

Tutorials: English language and literature

ENGLISH IS ONE OF THE LARGEST and most vibrant faculties at Oxford. Students studying English have the chance to take tutorials in a wide variety of specialist subfields, hear lectures by some of the discipline's foremost scholars, and use excellent library facilities. Students can also become literary tourists, visiting the homes of authors as varied as Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, the Brontë sisters, Robert Burns, and William Wordsworth, and seeing the places which inspired their work. Most of the courses listed below focus on literature, but there is ample opportunity to focus on the development of the language. Oxford English teaching provides unrivalled opportunity to study aspects of literature and language which are becoming rare elsewhere (Old Norse, Old English, and Special Authors such as Chaucer, Langland, and Gower, for example) but also gives students the chance to explore postcolonial and contemporary literature and approaches such as feminism.

The descriptions below are mainly copyright University of Oxford and cover tutorial courses offered by the University to matriculated undergraduates. SCIO students follow such courses as closely as is practicable, though there may be scope for minor variation to take into account students' previous experience. Students will not necessarily cover all the material cited in the description (especially when they take the course as a secondary tutorial). A few tutorials are shaped round SCIO tutors' special areas of expertise but demand the same intellectual rigour as the others listed here. All tutorials involve in-depth study: where the title might suggest a survey course, the content of the tutorial will involve focused study on part of the syllabus.

NB all works studied for English credit at Oxford must have been originally in English (Old, Middle, or current; British or other). Old Norse is the only exception to this rule.

For historical reasons, Oxford English students can study the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England as part of their English course, but do check that your home school will accept English credit for this course.

Tutorial list

Literature in English c.650–1350	2
Literature in English 1350–1550.....	2
Literature in English 1550–1660.....	2
Literature in English 1660–1760.....	2
Literature in English 1760–1830.....	3
Literature in English 1830–1910: The Victorian Period.....	3
Literature in English 1910 to the Present Day: Modern Literature	3
The American Novel after 1945	3
Anglo-Saxon Archaeology c.600–750: Society and Economy in the Early Christian Period	4
British Drama after the Second World War	4
Creative Writing (secondary tutorial only).....	4
The Fiction of C.S. Lewis in Literary Context	4
The History of the English Language to c.1800	5
The Icelandic Sagas	5
The Literary Essay.....	5
The Material Text.....	6
Old Norse	6
Postcolonial Literature	6
Psychological Approaches to Literature.....	7
Shakespeare	7
Special Authors (please specify your focus on your application form)	7
Tragedy	7
Writing Feminisms/Feminist Writing	7

Tutorials: English language and literature

Literature in English c.650–1350

This course firstly offers a chance to focus on the great works of Old English (i.e. Anglo-Saxon) literature, from its beginnings through to the Norman Conquest of 1066. This will include some consideration of these texts in the original medieval language – which it is possible to learn from scratch here in Oxford. This language work is also supplemented with wider reading of Anglo-Saxon literature in translation (including, for example, the poet Seamus Heaney's excellent and famous translation work), as well as a chance to consider the culture of the Anglo-Saxon peoples – some of whose most famous artefacts are on free display in Oxford's Ashmolean Museum and London's British Museum. The most famous Anglo-Saxon poem is *Beowulf*.

This course will also cover the shorter poems, such as 'The Wanderer' and 'The Dream of the Rood'. It is possible to look briefly at Anglo-Saxon historical and religious prose. Secondly, there is a chance to look at the beginnings of the re-emergence of English literature after the destruction of Anglo-Saxon culture in 1066. This may include the Peterborough continuation of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of historical prose writing ('the Peterborough chronicle'), the remarkable early Middle English poem *The owl and the nightingale*, and the earliest English version of mythology of King Arthur.

Literature in English 1350–1550

At the heart of this course are the most famous works of fourteenth-century literature: firstly, the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer; but also the anonymous writer behind *Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*; and William Langland, the author of *Piers Plowman*. It will be possible to learn from scratch enough medieval English to engage with these texts in the original language, perhaps supplemented by some of the excellent translations which are available (including by the British poet Simon Armitage). This course can also cover the different strands of English literature through the fifteenth century: the most important English compilation of Arthurian mythology, by Thomas Malory; the earliest English writings which we know were authored by women (Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich); and the important works of Scottish literature, by writers such as Henryson and Dunbar. The course concludes with works by the Tudor writers of the early sixteenth century, including the poets Skelton and Wyatt.

