

First Year Reading Lists

Below, you will see the English modules taken as part of each degree programme; this will help you navigate the Reading Lists that follow. Please be aware that these are indicative lists and so are subject to minor changes.

BA ENGLISH • EN1001 Encountering Medieval Literature (half unit Spring Term) • EN1011 Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1105 Literature and Crisis (whole unit, both terms) • EN1106 Shakespeare (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1107 Reorienting the Novel (whole unit, both terms) • EN1112 Introducing English Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND CREATIVE WRITING • CW1010: Introduction to Creative Writing (whole unit, two terms) • CW1020: Why Write The History and Theory of Creative Writing (whole unit, two terms) • EN1107: Reorienting the Novel (whole unit, two terms) • EN1011 Thinking as a Critic (half unit, Autumn Term) • EN1112 Introduction to Poetry (half unit, Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE • EN1105 Literature and Crisis (whole unit, both terms) • EN1107 Reorienting the Novel (whole unit, both terms) • EN1401 Introducing America, 1600-1900 (whole unit, both terms) • EN1011 Thinking as a Critic (half unit, Autumn Term) • EN1112 Introduction to Poetry (half unit, Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND FILM STUDIES • EN1105 Literature and Crisis • EN1107 Reorienting the Novel	BA ENGLISH AND HISTORY • EN1001: Encountering Medieval Literature • EN1105: Literature and Crisis • EN1106: Shakespeare BA ENGLISH AND CLASSICS • EN1107: Re-Orienting the Novel • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introduction to Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND LATIN • EN1107: Re-Orienting the Novel • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introduction to Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH WITH PHILOSOPHY • EN1011 Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1106: EN1106 Shakespeare (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1107 Re-orienting the Novel • EN1112 Introduction to Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND MODERN LANGUAGES • EN1107: Reorienting the Novel • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introducing English Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND CULTURE • EN1107: Reorienting the Novel • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introducing English Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA MUSIC AND ENGLISH • EN1107: Reorienting the Novel • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introducing English Poetry (half unit Spring Term) BA ENGLISH AND DRAMA • EN1105: Literature and Crisis • EN1011: Thinking as a Critic (half unit Autumn Term) • EN1112: Introducing English Poetry (half unit Spring Term)
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EN1001: Encountering Medieval Literature

This course will introduce you to the earliest literary writings in English, covering a span of eight hundred years, from 700-1500. To put that period of time in perspective, from the time of Shakespeare up to today is only four hundred years. We cover an extensive range of genres, themes, texts and topics. By the end of the course you will be well acquainted with the range of medieval literature in English.



You may be surprised at how vital and sophisticated the finest of this material is, and how much it has inspired more recent authors such as Seamus Heaney (see his translation of *Beowulf*), Derek Walcott (who cites Langland as his greatest inspiration), and Ian McEwan (who voted Chaucer as his 'Man of the Millennium').

Required Textbooks

Most of these are available as e-books through the library, but you may prefer to own your own copy (it's much easier to work with a physical book!). Make sure you have access to them by the start of Spring term (i.e. January 2027):

- Marsden, Richard, ed., *The Cambridge Old English Reader*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). [[e-book here](#)]
- Burrow, J. A. and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, 4th edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2020). [[e-book here](#)]
- Any translation of *Beowulf*. Most popular recently has been Seamus Heaney's translation [[e-book here](#)], but you may wish to consult a prose translation to provide a model for your own work, such as E. Talbot Donaldson, *Beowulf: A Prose Translation*, ed. by Nicholas Howe (London: W. W. Norton, 2002) [821 BEO]. There are many other translations available in the library and bookshops.
- Any translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Good choices include Simon Armitage's recent translation [[e-book here](#)] and the Oxford World's Classics translation (by Keith Harrison; note especially the introduction by Helen Cooper) [[e-book here](#)].

All your set texts (listed below) are included in these textbooks or will be supplied on handouts through the Moodle site.

Set Texts

Over the summer, try to read as many of these as possible in translation (and, if you're brave, have a look at them in the original languages, too!).

