

Literature of the Victorian Age

| 7.1 Module Overview | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|--|----|-------------|---|
| Module Number | | Module Title | Literature of the Victorian Age | | | | | | |
| Stage of Principal Programme | | | 2 | Semester | 2 | Duration. <i>(Weeks F/T)</i> | 12 | ECTS | 5 |
| Mandatory / Elective (M/E) | E Core | Hours of Learner Effort / Week | 2.3 | | | | | | |
| Analysis of required hours of learning effort | | | | | | | | | |
| Teaching and Learning Modalities | | | | | ✓if relevant to this module | Approx. proportion of total (hours) | | | |
| Contact Hours | | | | | | | | | |
| In person face-to-face | | | | | ✓ | 28 | | | |
| Synchronous | | | | | | | | | |
| Indirect/Non-Contact Hours | | | | | | | | | |
| Asynchronous | | | | | | | | | |
| Work Based | | | | | | | | | |
| Other: | | | | | | | | | |
| • Independent self- direct reading | | | | | ✓ | 42 | | | |
| • Research, preparation and completion of assessment | | | | | ✓ | 25 | | | |
| • Exam Preparation | | | | | ✓ | 30 | | | |
| Total | | | | | | 125 | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| Pre-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title | N/A |
| Co-Requisite Module, if any. Module # and Title | N/A |
| Maximum number of learners per instance of the module | 120 |
| Specification of the qualifications (academic, pedagogical and professional/occupational) and experience required of staff working in this module. | |
| Role e.g., Tutor, Mentor, Lecturer, Research Supervisor, etc. | Qualifications & experience required |
| Lecturer | A minimum level 9 qualification in English Literature or closely cognate area |
| Tutor | A minimum level 9 qualification in English Literature or closely cognate area |
| | Staff - Learner Ratio X:Y |
| | 1:120 |
| | 1:20 |

| Assessment Techniques – percentage contribution | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------------------------|--|
| Continuous Assessment | 50% | Proctored Exam – in person | 50% | Practical Skills Based | |
| Project | | Proctored Exam – online | | Work Based | |
| Capstone (Y/N)? | N | If Yes, describe | | | |

| 7.2 Minimum Intended Module Learning Outcomes (MIMLOs) | |
|---|------------------------|
| MIMLO On completion of this module a learner will be able to: | Related MIPLO # |

| | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a range of important works of Victorian literature across the genres of fiction, poetry, drama and criticism. | 3, 4 |
| 2. Assess the relevance of contemporary artistic, social, and political developments to an understanding of prescribed works. | 2, 4 |
| 3. Account for the extraordinary success of the novel form in this era. | 2, 4 |
| 4. Appraise the role of literature in the era as a means of reflection and self-critique for Victorians, in both personal/individual and communal contexts. | 6, 8 |

7.3 Indicative Module Content, Organisation and Structure

The origins of many of the characteristics of twenty-first century life, in the West, can be traced to the Victorian era. This is also the era in which modern understandings of literature, in its aesthetic and socio-political ‘capacities’, find their source. As such, this module furthers the aims of the programme as a whole by developing learners’ knowledge and understanding of English literature in this key transitional period of European letters and society. Ranging across the genres of fiction, poetry, drama, essay writing, journalism, and literary-criticism in the Victorian era, it aims to help learners develop a critically-informed and imaginative approach to the analysis of literature from the period, founded on detailed understandings of important contemporary social and political developments, and key critical contexts and debates.

The first block of lectures provides learners with an overview of the Victorian age with particular emphasis developments in contemporary England/Britain. Making reference to key social, intellectual, and political developments, these classes highlight the extraordinary changes that England underwent in this period. Classes discuss non-fictional writings by figures such as Thomas Carlyle, Friedrich Engels, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and J.S. Mill as a means of illustrating the ambivalent nature of these changes, and the important role that literature played in helping Victorians come to terms with them. These classes also highlight the centrality of ‘The Woman Question’ in contemporary discourses, making reference to a range of Victorian women writers and political activists (ex. Annie Besant, Harriet Martineau, Florence Nightingale, Ada Nield Chew) and, relatedly, by highlighting the particularly noteworthy developments in the novel in this era.

The next section of the module focuses on creative works of literature in the early-to-mid period Victorian period. Analysis of novels (by authors such as Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë), and poetry (by Emily Brontë, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson, and Mathew Arnold) considers how writers responded to the intellectual, social and political challenges of their day. Discussions of these works of fiction and poetry will be supplemented by analysis of critical writings by Victorian writers such as John Ruskin, Mathew Arnold, and John Henry Newman.

The final section of the module turns to literature of the late Victorian period, which is examined with reference to developments such as the aesthetic movement, imperialist discourses, and the woman’s movement.

Prescribed works include work by some the following authors: drama and criticism by Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw, fiction by authors such as J. L. Stevenson, Thomas Hardy, and Rudyard Kipling

7.4 Work-based learning and practice-placement *(if applicable)*

N/A

7.5 Specific module resources required *(if applicable)*

N/A

7.6 Application of programme teaching, learning and assessment strategies to this module

This module is taught through 24 (50-minute) lectures. Lectures will encourage detailed analyses of the prescribed texts, and also make use of websites dedicated to specific writers/Victorian literature, as well as documentaries on the period. Tutorials will function as discussion-groups which afford learners the opportunity to raise their own questions and thoughts concerning the prescribed course-work. (Learners will be asked to come to tutorials with 1/2 questions (or email these in advance to the tutor if they are reticent to speak in-class.)