Literature in English 1550–1660

This course covers the literature of Elizabethan England – *excluding* its most famous author, William Shakespeare, who has a different course entirely devoted to him – and the literature of the English civil wars (1642–1651). For the Elizabethans, it is possible to study a wide range of the playwrights surrounding Shakespeare, with whom he variously conversed, collaborated, and competed: Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, John Webster and others. It is also possible to look at some (or all) of *The faerie queene*, the Arthurian epic poem by Edmund Spenser – and also to study Spenser's shorter pastoral poems. The earlier erotic and the later religious poetry of John Donne, and his religious prose, can form a bridge between the beginning and the end of this course, as can the works of Mary Sidney. The literature of the English civil wars includes on one side the work of the 'cavalier poets' – Lovelace, Herrick – and on the other side the early poetry and prose of John Milton. (Milton's epic *Paradise lost* is part not of this course, but of the course Literature in English 1660–1760.) Another key writer of the wars, somehow unplaceable in his true sympathies, is Andrew Marvell. From Elizabethan courtiers to the intellectual and actual warfare of the mid-seventeenth century, this course covers the turbulent origins of modern Britain.

Literature in English 1660–1760

This course covers a century which runs from the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660 – an event which overturned but failed fully to erase the revolutionary effects of the English civil wars – to the early Georgian period, when England (though not other British territories) turned away from internal warfare towards an appearance of peaceful, Protestant, capitalist success that has been characterized as an age of beautiful houses and extravagant corruption. Early in the course, you will study the most famous epic poem written in English: *Paradise lost*, by John Milton. This is also the era of the first professional female writer in English, Aphra Behn. In the latter half of this course, it is possible to study the development of the epic form in English poetry, in the elaborate works of John Dryden and the gently mocking, or entirely vicious, satires of Alexander Pope. It is also possible to study the beginnings of the prose novel in English, in the works of Behn, Daniel Defoe, and Henry Fielding. For those interested in children's literature, the first English novel aimed at children, written by Henry's sister Sarah Fielding, also lies within the scope of this course.

Tutorials: English language and literature

Literature in English 1760–1830

Increasingly, to modern readers, the beginning of this course covers a period that is ‘the age of Jane Austen’, in the same way that the beginning of the previous course would once have been unquestionably called ‘the age of Milton’. This course offers a chance to study Austen’s novels in depth, and also to set her work in the context of other developments in the novel at that time, particularly the popularity of the ‘Gothic novels’ of writers like Ann Radcliffe, a movement that Austen undercuts in *Northanger Abbey*. The latter part of this course moves into the era of Romantic poetry and prose: the politically revolutionary ideas that are latent or explicit in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Blake; and the revolutionary lifestyles offered by Byron, Keats, Percy Shelley, Mary Shelley, and Thomas de Quincey. In keeping with the revolutionary character of the times, this was also an important era for Scottish literature, in the works of Robert Burns and Walter Scott.

Literature in English 1830–1910: The Victorian Period

This course offers a chance to follow the later developments of Romantic poetry in the works of Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning; and developments in the English novel in the works of Dickens and Hardy. Both strands – the novel as developing form, and Romanticism as a developing cultural movement – are expressed through the novels of the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. The course continues through the late Victorian period. This includes the broad Pre-Raphaelite movement, which began as a brotherhood of painters but which expanded to influence the writings of the poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and William Morris, and the cultural criticism of John Ruskin. Oxford offers a wealth of Pre-Raphaelite visual art on free display in the Ashmolean Museum and various college chapels. The course may also include the writings of A.C. Swinburne and Oscar Wilde, which represent early examples of what could now be termed ‘queer literature’. The end of the course may cover the Edwardian period in literature, which includes important novels by Joseph Conrad and the groundbreaking Irish writings of John Millington Synge.