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|-------------------------------------|---|
| • <i>The Wanderer</i> * | • <i>Sir Orfeo</i> |
| • <i>Beowulf</i> * | • <i>The Miller's Tale</i> |
| • <i>The Dream of the Rood</i> * | • <i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> |
| • <i>The Battle of Brunanburh</i> * | • <i>The York Play of the Crucifixion</i> |
| • Middle English lyrics | |

The Old English texts (marked with * above) can also be found in anthologies. You don't have to buy one, but many are cheaply available online or in a library. Some commonly found anthologies include:

- Bradley, S. A. J., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1982)
- Crossley-Holland, Kevin, trans., *The Anglo-Saxon World* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1982)
- David, Alfred and James Simpson, eds, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature Volume A: The Middle Ages*, 8th edn (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2006) [note this also has modernised versions of some of our Middle English poems, too]
- Delanty, Greg and Michael Matto, eds, *The Word Exchange: Anglo-Saxon Poems in Translation*, foreword by Seamus Heaney (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011)
- Gordon, R. K., trans., *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, rev. edn (London: Dent, 1954)
- Kennedy, Charles W., trans., *An Anthology of Old English Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960)

Here's a week-by-week outline of the module:

Week 18	<i>The Battle of Brunanburh</i> 1-28a
Week 19	<i>The Wanderer</i> 45-72
Week 20	<i>Beowulf</i> : 'The Fight with Grendel's Mother' 1-39
Week 21	<i>Beowulf</i> : 'The Fight with Grendel's Mother' 40-84
Week 22	<i>The Dream of the Rood</i> 27-65a
Week 23	Study Week
Week 24	<i>Middle English Lyrics</i>
Week 25	Chaucer, <i>The Miller's Tale</i>
Week 26	<i>Sir Gawain and the Green Knight</i> , Fitt 1
Week 27	<i>Sir Orfeo</i>
Week 28	<i>The York Crucifixion</i>

Background Reading

It can be really helpful to do some background reading, especially if, like many of our students, you've never read any medieval literature before. There are many excellent introductions to the period's literature; the following are merely examples.

- Alexander, Michael, *A History of English Literature* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), chapters 1 and 2
- Brown, Peter, *A Companion to Medieval Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007)
- Burrow, J. A., *Medieval Writers and their Work* (Oxford, 1982)
- Fulk, R.D. and Christopher M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005)
- Godden, Malcolm and Michael Lapidge, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)
- Johnson, David and Elaine Treharne, *Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Pearsall, Derek, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London: Routledge, 1977)
- Saunders, Corinne, *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010)
- Turville-Petre, Thorlac, *Middle English Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006)



EN1105: Literature and Crisis

Module Convenor: Dr Harvey Wiltshire [harvey.wiltshire@rhul.ac.uk]



What is crisis? How does literature respond to crisis? Why does literature matter?

During this year long course, we'll explore how and why literature offers writers and communities a way of responding to and thinking through various kinds of crisis.

You'll get the chance to think about the role of literature in the world across different historical periods and geographies, with a broad selection of texts organised around specific personal, political, or planetary crises or flashpoints.

You'll be challenged to reflect on the complex relationships between literature, history, and politics, and will be asked to think about the agency or shaping force of literature in political and historical experience, to consider the role of aesthetics in the communication and analysis of world events as well as the ways in which our political and social environment impacts on literature.

The exposure to the range of literatures and ideas facilitated by the course will help you in your future course choices. The module is organised thematically, with four, five-week, themed blocks.

Reading List — you will need to source copies of the texts indicated.

The Sonnet – A Form in Crisis?

A course reading pack will be made available at the beginning of the course. Reading can be completed week-by-week, so no advanced reading is required. This block will be divided into the following weeks: **1)** 'Little Songs' — The Origin of the Sonnet, from Petrarch to Shakespeare **2)** Divine Meditations — Man and God in the Seventeenth-Century Sonnet **3)** 'A Moment's Monument' — The Romantic Revival of the Sonnet **4)** The Victorian Sonnet and the African American Sonnet Tradition **5)** Love and War — The Evolution of the Sonnet in the 20th century

Literature in Times of Conflict

Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale* [Text provided on Moodle]
William Shakespeare, *Richard III* [Available in Norton Anthology of Shakespeare]
Civil War and Civil Strife — Poetry of the English Republic [Texts provided on Moodle]
Ernest Hemingway and John McGahern - Two Stories [Texts provided on Moodle]
[Lorrie Moore, *A Gate at the Stairs* \[Please purchase\]](#)

