

MA (Res) in Modern and Contemporary Writing For students entering in 2010

Awarding Institution:	The University of Reading
Teaching Institution:	The University of Reading
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	
Programme length:	12 months FT (24 months PT)
Date of specification:	July 2010
Programme Director:	Professor Peter Stoneley
Board of Studies:	English
Accreditation:	

Summary of programme aims

This degree explores in depth some of the key ideas, practices, and canonical structures of literature in English from 1890 to the present. It covers a wide range of issues, such as theoretical and conceptual debates over “modernity,” the defining characteristics of Modernism, the material history of the book in the period, the history and practice of reviewing, writing in relation to nationhood and gender, contemporary creativity and the “life or writing.” Students will develop their ability to question and to think critically about modern literature, and about the terms and the contexts that have been used to explain and evaluate modern and contemporary literature. The degree also aims to equip students for advanced literary research: working with such unique and important resources as the Beckett Archive, and the Authors’ Papers, and the Records of British Publishing and Printing, the MA will introduce students to methods of research with regard to bibliography, manuscripts, databases, and editing.

Transferable skills

Students on this MA will:

- 1) be able to analyse and think critically about complex texts and issues
- 2) be able to assess the legitimacy of an argument in its own terms, and to formulate, both in written and in oral form, complex arguments of their own with an awareness of the relevance and consequences of their own formulations and claims
- 3) acquire an extensive understanding of the methods, resources, and skills necessary for them to develop their knowledge and understanding further
- 4) be able to communicate clearly to others their own thinking and the reasons for it

Programme content

MA students will complete 180 credits.

<i>Mod Code</i>	<i>Module Title</i>	<i>Credits</i>	<i>Level</i>
	COMPULSORY MODULES		
ENMMT	Materiality and Textuality	30	7
ENMESM	Modern English Studies	20	7
ENMMD	20, 000-word dissertation, or 20, 000-word portfolio-essay	90	7
	OPTIONAL MODULES	20	7
ENMBEC	Beckett	20	7
ENMDIA	Diasporas of the Mind	20	7
ENMCAF	Contemporary American Fiction	20	7
ENMCP	Contemporary Poetry	20	7
ENMCIT	Representing the Modern City – New York	20	7
ENMCN	Caribbean Narratives	20	7
ENMWRP	Writing, Revision, and Publishing	20	7
ENMCCW	Creative and Critical Writing	20	7
ENMGS	Guided study in Modern and Contemporary Writing	20	7

Not all optional modules will be available in any given year, and entry to the modules is at the discretion of the programme director.

Part-time/Modular arrangements

Part-time and modular students are required to take the module on Modern English Studies in their first term, and Materiality and Textuality in their fourth term. They must complete four modules before beginning their dissertation.

Progression requirements

N/A

Summary of teaching and assessment

Students are taught in plenary seminar sessions, and also in potentially smaller guided study groups, by the tutors of Modern literature and research methods in the Department of English and American Literature. Active participation by the students is expected and encouraged at every stage. Classes in research methods and resources are incorporated into the “Materiality and Textuality” module. The dissertation is supported by a series of seminars on aspects of dissertation writing, followed by one-to-one supervision.

Mark Interpretation

70 – 100% Distinction

60 – 69% Merit

50 – 59% Good standard (Pass)

Failing categories:

40 – 49% Work below threshold standard

0 – 39% Unsatisfactory Work

For Masters Degrees

To pass the MA students must gain an average mark of 50 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation *and have no mark below 40 in modules ENMMT and ENMESM*. In

addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more overall including a mark of 60 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more overall including a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in modules ENMMT and ENMESM*. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 30 credits and for all modules marked below 50 must not exceed 55 credits.

Students who gain an average mark of 70 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for the award of a Distinction. Those gaining an average mark of 60 or more and have no mark below 40 will be eligible for a Merit.

For PG Certificate

To pass the Postgraduate Certificate students must gain an average mark of 50 or more *and have no mark below 40 in modules ENMMT and ENMESM*. In addition the total credit value of all modules marked below 40 must not exceed 10 credits.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:

At least a 2.i or its equivalent in English or in a discipline in which the study of literature has formed the substantial part.