Literature in English 1910 to the Present Day: Modern Literature

This course begins with the literary revolution from 1910 to 1930 that we now call the Modernist

movement. This includes the poetry and criticism of T.S. Eliot, James Joyce’s early works and his culture-changing epic novel *Ulysses*, the novels of Virginia Woolf, and the poetry of W.B. Yeats. From this centre point in the crucible of modern literature, it is possible to follow a path back to the writings of those who (unlike the Modernists just listed) served directly in the First World War, either as soldiers, like Wilfred Owen, or as nurses, like Vera Brittain. The trauma of the First World War, whether confronted directly by Owen or in the elliptical manner of Eliot or Woolf, is key to understanding the British literature of this period. There are also many paths forward: the literature of another world war, in the works of Evelyn Waugh, George Orwell, and W.H. Auden; the movements of very recent British literature, in the works of Tom Stoppard, Jeanette Winterson, Julian Barnes, Salman Rushdie, Zadie Smith, and many more. Picking up on those last two names, there is a chance later in this course to study works originally written in English which explore the relationship of Britain to parts of the wider world which gained their independence in the twentieth century, in works such as the novels of the British-Caribbean author Jean Rhys, or the Indian author Arundhati Roy.

The American Novel after 1945

This course offers great flexibility to explore the many movements and moments that can be identified in the development of the novel in North America (the United States and Canada) since the Second World War. There are novels which look back on the war itself and its effects, including Heller’s *Catch-22*, Styron’s *Sophie’s choice*, and O’Connor’s *Wise blood*. There are novels that reflect on the culture of ‘Eisenhower’s America’ of the 1950s that grew out of an era of post-war prosperity (for some), such as Sylvia Plath’s *The bell jar*. It is possible to focus on novels that explore the later legacy of the American South, including works by Styron, O’Connor, and Harper Lee. Novels by African Americans are also an important strand of this course, including works by James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker. Distinctively American challenges to the nature of the novel as literary form can be traced from the post-war Beat Generation, through the work of David Foster Wallace and beyond. The very recent explosion of interest in American feminist writing also forms part of this course, including the work of Margaret Atwood.

Tutorials: English language and literature

Anglo-Saxon Archaeology c.600–750: Society and Economy in the Early Christian Period

In the year 600, the peoples who came to be known as ‘the Anglo-Saxons’ were ethnically diverse, politically fragmented and largely pagan; by 750 they had emerged as one of the major cultures of post-Roman Europe, with towns, a complex economy, and a network of richly endowed churches. The fusion of Germanic, Celtic, and Mediterranean traditions produced a material culture of astonishing richness and originality, including such internationally famous works as the Sutton Hoo grave goods, the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, and the Lindisfarne Gospels. This is currently one of the liveliest areas of medieval history, as old discoveries are reassessed, and new ones (especially in the areas of economy and settlement) overturn accepted views. This course will afford students the exciting opportunity to trace the remarkable growth of English society and culture in response to external stimuli. Archaeology is defined in the widest sense, to include illuminated manuscripts, precious objects, coins, sculpture, and buildings as well as sites and finds. With this subject the sites and artefacts themselves are ‘primary’, but to make them available in print inevitably involves a process of selection and interpretation; at the same time, ‘primary’ material (unavailable elsewhere) can be embedded in analytical and essentially secondary works. Thus the normal distinction between primary and secondary literature cannot be drawn so clearly, and the subject-matter covers a spectrum from the primary (e.g. photographs and excavation reports) to the secondary (e.g. interpretative books and articles). Mastering the art of using physical evidence, and of reading and criticizing excavation reports, involves some initial intellectual effort but is highly rewarding.

British Drama after the Second World War

This course allows great flexibility in looking at works written by British and Irish playwrights after 1945. It is possible to focus on the flourishing of new writing for the theatre in the British Isles in the years shortly following the Second World War, including the works of major writers such as Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter, and John Osborne. This was an era that saw significant movements in drama: the theatre of the absurd, the ‘angry young men’, and the pioneering theatre craft of the director Joan Littlewood. It is also possible to extend this course forward, to include drama right up to the present day. This would allow, for example, a consideration

of the whole career (to date) of the playwright Tom Stoppard; the inclusion of feminist drama, such as Caryl Churchill, Sarah Kane, Rebecca Lenkiewicz; and the recent resurgence of Irish drama, from Conor McPherson and Martin McDonagh. This course is an excellent opportunity to consider a range of theatrical work as literature, and also as a tradition linked to socio-cultural change and to developments in the possibilities of performance art.

Creative Writing (secondary tutorial only)

Students will study various aspects of how to write creatively and look at various literary forms and genres, although the emphasis for this course will be on the students’ own writing. Students may choose to focus on writing fiction, poetry, or prose, and may work on one or several pieces. They should start new projects in Oxford, rather than simply revising older pieces, though the course will develop skills for reworking and improving texts, as well as writing afresh.