Moodle will be used to provide learners with detailed information concerning the aims and objectives of the module, assessments, and the key themes and issues discussed in individual lectures (through Powerpoint). Moodle will also be used to provide learners with access to relevant video-recordings, online essay, journal and newspaper resources, and useful websites. Submissions and Assessment: Learner essays, quiz-work, short written assignments and presentations will also be processed through Moodle/Turnitin.

Learner learning is evaluated through a number of different continuous assessments: weekly in-class quizzes (10%); Short presentation (15%); a short written assignment (25%), and a proctored (2-hour/2-Question) written examination (50%).

7.7 Summative Assessment Strategy for this module

| MIMLOs | Technique(s) | Weighting |
|---------|---|--|
| 1 | Multiple choice/short answer quizzes which take place towards the end of lectures, and which contain questions relevant to issues raised during that class. | 10% (Each quiz is weighted at 2% of the total mark for the module. i.e. Only the top five results count towards the learner's final mark.) |
| 2, 4 | Small-group presentations on issues covered in the first block of lectures (ex. The 'Victorian scene'; contemporary criticism; the Woman Question). | 15% (Two-thirds of this mark (10%) is a Group Mark, the remaining third is an individual learner mark.) |
| 1, 2, 3 | A written assignment (1250-1500 words) on an issue relevant to the era which has been covered in the mid-section of the module. | 25% |
| 1, 2, 3 | A 2-hour / 2-question proctored exam on novels and plays covered in the mid and final section of the module | 50% |

7.8 Sample Assessment Materials

In-Class Quizzes:

Each quiz contains 5 multiple-choice, True or False; Short-answer type questions based on material covered in that same class.

Short Presentation:

These presentations are on topics relating to the first part of the module. Sample Presentation topics:

Discuss the importance of any one of the following topics (discussed in Lecture Weeks 1,2, 3 or 4 of the module) for an understanding of the Victorian Era: **a)** 'Evolution or Revolution?'; **b)** literary criticism; **c)** 'the Woman Question'

OR

Outline and discuss some of the key ideas raised by any one of the authors whose writings we have considered in Lecture weeks 1, 2 or 3 of this module.

Essay Assignment:

A 1250-1500 word essay on a topic addressed in the mid-section of the module.

Sample essay-titles:

a) What do you consider are the main strengths and/or weaknesses of the arguments that John Henry Newman makes in defence of a university education in his *The Idea of a University* (1852).

OR

b) "We have become a novel-reading people; from the Prime Minister down to the last appointed scullery-maid [...] all our other reading put together hardly amounts to what we read in novels." (Anthony Trollope)

c) How do you account for the extraordinary popularity of novels in the Victorian Era?

OR

d) Agree an alternative topic/essay-title for this assignment with your course-lecturer.

Final exam

1. The manner in which Jane and Rochester's relationship develops is one of the most important plotlines in the novel, *Jane Eyre*. Consider some of the ways in which this relationship is relevant to the portrayal of gender and/or social class in Brontë's work?

OR

2. 'The real stab of the story is not in the discovery that one man is two men; but in the discovery that two men are one man.' (G.K. Chesterton)

Write an essay on the representation of identity *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. (In your answer you should consider some of the ways in which the treatment of this theme in Stevenson's novella might have resonated with its late-Victorian readership in Britain.)

OR

3. 'Although they did not like each other's work, Stephen Greenblatt notes, the dramas written by Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw both 'took aim at Victorian pretence and hypocrisy.'

Do you agree? Write an essay on the theme of Victorian pretence and hypocrisy in G.B. Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893) **and/or** Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).

Marking of assessments will be in line with the Marking Assessment Guidelines as outlined in Section 3.3 of the College's [Regulations in Relation to Assessment and Standards](#) unless otherwise indicated.

7.9 Indicative reading lists and other information resources

Indicative Core Reading:

Greenblatt, Stephen, et al, (eds), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, 9th edn (New York: WW Norton, 2018)

Selected novels and plays by authors such as: Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, J. L. Stephenson, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, G.B. Shaw, and Oscar Wilde

Indicative Critical Reading

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Gubar, Susan, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 2000)

Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Capital 1848 – 1875* (New York, Vintage, 1996)

-----, *The Age of Empire 1875 – 1914* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987)

Showalter, Elaine, *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Bronte to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago, 1999)

Van Ghent, Dorothy, *The English Novel – Form and Function* (New York: Harper and Row, 1953)

Walder, Denis (ed), *The Realist Novel* (London, Routledge, 2007)

Wheeler, Michael, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period 1830 – 1990*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1994)

Useful Websites:

The Victorian – Their Story in Pictures (John hay/Jeremy Paxman, 2009)

The National Archive – Victorian Lives

[<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/victorian-lives/>]

The British Library – Victorian Britain [<https://www.bl.uk/victorian-britain>]

<http://www.victorianweb.org/>

Other Resources

Carlow College P.J. Brophy Library

ejournals.ebsco.com

www.jstor.org

Lecture notes

Moodle

Quercus

PowerPoint