MA in Victorian Literature and Culture: Relocating Modernity

For students entering in 2006

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: September 2006	
Programme Director:	Dr Lucy Bending
Board of Studies: SEAL	
Accreditation: None	

Summary of programme aims

Many aspects of modern culture which are usually identified with the twentieth century, and which remain central today, had their roots in the Victorian period. This MA aims to offer an introduction to a number of key debates and issues within Victorian literature and culture, arguing that our understanding of modernity can be greatly enhanced by an awareness of its origins in the nineteenth century. Working with a wide range of texts and within a variety of contexts, the programme aims to introduce students to the problems and issues stemming from a period of significant cultural change. Students will develop their ability to question and to think critically and analytically about Victorian literature and modernity and its implications. The MA will provide students with skills and confidence to undertake research in their chosen area, and will provide appropriate training in research methods and resources.

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 oral form, complex arguments of their own with an awareness of the relevance and consequences of their own formulations and claims.
3) be aware of methods and resources to develop their knowledge and understanding further, as part of an ability to learn independently.
4) be able to communicate clearly to others their own thinking and the reasons for it.

Programme content

Modules

Mod Code	*Module Title*	*Credits* X	*Level* X
ENMVFG	Innovations in Form and Genre	30	M
ENMVSC	Literature and the New Science	20	M
ENMVEM	Nation and Empire	20	M
ENMVSX	Sexuality and Gender	20	M
ENMVD	20,000 word Dissertation (for MA)	90	M
ENMVES	6,000 word Essay (for Diploma)	30	M

Part-time/Modular arrangements
Part-time and modular students are required to take the module on Form and Genre in their first term. They must complete four modules before submitting the dissertation. The timing of optional modules will be agreed between the student and the programme director.

Progression requirements
The University's taught postgraduate marks classification is as follows:

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

A Certificate may be awarded on the completion of at least 60 credits (i.e. the first three modules). A Diploma may be awarded on completion of at least 120 credits to be made up of 90 credits of coursework plus the completion of an extra 30 credits in the form of essays.

For Masters Degrees

To pass the degree of Master 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 addition the total credit value for all modules marked below 50 must be less than 60 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 awarded a Merit.

For Postgraduate Diplomas

To pass the Postgraduate Diploma students must gain an average mark of 50 or more and have no mark below 40 in modules agreed in modules Innovations in Form and Genre. 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 be less than 60 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 awarded a Merit.

For Postgraduate Certificate

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

*The provision to permit a candidate to be passed overall with a profile containing marks below 40 is made subject to the condition that there is evidence that the candidate applied himself or herself to the work of those modules with reasonable diligence and has not been absent from the examination without reasonable cause.

Summary of teaching and assessment

Students are taught in group seminars by the tutors of Victorian literature in SEAL. Active participation by the students is expected and encouraged in the seminar teaching. In addition, each student will be expected to give a presentation of work in progress towards his/her dissertation.

Classes in research methods and resources, which will support and enhance learning throughout the course, are incorporated in the module 'Innovations in Form and Genre'. The dissertation is further supported by a series of seminars on aspects of dissertation writing, followed by one-to-one supervision.

Each module will be examined through coursework which will be double-marked by the module convenor and another teacher on that module. Students will be encouraged to submit a draft of each piece of work for comment prior to final submission.

Assessment follows the University's classification:

70-100%	Distinction	(A)
60-69%	Merit	(B)
50-59%	Pass	(C)
49% and below	Fail	(F)

Reassessment arrangements are that:

(a) All modules other than the dissertation to be re-assessed in September.
(b) Students undergoing re-assessment to be allowed one month's extension to submit their dissertation.
(c) A failed dissertation to be re-submitted within one year from the original submission date.

Admission requirements

Entrants to this programme are normally required to have obtained:

A 2.i or higher in English or in a discipline in which the study of literature has formed a substantial part.

In the case of non-standard applicants, applications will be assessed on their individual merits, taking into account relevant experience.

Admissions Tutor: Dr Lucy Bending

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 for those students taking modules offered by the Institution-wide Language Programme. Student guidance and welfare support is provided by Programme Directors, the Careers Advisory Service, the University's Special Needs Advisor, Study Advisors, Hall Wardens and the Students' Union.