The Fiction of C.S. Lewis in Literary Context

This literary course involves a study of the life and major works of fiction by C.S. Lewis, placed in the context of the authors who influenced him. Throughout the course students are directed to A.N. Wilson’s important study, *C.S. Lewis: a biography*. The course begins with a detailed examination of the author whom Lewis described as his literary ‘master’ – the Victorian fantasy writer George MacDonald. Focusing on MacDonald’s influential ‘mythopoeic’ fantasy novels, *Phantastes* and *Lilith*, we examine the themes and literary techniques used by MacDonald in his Christian myth-making and discuss how they are repeatedly used by Lewis. Students will also study authors including J.R.R. Tolkien (*The Hobbit* and ‘On faerie stories’), Edmund Spenser (*The faerie queene*), John Milton (*Paradise lost* and *Comus*), William Blake (*The marriage of heaven and hell*), and Jonathan Swift (*Gulliver’s travels*). Contextual authors and texts will shed light on specific works such as *The Namia chronicles*, *The Screwtape letters*, *The space trilogy*, *The four loves*, *The great divorce*, *Of other worlds*, and *Till we have faces*, as well as on Lewis’s general literary and apologetic aims. Students will encounter a range of criticism on Lewis – positive and negative – and topics under consideration will include allegory versus applicability, travellers’ tales, the role of didacticism in children’s literature, and Horatian versus Juvenalian satire.

Tutorials: English language and literature

The History of the English Language to c.1800

This course offers the chance to study the English language from its earliest recorded appearances, in the Anglo-Saxon period (pre-1066), through to its establishment by the end of the eighteenth century as a national and even – embryonically, arguably – an international language of legislative record, academic enquiry, and literary power. Oxford's Ashmolean Museum contains the Alfred jewel – usually on free display – a piece of jewellery with an inscription that represents one of the earliest examples of written English. (The English inscription on the runic Ruthwell cross in Scotland is probably the very earliest – but harder to visit!) It will be possible to learn from scratch in Oxford how to read the English of the Anglo-Saxons ('Old English') and also to follow the changes that occurred in the English language when England was invaded by a French-speaking imperial power through the Norman Conquest of 1066, the beginning of the post-conquest 'Middle English' period. As medieval English shifts to early modern English, it is possible to study changes in English – both linguistic changes and changes in the ideology of what it meant to use English in different contexts – through English translations of the Bible from different eras; through the development of English as a scientific language, especially via the emergence of what came to be the Royal Society (founded in 1660); and through the development of the first complete dictionaries of English. Throughout this course it is possible to consider the English language not only through isolated lexical and grammatical changes that can be seen in the written record, but also as a medium in a dynamic relationship with the social and cultural changes affecting the users of English – the men and women from different classes and regions of the British Isles and beyond whose life experiences have shaped today's English language.

The Icelandic Sagas

This course offers a chance to look in depth at Icelandic Sagas, a range of prose texts written in the later Middle Ages in Old Norse about historical, quasi-historical, or mythic events set in the earlier medieval world of wider Scandinavia. (See the description of the Old Norse course for some more general background explaining the varieties of Old Norse literature and their relationship to the cultural traditions of the British Isles. This course is not 'more advanced' than the Old Norse course: it just takes a different focus.) It is possible to learn

from scratch in Oxford enough Old Norse to appreciate the literary qualities of the sagas, and also to supplement this with reading in translation. The Icelandic Sagas – written in various styles by a range of writers, none of whose identity is known for certain – offer a fascinating glimpse of the world of medieval Iceland and places linked to it by sea, including for example the Orkney Islands off the coast of northern Scotland. The sagas include mythological and also Christian elements, as well as accounts of the military, political, and cultural history of the region. How much can be derived from them that is 'historically accurate', in the modern sense, is a complex question. They are a tantalizing source as well as representing a powerful, independent literary tradition that has continued to influence authors up to the present day.