Admissions Tutor: Professor Peter Stoneley

Support for students and their learning

University support for students and their learning falls into two categories. Learning support includes IT Services, which has several hundred computers, and the University Library, which across its three sites holds over a million volumes, subscribes to around 4,000 current periodicals, has a range of electronic sources of information and houses the Student Access to Independent Learning (S@il) computer-based teaching and learning facilities. There are language laboratory facilities both for those students studying on a language degree and for those taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme.

Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Personal Tutors, School Senior Tutors, the Students' Union, the Medical Practice and the Student Services Directorate. The Student Services Directorate is housed in the Carrington Building and includes the Careers Advisory Service, the Disability Advisory Service, Accommodation Advisory Team, Student Financial Support, Counselling and Study Advisors. Student Services has a Helpdesk available for enquiries made in person or online (www.risisweb.reading.ac.uk), or by calling the central enquiry number on (0118) 378 5555. Students can get key information and guidance from the team of Helpdesk Advisers, or make an appointment with a specialist adviser; Student Services also offer drop-in sessions on everything from accommodation to finance. The Carrington Building is open between 8:30 and 17:30 Monday to Thursday (17:00 Friday and during vacation periods). Further information can be found in the Student website (www.reading.ac.uk/student).

A specific introduction to the use of the University Library will be provided. The University Library has substantial holdings in modern literature, and has extensive collections which relate to modern literature. There are also good resources in critical and cultural theory. In addition, the Bodleian Library and the British Library are within easy reach. The University Library also has a strong range of digital research resources, including the *MLA Bibliography*, and the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The Department runs regular research seminars, and MA students are strongly encouraged to take part in these. All students on the programme will be able to consult the Programme Director as a Personal Tutor. They will be represented on the Staff-Student Liaison Committee, and they will receive full printed information on the MA and the Department, in the form of a comprehensive handbook, on arrival.

Career prospects

The MA will provide excellent preparation for PhD research in terms of research skills and methods, and in terms of the emphasis on critical and analytical thinking and the examination and construction of argument, and in terms of creative and publishing practice. The ability to understand and work with complex material in detail has also supported students entering into, or returning to, employment in other fields. Those who wish to become, or who already are, teachers of English or the Humanities will find their specialist knowledge of modern literature greatly enhanced, and their awareness of approaches and analytical techniques sharpened and developed. Creative writers will have the opportunity to develop their skills, and also to engage with the contemporary institutions and practices of writing. Skills of research presentation, self-reflection and presentation, will serve graduates well in a range of employment outside the classroom.

Opportunities for study abroad or for placements

These are not applicable to this course.

Educational aims of the programme

The MA in Modern and Contemporary Writing aims to produce students who have good knowledge of modern literature in English; who have an understanding of the contexts and contemporary practice of literature, and who have the skills to embark on further and more specialised research and practice in this area of study (and, in particular, to prepare students for PhD research in modern and contemporary English literature). The programme aims, in particular, to familiarise students with some of the areas of most intense present-day critical debate. In the course of study, students will also be given the opportunity to examine different genres and forms, most obviously fiction, non-fictional prose, drama, and poetry. The compulsory modules offer methodological and theoretical approaches to modern and contemporary English literature. The optional modules reflect current interests and strengths within the Department, but there is also a strong element of cohesion, in that the optional modules approach modernity as refracted through gender and sexuality, and in relation to race, nation, and diaspora. In these various ways, the programme will work to develop students' ability to think critically and analytically about a wide but related range of textual and contextual material.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:

- 1) Modern and contemporary literature and culture, including creative practice.
 - i. The forms and modes of cultural production and consumption.
 - ii. Concepts, theories, and histories of modernity.
 - iii. Nationhood, the cosmopolis, ethnicity, and modernity.
 - iv. The development of discourses of gender and sexuality, and their impact on notions of the modern.
 - v. How these various issues have been developed and complicated in contemporary writing, under the terms of postmodernism, postethnicity, and hybridity.
 - vi. How these various issues determine or otherwise relate to the practice and reception of contemporary writing.
- 2) A range of the literary, theoretical, and historicist discourses that had an impact on the understanding of modernity, and that might be used to study modern and contemporary literature.
- 3) Research methods and resources, including bibliography, palaeography, editorial practices, and databases.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1) There will be two foundational, compulsory modules. Full-time students will take two modules in each of the first two terms.
- 2) On the foundational modules, there will be one two-hour seminar per module, per week, for full-time students. Material for seminars will be set in advance and discussed in small groups with the seminar leader.
- 3) On the optional, guided study modules, there will be one two-hour seminar per week for full-time students. Material for discussion will be arrived at on a week-by-week, consultative basis.
- 4) Seminars will be devoted to acquainting students with the range of archival, print, and electronic resources. Some seminars will take place in the University Library, using material from the special collections. Special seminars for the planning of the dissertation will be provided at the beginning of the writing period. Each student will arrive at his/her dissertation topic in advance of the writing, and in consultation with staff. Regular supervisions will be given during the summer term.

Assessment

Assessment on the “Materiality and Textuality” module take the form of three bibliographical exercises. All of the other three modules taken will be worth 20 credits each, and will be assessed by long essay (5000 words), to be submitted after the course has finished. The dissertation may be up to 20, 000 words, and must be submitted by 20 September.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to:

- 1) Think critically and analytically about texts and contexts.
- 2) Engage with a range of approaches and ideas, including the various ideas and perspectives of staff and students.
- 3) Evaluate and participate in their own learning and writing process, and to develop an independence in learning and argument in written work.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1) On all modules, students are encouraged to look at texts within a number of specific contexts, and to use texts and contexts to interrogate one another.
- 2) In seminar, students are expected and encouraged to debate with one another and with tutors, and to raise questions and problems.
- 3) One-to-one essay supervisions will be used to ensure that students take responsibility for the formulation, research, and presentation of their own ideas and arguments.

Assessment

Students must demonstrate the development of these skills in their coursework essays, and in their 20, 000-word dissertation or portfolio-essay.

C. Practical skills – able to:

- 1) Use research facilities such as libraries and the internet, appropriately and efficiently.
- 2) Use the special resources of the University Library, and apply bibliographical methods to research.
- 3) Use information technology, such as computer software, where it is useful.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1) Library induction, including the use of electronic resources; raising awareness of the range of primary resources in Reading and beyond (using such resources as the Location Register of Literary Manuscripts).
- 2) Training in bibliographical method and use of print resources.
- 3) Attendance of University IT modules where appropriate; learning on modules to assess and differentiate the validity of internet text as information and/or argument, and learning to use these effectively in criticism and scholarship.

Assessment

There will be an assessed bibliographical component in the first term.

D. Transferable skills – able to:

- 1) Think about present-day texts and issues in the light of their literary and cultural antecedents.
- 2) Analyse and think critically about complex texts and issues.
- 3) Assess the legitimacy of an argument in its own terms, and to formulate, both in written and oral form, complex arguments of their own, with an awareness of the relevance and consequences of their own formulations and claims.
- 4) Communicate clearly to others their own thinking and the reasons behind it, and work with others in groups, acknowledging and comprehending a variety of arguments.
- 5) Promote awareness of ways and resources for the development of further knowledge and understanding, as part of an ability to learn independently.
- 6) Take responsibility for their own work and to meet deadlines.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

- 1) The structure of the course, and of each module, is designed and will be taught to make explicit the emergence of many of the ideas that are continuous in the present-day understanding of modernity.
- 2) Discuss and analyse a wide variety of texts in a range of historical and intellectual contexts.
- 3) Engage closely with these texts to develop critical and analytical skills.
- 4) Participate actively in seminar discussion, and prepare and deliver oral presentations to their peers.
- 5) A familiarity with library and IT resources is developed through the course both in terms of discussion and information on where material is available, and how such material should be approached and evaluated.
- 6) Students will be encouraged to develop independent and disciplined thought in seminar and written work.

Assessment

All these transferable skills are assessed in the writing of the essays and the dissertation.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably expect to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in module and programme handbooks. The University reserves the right to modify this specification in unforeseen circumstances, or where the process of academic development and feedback from students, quality assurance processes or external sources, such as professional bodies, requires a change to be made. In such circumstances, a revised specification will be issued.