Race, Empire, Migration

The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole in Many Lands (1857) [Please purchase]
Poetry and Empire — Derek Walcott [Texts provided on Moodle]
Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance [Texts provided on Moodle]
Leila Aboulela — *The Museum* [Text provided on Moodle]
[Zadie Smith, *Swing Time* \[Please purchase\]](#)

Literature and the Environment

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* [Please purchase]
Alice Oswald, *Dart* [Please purchase]
Material and Visual Ecopoetry [Texts provided on Moodle]
[Noreen Masud, *A Flat Place* \[Please purchase\]](#)

Please try to read the texts highlighted in green over the summer, to get ahead.



EN1106 Shakespeare **(Autumn term, 2026-27)**

Module Convenor: Dr Harry Newman, harry.newman@rhul.ac.uk

Set Primary Reading

The list below identifies the plays we will study on the course. Students should read the first three plays on the list in advance, although you are encouraged to read as many as possible before term starts. After an introductory week, we will study one play each week in the following order:

- *Henry IV, Part 1*
- *Henry V*
- *The Merchant of Venice*
- *Twelfth Night*
- *Hamlet*
- *Othello*
- *King Lear*
- *The Winter's Tale*
- *The Tempest*

Students will need to obtain a physical copy of ***The Norton Shakespeare (third edition), ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (2016)***, which is the key course text. If you decide to buy directly from Norton, please apply the discount code **WN440** at the checkout for a 30% discount code (you will get access to the e-book and online learning tools as well).

Follow [this link](#) to the Norton webpage where you can purchase the third edition (the one called 'Third International Student Edition'). *The Norton Shakespeare* has good, brief introductions to the individual plays as well as useful background material. Single editions of plays in The Oxford Shakespeare, Arden Shakespeare, New Cambridge Shakespeare series are also recommended. Cheap second-hand editions are usually available online, but these single editions are also available in Royal Holloway's library.

Please also **WATCH** any of the above plays – on stage, in the cinema, on TV/DVD, or online.

Secondary reading

Reading the plays and the introductions in *The Norton Shakespeare* should take priority. But students can also prepare by reading one or more of the following critical works. Emma Smith's *This is Shakespeare* (2019) is particularly recommended.

David Bevington, *Shakespeare* (Blackwell, 2002)

Terry Eagleton, *William Shakespeare* (Blackwell, 1986)

Frank Kermode, *Shakespeare's Language* (Allen Lane, 2000)

Simon Palfrey, *Doing Shakespeare* (Arden Shakespeare, 2005)

Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare*, 3rd edn (Palgrave, 2002)

Emma Smith, *This is Shakespeare* (Penguin, 2019), also available as an [audio-book](#)

Podcasts / online interviews / audiobooks

Emma Smith's excellent book *This is Shakespeare* (Penguin, 2019), is available as an [audio-book](#). You can listen to podcast lectures on Shakespeare on Shakespeare by Emma Smith here: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/approaching-shakespeare>. It's also worthwhile listening to her recent [BBC Radio 4 series, "Taking Issue with Shakespeare"](#) (five episodes, 15 mins each).

Shakespeare Unlimited is a podcast of the Folger Shakespeare Library:

<https://www.folger.edu/podcasts/shakespeare-unlimited/>. It features interviews with scholars, directors, actors and other about all things Shakespeare. Episodes of particular interest may be "How Shakespeare Thought About the Mind," with Helen Hackett ([here](#)); "Shakespeare's Language and Race," with Patricia Akhimie and Carol Mejia LaPerle ([here](#)); and "The King's Men" [Shakespeare's acting company], with Lucy Munro ([here](#)).

Assessments [excluding formative work]

Mid-term commentary, 1000 words (worth 40%)

Final essay, 2000 words (worth 60%)

Content notes

Some of the texts on this course include the following themes: suicide, mental illness, physical violence, sexual violence, racism and ethnic abuse, pejorative terms aimed at illness or disabilities. When preparing for the course, students are asked to research the reading lists and raise any concerns with their Personal Tutor or the course leader.

EN1107 Reorienting the Novel Reading List and Schedule 2026-27

We will read ten novels across the year in the following order.

