English

The following courses in English are regularly offered to Visiting Students and details of each course are given below. For further English courses which may be available please go to http://www.english.ox.ac.uk/prospective-undergraduates/course-structure.

If you have a particular interest in an area of English which you do not see here, please contact vsp@mansfield.ox.ac.uk, and we will ask our English fellows for advice. Before confirming your choice of topics we will look at your past qualifications and statement of interests to make sure we are providing the most suitable courses for you.

The study of English at Oxford covers core period courses (in Oxford called ‘papers’) of literature in English from 650-the present day, plus specialist options (special subject and special author).

Period Papers
Old and Early Middle English 650-1350
Literature in English 1350-1550
Literature in English 1550-1660
Literature in English 1660-1760
Literature in English 1760-1830 (Professor Ros Ballaster)
Literature in English 1830-1910 (Dr Michèle Mendelssohn)
Literature in English 1910-present day (Dr Michèle Mendelssohn)
Shakespeare (Dr Chris Salamone)

Special Authors
Study of a special author gives students the opportunity to specialize in the works of one author and their literary and historical context.

Popular special authors include:
Beowulf Poet; Chaucer; Spenser; Milton; Ben Jonson; Marvell; Dryden; Eliza Haywood; Wordsworth; Jane Austen; Byron; Tennyson; Dickens; Wilde; Conrad; Yeats; Woolf; Walcott; Joyce; Roth; Friel; Emerson; Dickinson; Faulkner

Students may select other authors for specialist study in discussion with Mansfield tutors.

Special topics
Students can choose a special topic in discussion with Mansfield tutors. Study of a special topic is an opportunity to specialize, in a literary movement, genre or type of literature (e.g. the novel, children’s literature, travel literature, women’s writing) or in the study of linguistics and English language, within one literary period or across periods.

Please contact the Senior Tutor (Lucinda Rumsey lucinda.rumsey@mansfield.ox.ac.uk) for guidance about particular areas of interest you would like to pursue.
Period papers

Mansfield tutors (Professor Ros Ballaster; Dr Michèle Mendelssohn; Dr Chris Salamone; Lucinda Rumsey) cover all these papers:

**Old and Early Middle English 650-1350 (Lucinda Rumsey)**
This paper introduces you to the writing of early medieval England, giving you the opportunity to study the literatures of both Anglo-Saxon and post-Conquest England. This includes texts such as *Beowulf, Ancrene Wisse, The Dream of the Rood* and *The Wanderer*.

**Literature in English 1350-1550 (Lucinda Rumsey)**
Enables you to study British texts and authors from the early Middle Ages to the early Tudor period. You will study Chaucer and other major fourteenth-century writers such as Langland, the Gawain-poet and Gower, but the course can also cover early texts such as *Ancrene Wisse* and late medieval writers such as Malory and the Older Scots poets (e.g. Henryson and Dunbar) in order to gain a deeper sense of the different types of writing produced during changing cultural and historical circumstances. The topic also contains a rich range of genres in verse and prose, including the lyric, the ballad, romance, devotional and mystical writing and drama.

**Literature in English 1550-1660 (Dr Chris Salamone)**
This paper encompasses the reigns of Henry VIII to most of the reign of Charles I (1625-1649). It develops from *Literature in English 1350-1550* topic with which it has some helpful overlaps.

This paper offers a period rich in formal experimentation, in the importation of classical and continental forms, in translation, in literary theory, in religious writing and in historical chronicle. Writers began to consider what a secular English literature might look like and theorised accordingly (e.g. Sir Philip Sidney, George Puttenham); the English language itself was undergoing enormous change, embracing thousands of new words a year and becoming more Latinate (thus paving the way for the considerations of Thomas Sprat at the Royal Society in *Literature in English 1660-1760*).

You will find household names throughout this paper: the drama of Marlowe, Jonson, Middleton; the epic poetry and pastoral of Edmund Spenser; sonnets by Sidney and Drayton; the metaphysical and religious poetry of Donne, Vaughan, Herbert; the Cavalier poetry of Lovelace, Herrick, Cowley, Suckling, Waller, Carew. The prose of the period also offers a rich field.

Nonfictional prose was dominant in many forms: sermons, martyrlogies, diaries, letters, autobiographies, scientific writing (Bacon), ecclesiastical prose (Richard Hooker), speeches (Queen Elizabeth), travel writing, medical works (Burton). In fiction, romance novellas, many of which were used as sources of plays by writers such as Shakespeare, paved the way for what would later become the novel.

Because of these crossovers, this period responds particularly well to thematic approaches. Topics which are prominent in current academic books include: myth, classical revision and appropriation, Catholicism, Italy, nationhood, London, historiography, grief, the history of the emotions, subjectivity, self-fashioning, magic and the supernatural, death, travel and discovery, service, reputation, myth, law, place, regional or national identity, wantonness in poetry and/or behaviour. Equally, the period’s interest in experimentation and development means that approaches via form, genre, and style are very rewarding: epyllion, elegy, allegory, parody, epithalamion, blazon, epigram, the essay, rogue literature, the masque, romance, sacred texts, satire, pastoral, history, tragedy and comedy and their subsets (revenge tragedy, domestic tragedy, tragicomedy, citizen comedy.
humours comedy). And the development of the English language in this period, to say nothing of rhetorical training at school and university, means that linguistic excess, plainness, neologism, commonplacing, ‘inkhorn’ and ‘honeyed’ terms, and all aspects of form (visual shape, stanzaic form, metre, rhyme etc.) deserve close attention.

