle

British Black and Asian Voices: 1948 to the Present

Family romances: Genealogy, identity and imposture in the

nineteenth-century novel

The bloody stage: revenge and death in Renaissance drama

American graphic novels

James Joyce

Margaret Atwood

Class matters

Environment, Ecology and Literature

Studying manuscripts

Global Literature in Translation

Modern and contemporary poetry

Shakespeare on film

Psychoanalysis and text

Samuel Beckett

Literature and Mental Health

From romance to fantasy

Writing Women: nineteenth-century poetry

Medieval otherworlds

Placing Jane Austen

CREATIVE WRITING

Your degree in a nutshell



Over the course of your degree you will benefit from:

- **Small group teaching.** There will usually be no more than fifteen people in your seminar or workshop groups.
- **One-to-one tutorials.** Tutors will be available to discuss your written work with you individually.
- **Timely feedback on your work.** Written assignments will be returned to you with feedback within fifteen working days.
- **Published and prize-winning tutors.** Your tutors are successfully published writers who bring their professional experience and expertise to their teaching, and who will read and give bespoke advice on your work.

You can study Creative Writing at Reading on one of our Joint Honours degree programmes, such as:

- **BA English Literature and Creative Writing**
- **BA Creative Writing and Film**
- **BA Creative Writing and Theatre**
- **BA Creative Writing and Film and Theatre**
- **BA Art and Creative Writing**

You can also take a Creative Writing module as part of an English Literature degree programme.

Creative writing modules

On your creative writing modules, you will be introduced to all the major forms, including fiction, drama, poetry and creative non-fiction.

At [Part 1](#), Creative Writing students take **Introduction to Creative Writing, Prose: Writing Identities**, and **Poetry in English**. English Literature and Creative Writing students may also choose to study two modules: **Introduction to Drama**; either **Shelf Life** or **Comparative Literature**; either **Thinking Translation**, or **Modern American Culture and Counterculture** or **Creative Writing Through the Arts**. Other Creative Writing Joint Honours students take **Introduction to Creative Writing** and **Poetry in English** and will have a choice to study one of the following

modules: **Introduction to Drama, Shelf Life, Modern American Culture and Counterculture, Thinking Translation**, or **Comparative Literature**. You will take up to three modules in your other subject. You will have the chance to swap one of these optional modules for an IWLP (language) module.

Current Part 2 options in creative writing include **Creative Writing: Non-Fiction, Creative Writing: Poetry, and Creative Writing: The Short Story**. Joint Honours students will be able to take all three Creative Writing modules, or you can choose two Creative Writing modules and take a module in English Literature. You will also have sixty credits of modules in your other subject (usually three modules). (Students on the English Literature with Creative Writing programme can take two Creative Writing modules and four English Literature modules, or they can opt for three Creative Writing modules and three English Literature modules.)

At Part 3 you can take our two creative writing masterclass modules in **Prose** and **Poetry**. These are advanced modules where you will read and discuss very recently published texts, identify and write about the themes that are currently popular and fresh, and be encouraged to pursue publication yourself as part of the module assessment. You will also have the option to write a **creative writing dissertation** – a long creative piece in a genre of your choice and a reflective essay. On the English Literature with Creative Writing programme, you have the choice to do a dissertation in English Literature if you also take the two Creative Writing modules. Joint Honours students with Film, Theatre and Television choose a dissertation in Creative Writing or Film, Theatre and Television, or they can complete a Creative Research Project.

Art and Creative Writing is a four-year programme. In your third year, you will take your choice of modules in Creative Writing and you will have a 60-credit **Art Studio** module. In your final year, you will complete your dissertation in Creative Writing and your Art Studio project (Exhibition).

How you'll learn

We are committed to teaching through the workshop model. These small group sessions are the heart of Reading's writing community: guided by one of our lecturers, you and your fellow students will gain confidence as you share your writing and help each other improve.

You will also have the opportunity to publish your work – and gain experience in editing and publishing – by participating in our annual Creative Writing Anthology, *The Canvas*, which is available here:

<https://thecanvasartsmagazine.com/>

Disclaimer:

This information was issued in May 2023 and describes in outline the courses and services offered by the University starting in September 2024. The University makes every effort to ensure that the information provided is accurate and up-to-date at the time of going to press. However, it may be necessary for the University to make some changes to the information presented in this publication.

Sample modules are provided as a taster of some of the modules that may be available at the University. The sample modules listed may be compulsory (core) or optional modules. Information is correct at the time of going to press but the University cannot guarantee that a module appearing in this will definitely run or that all optional modules will be available to all students who wish to take them.

The University takes all reasonable steps to provide the services (including the courses) described in this information, it does not however, guarantee the provision of such services.

To make an informed and up-to-date decision, we recommend that you check <http://www.reading.ac.uk/Ready-to-Study.aspx> for up-to-date information.

FIND OUT MORE

For more information about studying English Literature at the University of Reading, visit our website:

www.reading.ac.uk/english-literature,
and follow the links to the 'Undergraduate' pages.

If you have any questions about our courses, or about applying to study with us, you can email us at:

english-literature@reading.ac.uk