A specific induction to the use of the University Library is provided. The University has substantial holdings in Victorian Literature, including extensive collections in the literature of the 1890s. There are also good resources in critical and cultural theory. In addition, Reading has strong links with the V&A, and is close to the Bodleian Library and the British Library. Reading University also has a strong range of digital research resources including the *MLA Bibliography* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The School runs a regular series of research seminars in which MA students will become involved. All students on the course are assigned a member of staff as a Personal Tutor, and will also be able to participate in a regular students' contact group in the School of English. Students will be provided with a Course Handbook to ensure that they know what is required of them and what they may require of their tutors.

Career prospects

The course provides excellent preparation for PhD research in terms of the emphasis on critical and analytical thinking and the examination of the construction and formulation of argument. 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 the Victorian period greatly enhanced, and their awareness of approaches and analytical techniques sharpened and developed. 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 Victorian Literature and Culture aims to interrogate the theoretical and ideological implications of the concurrent discourses of Victorianism and modernity and the ways in which they inflect each other. Using a variety of methodological approaches involving different teaching strategies, the programme will focus on four issues fundamental to the study of Victorian literature and culture: transformations in the material conditions of cultural production and consumption; the role of scientific thinking in the formation of modern intellectual culture; the significance of national and imperial identities; and the development of discourses of sexuality and identity.

The programme, and its insistence on research techniques and resources, will give students confidence in academic research. The programme will work to develop students' ability to think critically and analytically about a wide range of textual and contextual material.

Programme Outcomes

Knowledge and Understanding

A. Knowledge and understanding of:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
1) Victorian literature and culture. i. the emergence of new forms and genres, and changes in modes of cultural production and consumption. ii. the role of Victorian scientific thinking in the formation of modern intellectual culture. iii. the role of imperialism and nationalism in Victorian literature. iv. the development of discourses on gender and sexuality and their impact on notions of identity. 2) A range of literary and other theories relevant to the study of these 3) Research methods and resources	1) There will be four modules, and full-time students will take two in the first two terms. ***2)*** There will be one two-hour seminar per module per week for full-time students. Material for the seminars will be set in advance and discussed in small groups with the seminar leader. ***3)*** 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 discuss the dissertation in advance, and regular supervisions will be given during the summer term. *Assessment* Each of the four modules will be assessed by one 4000-word essay (20 credits) to be submitted at the end of the module. In addition students will complete a shorter bibliographical exercise (10 credits) to be set in the first term. The dissertation is 20,000 words, and must be submitted by 1 September.

Skills and other attributes

B. Intellectual skills – able to:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
1) think critically and analytically about texts and contexts. 2) engage with a range of approaches and ideas, and the differing ideas or perspectives of staff and other students. 3) evaluate and participate in their own learning process, and to develop an independence of learning and argument in written work.	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 seminars, students are expected and encouraged to debate with one another and the tutors, and to raise questions and problems. In essays, students are expected to engage with relevant critical debates. 3) One-to-one essay supervisions will be used to ensure that students take responsibility for the formulation of their own ideas and arguments. *Assessment* Students must demonstrate the development of these skills in their coursework essays and 20,000-word dissertation.

C. Practical skills – able to:	**Teaching/learning methods and strategies**
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 necessary and useful.	1) library induction, including 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) texts as information and argument, and using these effectively in criticism and scholarship. *Assessment* There will be an assessed bibliographical component (10 credits) in the first term.

D. Transferable skills – able to:

1) Think about contemporary texts and issues in the light of their literary and cultural inheritance.
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 for 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 meeting deadlines.

Teaching/learning methods and strategies

1) The structure of the course and each module is designed and will be taught to make explicit connections between Victorianism and modernity.
2) Discuss and analyse a wide variety of texts in a range of broadly defined historical and intellectual contexts.
3) Engage closely with these texts to develop critical and analytical skills.
4) Participate actively in seminar group 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 materials are available, and how they may 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 be expected 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 the module description and in the programme handbook. 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.