Physical copies are essential. Please bring your copy every week to the lecture and seminar.

1. Sara Collins, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*
2. Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*
3. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*
4. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*
5. J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*
6. Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*
7. Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*
8. Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*
9. Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*
10. Sunjeev Sahota, *The Year of the Runaways*

Weeks 1-5, Block 1: Form

Learning objectives for this block:

- To gain confidence in identifying and discussing the form of a novel
- To understand how certain genres and forms emerged and became popular in Britain (e.g. the epistolary novel, confessional writing)
- To explore how contemporary novels are influenced by, subvert, and challenge 'the canon'

Primary texts

Sara Collins, *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*

Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*

WEEK 2 Introduction to the course/ *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*

WEEK 3 *The Confessions of Frannie Langton*

WEEK 4 *Pamela*

WEEK 5 *Pamela*

WEEK 6 Academic Support Week: Academic Writing

Weeks 6-11, Block 2 History

The focus of this block is how different perspectives shape how history is told, and the considerable influence of the British empire on the history of the novel.

Learning objectives for this block:

- To be able to debate whether novels can challenge the historic marginalisation of voices
- To understand the early conventions of realism and what influenced the formation of the novel
- To understand the role form plays in postcolonial responses to canonical novels

Primary texts

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

J.M. Coetzee, *Foe*

-WEEK 7 Study Week-

WEEK 8 *Things Fall Apart*

WEEK 9 *Things Fall Apart*

WEEK 10 *Robinson Crusoe*

WEEK 11 *Robinson Crusoe*/ Academic Support Week: Research for Essays (library talk: how to research for essays)

WEEK 12 *Foe*

Weeks 17-22, Block 3 Romance

This block studies the development of 'romance' novels, broadly understood as an 'anti-realist' genre comprising of a range of genres we know today (for example, fantasy or dystopian novels).

The academic support offered in this block does not have a dedicated week. Instead, **at least one seminar should be focused on activities which allow students to practice incorporating critics into essays.**

Learning objectives for this block:

- To understand how 'romance' developed as a genre, and its key conventions
- To understand the relationship between realism and various kinds of 'unrealism'
- To explore historical and psychological approaches to romance

Primary texts

Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw*

Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

WEEK 18 Introduction to Romance/ *The Castle of Otranto*

WEEK 19 *The Castle of Otranto*

WEEK 20 *The Turn of the Screw*

WEEK 21 *The Dispossessed*

WEEK 22 *The Dispossessed*

-WEEK 23 Study Week-

Weeks 23-27, Block 4 Realism

The module ends by focusing on realism, the first literary genre. By focusing on realism last, the module attempts to 'reorient' novel studies by taking students on a non-linear journey through its history.

Learning objectives for this block:

- To understand how realism developed as a genre, and its key conventions
- To contextualise the role the novel might play in social justice
- To explore how novels imagine diaspora, migration, labour and class, historically and in contemporary times

Primary texts

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*

Sunjeev Sahota, *The Year of the Runaways*

WEEK 24 *North and South*

WEEK 25 *North and South*

WEEK 26 *The Year of the Runaways*

WEEK 27 *The Year of the Runaways*

WEEK 28 Academic Support Week: Open Book Exam

EN1011: Thinking as a Critic, Autumn term, 2026-27

Summer Reading

Welcome to a huge community of people who love literature and want to talk, listen, write and read about it! You are *already* a literary critic: this course will make you an even better one.

In our Department, we want you to be what you really already are – though sometimes it might not feel like it - active readers, critics and writers, developing your own interpretations, responses and judgements and not merely passive learners into which facts are downloaded. For all of us, literary criticism is a *process* rather than a final product: it's a way of thinking not a list of stuff. So, in one of your first-year courses, *Thinking as a Critic*, we discuss concepts, theories, skills, ideas and histories that are central to the discipline of English and will be useful for every other course you study. *Thinking as a Critic* is roughly divided into two parts: in the first, we focus on ideas about interpreting literature; in the second, we look at ideas that emerge from thinking about the nature of texts. The aim of *Thinking as a Critic* is to improve your ability to read, write and think like a literary critic, and so to make the transition into university level work.