The Literary Essay

This course offers a chance to follow one particular literary form through different historical eras and through all parts of the world where English is written. For these purposes, a 'literary essay' is a short (i.e. shorter than normal book length) piece of non-fiction writing, which may convey an opinion, an argument, an illustrative personal experience, or an appreciation/critique of another person's literary writing. There is a lot of freedom for students to choose essayists who particularly interest them, although the primary texts studied must have been originally written in English – which is not to say that the considerable influence of non-English essayists, perhaps especially Michel de Montaigne, on their Anglophone counterparts cannot be considered. As a genre, the essay's popularity has very much come in waves: sometimes it feels central to the literary culture of a particular era, sometimes it is set aside in favour of other kinds of writing. The earliest era of the English essay includes the *Essays* of Francis Bacon and the endlessly strange mid-length prose meditations of Thomas Browne, 'Hydriotaphia: urn burial' and 'The garden of Cyrus'. Another flourishing of the essay, in more recognizably modern form, occurred in the early nineteenth century, especially in the work of William Hazlitt. In the twentieth century and beyond, the essay has found its greatest literary prominence: starting with the essayists of the Modernist era, T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and Willa Cather; through the powerful political essays of the mid-twentieth century, by George Orwell and James Baldwin; to the postmodern era, where the essay has become a characteristic form for British writers such as Julian Barnes and Zadie Smith.

Tutorials: English language and literature

The Material Text

This course offers a chance to study how early English literary texts were presented to the reader in the original book format of their own cultures, and how that presentation differs from the way the same texts are presented in a modern edition. For example, medieval manuscript books were highly expensive, painstakingly hand-produced items, which – unlike most modern paperbacks – often contained many different texts bound together as one book. A person in that era who owned ‘a book’ might in many ways be the equivalent to a person now who owns ‘an art collection’; and libraries of that era were rich possessions of powerful institutions or aristocrats. As students of literature, we can consider the effect of the physical form in which a text is presented. Handwritten texts are slower to read, and medieval authors knew this. In a society of widespread illiteracy (not confined to a ‘peasant class’), written texts might need to be read or performed to achieve wide enjoyment. Each manuscript copy might acquire its own commentary and textual apparatus – either designed as part of the original book production, or added over the years as different readers added their insights or graffiti. There might be pictures. The course focuses on two particular manuscript books, both available in detailed online facsimile: the Nowell Codex, the Anglo-Saxon manuscript which includes *Beowulf* alongside other related texts; and the Auchinleck manuscript, a remarkable fourteenth-century collection of very disparate texts (romances, religious works, historical works, jokes). The facsimiles may be freely viewed at the following addresses:

- http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_a_xv
- <http://ebeowulf.uky.edu/>
- <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/>

It is also possible to extend this course forward in time, including for example Emma Smith’s recent work on the First Folio publication of Shakespeare’s plays. While this course does not involve physically handling Oxford’s own collection of early books, these often feature (in glass cases) in the rotating free displays in the Bodleian’s Weston Library exhibition rooms.

Old Norse

This course offers an introduction to a range of Old Norse literature, in both prose and verse. It is possible to learn from scratch in Oxford enough

Old Norse to engage with the literary qualities of the language, and also to gain wider literary and cultural background through works translated into English and through works of secondary scholarship. Almost all of ‘Old Norse literature’ derives from a variety of manuscript books written in Iceland in the later Middle Ages: those that survive are still in Iceland. As well as their relevance for the literary and cultural history of Iceland, these texts also offer windows onto aspects of medieval European culture more widely. They are the literature of a people whose identity involved travel as far afield as North America and southern Russia: a much more complex culture than is conjured by the term ‘the Vikings’. Forms of Old Norse would have been known, spoken, and read, at various times, across continental Scandinavia, parts of Ireland, parts of Scotland, and northern England. (Old Norse inscriptions on stone, bone, and metalwork appear in various of these places, a small supplement to the Icelandic manuscript tradition.) Old Norse literature also shows various continuities – and differences – with a wider tradition of culture and mythology that is shared across the ‘Germanic’ groups of central and Northern Europe, including Anglo-Saxon England, as well as incorporating the worldview of the European medieval (i.e. Catholic) church. The ‘Prose Edda’ also includes a remarkable early discussion of how it works to be a poet.

Postcolonial Literature

This course covers Anglophone literature written from or about countries that became independent of imperial rule after the nineteenth century. (It does not include American literature, which has its own course and which is seldom regarded as ‘postcolonial’.) It is possible to study current postcolonial theory, starting with theorists such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon who offer still controversial formulations of postcolonial history, experience, and literature. Theoretical works may be studied in translation, but the primary texts you focus on must have been originally written or published in the English language. Students may select one or several regions of the world to cover; and may also choose to include or exclude the perspectives of ethnically British or European authors on the dynamics of imperialism (e.g. Joseph Conrad on the Congo; E.M. Forster on India). Regions that may be studied include: Africa, especially the Nigerian authors Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, or the South African novels of J.M. Coetzee; South Asia, especially the Indian novels of Arundhati Roy and Salman

Tutorials: English language and literature

Rushdie; the Caribbean, especially the novels of Jean Rhys and the poetry of Derek Walcott. There is also room to study works which explore the dislocation of people moving from place to place or immigrant experiences within Britain, such as Michael Ondaatje's novels of movement, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, or Salman Rushdie's highly controversial novel about Islam and London, *The satanic verses*.