**Literature in English 1660-1760 (Professor Ros Ballaster)**

This paper explores literature in a variety of genres and modes across the period 1642 to 1740. You will be encouraged to develop a knowledge of the major forms and styles which flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as an understanding of the important political, social and cultural contexts for the literature of the period. Thematic approaches to the period are encouraged: topics such as women’s writing, gender, politics and satire, the development of the public sphere, ‘politeness’, the growth of print culture and the continuation of manuscript and coterie writing, the significance of the urban and the rural, and the rise of the sublime and early precursors of Romanticism, are all potential subjects for exploration. The definition of the ‘literary’ within this period is broad, and can include scientific, political and philosophical writings, such as those by Hobbes, Locke and Mandeville.

Some of the mainstream authors within this period are Marvell, Milton (prose and later poems including *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*), Restoration dramatists and satirists including Behn, Wycherley, Etherege and Dryden, prose writers such as Sir Thomas Browne and John Bunyan, devotional poets including Thomas Traherne and Henry Vaughan, novelists such as Daniel Defoe and Eliza Haywood, satirists such as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, Oldham, Butler, Dryden, Swift and Pope, women writers such as Aphra Behn, Ann Finch, Sarah Egerton, Mary Collier, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

**Literature in English 1760-1830 (Professor Ros Ballaster)**

In this paper you may study texts from the period 1740 to 1832 by author, theme, genre, or historical context. Teaching is designed to give you a sense of the major literary and cultural developments, as well as an opportunity to explore both well-known and less well-known materials in a very diverse period.

The period includes novelists such as Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Burney, Austen, Edgeworth, Scott and Mary Shelley; poets such as Gray, Goldsmith, Smart, Burns, Cowper, Barbauld, Smith, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Hemans, Clare and Keats; and non-fiction prose writers such as Johnson, Boswell, Wollstonecraft, Hazlitt, Lamb and De Quincey. Work on other writers of the period is also encouraged. Genres such as Life-Writing, Political Prose, Travel writing, Aesthetic writings, Literary Criticism, the Gothic, or the literature of sensibility are all popular topics.

Themes such as the rights of women, the Abolition Movement, the Sublime, the Body, ekphrasis and the visual arts, national identity, Orientalism, transformations of the pastoral, literary tradition, Hellenism, heroism, senses of the past, personal identity, the French Revolution, the rise of Napoleon, can also be addressed.

The chronological boundaries are loosely set at Fielding at the beginning and Clare at the end. Regular lectures covering different aspects of the literature of the period take place in this term and sometimes in earlier terms as well.

**Literature in English 1830-1910 (Dr Michèle Mendelssohn)**

This paper gives you the opportunity to write across a range of authors, focusing on some of the major preoccupations, both thematic and stylistic, of the period.
Issues that you might choose to cover could include (for example) the development of realism, responses to industrialism, women’s writing, concepts of identity and selfhood, guilt and transgression, memory and uses of the past, verbal and metrical experimentation, attitudes towards nation, race and Empire, decadence, the roots of modernism, symbolism, science, religion, class, domesticity, writing for children and the treatment of childhood, romance, popular fiction, melodrama, the social problem play, drama and identity, theatre and performance issues, the relationship between literature and art.

Among the authors you might consider studying are the following: Arnold, Braddon, the Brontës, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Carlyle, Carroll, Clough, Wilkie Collins, Conrad, Dickens, Emily Dickinson, Frederick Douglass, George Eliot, Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, Hardy, Hopkins, A. E. Housman, Harriet Jacobs, Henry James, Melville, Meredith, John Stuart Mill, Newman, Pater, Patmore, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Christina Rossetti, Ruskin, Olive Schreiner, Shaw, R. L. Stevenson, Swinburne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Tennyson, Thackeray, Thoreau, Twain, H. G. Wells, Edith Wharton, Walt Whitman, and Oscar Wilde. However, you may also choose to study groups of writers or particular genres, such as spasmodic poetry, Gothic, the dramatic monologue, elegy, and so on.

**Literature in English 1910-present day (Dr Michèle Mendelssohn)**

This paper examines 20th and 21st century Literature. The essay questions in the examination tend to be based on topics, rather than authors. This gives you the opportunity to write across a range of authors, focusing on some of the major thematic and stylistic preoccupations of the period. Alternatively you may choose to focus each of your examination answers on the work of only one or two authors. Issues that you might choose to cover would include (for example) modernism, postcolonialism, ideas of literary language, postcolonialism, literary experimentalism, primitivism, national (and other) identities, popular culture, concepts of literary value, journalism, gender, intertextuality, literature and other art forms, technology, innovations in modern theatre, war literature, and representations of the city.

Among the authors you might consider studying are Achebe, Amis (father and son), Atwood, Auden, Djuna Barnes, Beckett, Boland, Bowen, Carter, Caryl Churchill, Coetzee, Conrad, Duffy, T. S. Eliot, Forster, Friel, Golding, Greene, Heaney, Hill, Hughes, Joyce, Kipling, Larkin, Lawrence, Lessing, Mamet, Miller, Toni Morrison, Muldoon, Naipaul, Ondaatje, Orwell, Osborne, Pinter, Plath, the poets of the two World Wars, Pound, Rushdie, Shaw, Stoppard, Dylan Thomas, Walcott, Waugh, Tennessee Williams, Woolf, and Yeats. Candidates are encouraged to read widely within the period. You may discuss any literature written in the English language: there are no exclusions based on the author’s citizenship, country of origin, or residence.

**Shakespeare (Dr Chris Salamone)**

This paper gives you the opportunity to explore Shakespeare’s canon of work across themes and genres. You can write on genres, periods, history, themes, emotions, audiences, staging, films, adaptation, politics, appropriation, authorship, collaboration, editing, marketing, women, and theoretical schools, stage directions, Shakespeare in relation to his contemporaries etc.

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