There are questions you want to ask (or have probably already asked) about the subject of English: why do we have to read that? How do I know if a book is good? Does book mean what the author says it means? Can you make a poem mean anything? What's the point of English? Will AI change literature? There are questions you want to ask about studying English: is there a right answer? how do I get a good mark? How do I write a good essay? How do I know what I am saying is sensible? These are great questions and this course is our mutual attempt to work out what your answer is. And, of course, having a sense of the answer makes your work easier and better: we like to know *why* are doing something!

We're going to do this by 'thinking as a critic'. This means conversations: with texts, with each other, with ourselves. It means communicating and collaborating with academics, peers, writers and thinking and writing critically and creatively.

Summer Reading

You will need to read Robert Eaglestone, *Doing English: a guide for literature students* 4th edition (London: Routledge, 2017).

There's a superb book about writing at university level that we really recommend:

Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein *"They Say / I Say": The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* 5th ed (New York: WW Norton & Co, 2021). It doesn't really matter what edition you read; there's a free version online and often very cheap secondhand copies available, and, of course, it's in the library. (We recommend that you start with the charming autobiographical account called 'Hidden Intellectualism' then circle back to the beginning).

EN1112 Introduction to Poetry, spring term 2026-27

Course description

This course is designed to introduce first-year students to a variety of major poems in English. The course ranges widely from the Renaissance to the present day, involving practice in close reading while also engaging with issues of historical understanding and critical judgement. Throughout the term, we hope you will develop the confidence to engage with a range of stylistic elements in relation to poetry, and that you will seek to develop a critical awareness of the complex ways in which poetry relates to social and political events. As the course progresses, you will develop your critical awareness of the different kinds of responses that certain poems elicit, in relation to aspects of their historical reception by previous readers. The course is organised thematically rather than chronologically: we will look at a variety of poems from different periods each week.

Preparation

Over the summer, **please purchase a physical copy of the latest [Norton Anthology of Poetry](#)**, which is the **6th edition**. We have arranged for a **30% discount for print copies** (access to digital learning tools included) for those who decide to buy the book directly from Norton. The discount code is **WN440**.

We suggest that you read widely and often in this book, starting with the poets you know already and reading outwards as your interests lead you (if you're at a loss, then start with Emily Dickinson and Frank O'Hara!). The notes and appendices are very useful. In addition to the Norton anthology, we make regular reference throughout the course to [Poetry: The Basics](#) by Jeffrey Wainwright (London: Routledge, 2016), which is a set text. This will be available directly through the library as an e-book when you have completed registration.

Summer Reading List: EN1401 – Introducing America, Literature 1790-1900

Convenor: Katie McGettigan (katie.mcgettigan@rhul.ac.uk)

This reading list should be consulted alongside the Talis Reading list for the module. Online/PDF texts will be linked from there or the course Moodle page. Texts marked with an asterisk (*) should be purchased by students.

Term 1

1. Washington Irving, "Rip van Winkle," *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1819); "The Declaration of Independence" (1776) (PDF provided)
2. Edward Everett Hale, "The Man Without a Country," *Atlantic Monthly* (1863) (PDF provided)
3. Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1847)*
4. African American Poetry – texts TBC
5. Indigenous and Immigrant Memoirs: Sui Sin Far (Edith Maud Eaton) "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of a Eurasian," (1909); Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin) (Yankton Dakota), Extracts from *School Days of an Indian Girl* (1900) (online)
6. READING WEEK
7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature" (1842) in *Nature and Selected Essays*, Penguin (2003)*
8. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden and Civil Disobedience* (1854), Penguin (1983)*
9. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) Oxford World Classics, ed. Cindy Weinstein*
10. Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1856) in *Leaves of Grass*, Oxford World Classics, ed. Peter Riley*
11. Emily Dickinson, Selected Poems (PDF)

Term 2

Weeks 18-22: Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851), Oxford World's Classics, ed. Hester Blum*

READING WEEK

Weeks: 24-27

Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women: A Norton Critical Edition*, WW Norton (2003)*

CW1010: Introduction to Creative Writing (Academic year 2026-2027)

First year introduction to Creative Writing

Introduction and General

Atwood, M. (2002) *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Field, T. (2014a) 'Writing as Experimental Practice', in S. Earnshaw (ed.) *The Handbook of Creative Writing*. 2nd Edition. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 324–330.

Queneau, Raymond. (2013). Trans. Barbara Wright. *Exercises in Style*. New Directions.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. (2011) *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Noel-Tod, J. and Hamilton, I. (eds) (2013) *The Oxford Companion to Modern Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*Smith, A. (2013) *Artful*. London: Penguin Books.

*Le Guin, Ursula.K. (2019) *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*. London: Ignota. ***Or newer edition Cosmogenesis with introduction by Donna Haraway.***

Moore, Lorrie. (1985) *How to Become a Writer* | The New York Times Archive. The New York Times.

Available at:

<https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/20/specials/moore-writer.html>.

*Saunders, George (2022) *A Swim in a Pond in The Rain*. London: Bloomsbury.

Swensen, C. and St. John, D. (2009) *American Hybrid: A Norton Anthology of New Poetry*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Wynter, Sylvia. *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. McKittrick, K. (ed.) (2015) Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Play-Writing

*Chekhov Anton, (2008 edition) *Five Plays: Ivanov, The Seagull, Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters, and The Cherry Orchard* Oxford World's Classics.

Churchill, C. (2016) *Escaped Alone*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Coel, M. (2013) *Chewing Gum Dreams*. London: Oberon Books.

Lee-Jones, J. (2021) *Seven Methods of Killing Kylie Jenner*. London: Methuen Drama.

Macmillan, D. (2011) *Lungs*. London: Oberon Books.

Morgan, A. (2011) *Lovesong*. Oberon Books.

*Sophocles (1994) *The Three Theban Plays: 'Antigone', 'Oedipus the King', 'Oedipus at Colonus'* Penguin Classics.

Waller-Bridge, P. (2013) *Fleabag*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Poetry

Bernard, Jay. (2019) *Surge*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Capildeo, V. (2016) *Measures of Expatriation*. Manchester: Carcanet.

CA Conrad. (2023) *You Don't Have What It Takes to Be My Nemesis: And Other (Soma)tics* London: Penguin.

Dungy Camille. Eds. (2009) *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature Poetry*. University of Georgia Press.

Dungy, Camille. (2018) *Trophic Cascade*. Wesleyan University Press, 2018.

Finlay, Ian Hamilton. (2012) *Selections*. University of California Press.

Harjo, Joy. (2009) *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems 1975 – 2001*. Norton.

O'Hara, Frank. Ed. Allen, D. (1995) *The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

*Philip, M.Nourbese. (2011) *Zong!* Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Philip, M.Nourbese. and Shockley, E. (2014) *She Tries Her Tongue, Her Silence Softly Breaks*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

Rankine, Claudia. (2015) *Citizen: An American Lyric*. Penguin.

Retallack, Joan. (2003) *The Poethical Wager*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Riley, Denise. (2016) *Say Something Back*. London: Picador.

Rukeyser, Muriel (1938, new edition 2018) *The Book of the Dead*. West Virginia University Press.

Spahr, Juliana. (2005) *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs: Poems*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Spicer, Jack. (2011) *The House That Jack Built, Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*. Edited Peter Gizzi, Wesleyan.

*Stein, Gertrude. (2014) *Tender Buttons*. (The Corrected Centennial Edition). City Lights.

White, G.C. (2014) *Lyric Shame: The 'Lyric' Subject of Contemporary American Poetry*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Williams, N. (2011) *Contemporary Poetry*. Edinburgh University Press.

Fiction

Davis, Lydia. (2007) *Varieties of Disturbance: Stories*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Ghosh, Amitav. (2017) *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Hildyard, Daisy. (2022) *Emergency*. London: Fitzcarraldo.

*Johnson, Daisy. (2017) *Fen*. London: Vintage.

Litten, Russ. (2018) *We Know What We Are*. Long Buckby, United Kingdom: Obliterati Press.

Moore, Lorrie. (2010) *Collected Stories*. London: Faber and Faber.

Nelson, Azumah (2022) *Open Water*. London: Viking.

And see also: Nelson, Azumah (2020) 'Pray', in *The BBC National Short Story Award 2020*. Manchester, United Kingdom: Comma Press.

Rooney, Sally. (2018) *Normal People*. London: Faber and Faber.

Saunders, George. (2013) *Tenth of December*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks.

*Saunders, George. (2018) *Fox 8*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sittenfeld, Curtis. (2017) *The Prairie Wife* | The New Yorker. The New Yorker. Available at:
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/02/13/the-prairie-wife>.

Smith, Ali. (2009) *The First Person and Other Stories*. London: Penguin.

Woolf, Virginia. (2009) *Flush*. Oxford Worlds Classics.

Wynter, S., (2010) *The Hills of Hebron*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.

Yazbik, S. and Price, L. (2021) *Planet of Clay*. New York: World Editions.

We will be looking at **extracts from many of these books** during the seminars and short PDFs will be provided for discussion in class for some of the titles.

The contemporary plays will be mainly available at <https://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/>

The titles that are asterisked * we suggest that you need to own a copy for the seminars.

We suggest that you **do not** need to buy ALL these books, but we do suggest that you **familiarise yourself with the work of these writers** by using the **library** and online research before deciding which of these are of particular interest to you as a writer.

Please follow your seminar leader's direction and **make use of the library at Royal Holloway** which should have copies of these books: <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/about-us/the-library/>

Further Reading: Talis

<https://rl.talis.com/3/rhul/lists/cd541316-23d7-4ee2-ad10-fce6e1e0296d.html?lang=en-GB>

We hope you enjoy reading for this Introduction to Creative Writing!

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CW1020 Why Write: The History and Theory of Creative Writing.

Module Convenor: Dr. Doug Cowie

Module Outline and Summer Reading Recommendations.

Below is a week by week outline of the module reading. Some essays are short, and some are longer. You may wish to read ahead this summer.

All of the texts are available either online or in the university library, but in some cases, it will be helpful to buy your own copy of the book (usually when the reading assignment is a little longer). **These titles are marked in bold. Please try to buy the recommended edition, because it will make your life slightly easier.**

The other great thing you can do to prepare yourself for studying on a degree in creative writing is read as many novels and short stories, poems, and plays as you can. You'll be writing in all these forms, and thinking about how and why to write in these forms, for the next three years, so read at least one short story, at least one novel, at least one play, and half a dozen poems this summer, and think about what you like about each of them, what you don't like about each of them, and—importantly—why you like or don't like those things. "I don't know, it just wasn't relatable" isn't really a reason why. Why? Why? Why? Pretend you're three years old and keep asking that question, and see where it takes you.

Week Two: George Orwell, 'Why I Write', in *Why I Write*, Penguin Great Ideas (Penguin, 2004)

Week Three: James Baldwin, 'Autobiographical Note', in *Collected Essays*.

Week Four: Patricia Smith, 'Foreward', Mahogany L. Browne, 'Introduction', Idrissa Simmonds, 'Introduction', and Jamila Woods, 'Introduction', all from *Black Girl Magic* Topics

Week Five: Meghan O'Rourke, '[The Seductions of A.I. for the Writer's Mind](https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/18/opinion/ai-chatgpt-school.html)'.
[<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/18/opinion/ai-chatgpt-school.html>].

Week Six: Plato, *Republic* 2-3 and 10. Penguin Classics, translated by Desmond Lee.

Week Eight: Aristotle, *Poetics*. Penguin Classics, translated by Malcolm Heath.

Week Nine: Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry'.

Week Ten: Audre Lorde, 'Poetry Is Not a Luxury' and 'The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action'.

Week Eleven: Matthew Arnold, 'Sweetness and Light' in *Culture and Anarchy*, and Oscar Wilde, 'Preface to *A Picture of Dorian Gray*'.

Week Twelve: Joan Didion, 'Why I Write'.

Week 18: Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*.

Week 19: Henry James, Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*.

Week 20: T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"

Week 21: William Carlos Williams, "Spring and All", in *Imaginations*.

Week 22: Bertolt Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues*.

Week 24: Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism".

Week 25: W.H. Auden, "The Virgin and the Dynamo" and "The Poet and The City", from *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays*.

Week 26: Adrienne Rich, 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision'.

Week 27: Ralph Ellison, "Introduction to *Invisible Man*".

Week 28: Aleksandar Hemon and Colum McCann, "On Writers and History", from *Pretext 7* (Spring/Summer 2003).