Psychological Approaches to Literature

Since the inception of modern approaches to psychology in the late nineteenth century, psychological theories have been applied to the interpretation of culture, and of literary texts in particular. This series of tutorials will focus on psychological approaches to literature, including those of Freud, Jung, Klein, Winnicott, Holland, Lacan, and Kristeva, and more recent approaches emerging out of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. As well as theoretical topics, there will be opportunity to apply the theory to close reading of particular texts.

Shakespeare

The Shakespeare course provides a wonderful opportunity to get to grips with an entire canon and its contexts. Although you can study Shakespeare chronologically or generically (tracing his development from the early plays and poems or through a genre), the tutorial course provides opportunities to mix and match. Thinking thematically you can place early comedies with later histories (identity in *Comedy of errors* and *Henry V* for example); thinking generically you can consider sonnets and poems alongside poetry within the plays, for instance. This is also a course in which you can make full use of your wider reading (knowledge of the Victorians or the twentieth century, for example) – Shakespeare and performance, political receptions, cult uses, editorial history, new schools of criticism. You are expected to cover a representative range of the canon, but also to gain an in-depth knowledge of a number of plays. There is opportunity to write on genres and on periods ('early Shakespeare', 'mature comedies') as well as to pursue a topic-based approach.

Special Authors (please specify your focus on your application form)

The Special Authors course allows in-depth study of one or more major author/s, or literature in a given genre or from a group of authors. All the works studied must originally have been written in English.

At the time of application students should state which special author(s) or genre or geographical area they wish to specialize in. Suitable genres might be English drama, English fiction, English poetry, or medieval and Renaissance romance. Suitable single authors might be Austen, Behn, Chaucer, Conrad, Dickens, Donne, George Eliot, T.S. Eliot, Joyce, Langland, Milton, Plath, Spenser, Woolf, Wordsworth, or Yeats. Suitable regions might be Irish or Scottish literature in English. It is possible to go outside what would once have been referred to as 'the canon', but students are encouraged to take on the intellectual challenge of approaching influential and innovative authors, and canonical figures whom they are unfamiliar with.

Tragedy

This course offers a chance to engage with a wide range of primary texts written in English from any era, and from any region of the world, that inhabit the genre of tragedy. Alongside that, it is also possible to study the theory of tragedy, from Aristotle to Nietzsche and beyond (the theory may be studied in translation, but the primary texts must have been originally written in English). At the heart of the idea of tragedy is the theatre. This course invites the question: what did tragedy mean to Shakespeare? Was it really distinct in his mind from the gloomier of his 'history plays'? Or from his late 'tragicomedies'? What did tragedy mean to his near contemporaries (Marlowe, Jonson, Webster)? And something like the tradition of tragedy has continued in the theatre to the present day. Is Arthur Miller's Willy Loman a tragic hero? What about Tennessee Williams's Blanche Dubois? Or the characters in British playwright David Hare's plays *Absence of war* or *Plenty*, or Sarah Kane's *Phaedra's love*? It is also possible to study poems that directly relate to tragedy, from Chaucer to the poet Carol Ann Duffy, some of whose pieces play with and gently undermine tragic themes and some of which engage with tragedy very powerfully. There is also room in this course to ask how tragedy relates to the novel, whether through Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Orwell's *Nineteen eighty-four*, Achebe's *Things fall apart*, or the work of Margaret Atwood.

Writing Feminisms/Feminist Writing

There is English writing authored by women from the later Middle Ages onwards (perhaps earlier – who knows, when writing is anonymous?). The beginnings of English writing with a distinctly feminist approach are best traced from Mary

Tutorials: English language and literature

Wollstonecraft's *A vindication of the rights of women* (1792). This course weaves together feminist non-fiction and fictional or poetic writing by women that explores feminist themes. On the non-fiction side, it is possible to study works written in English, including those by Wollstonecraft, Woolf, Paglia, Estés, and Adichie; it is also possible to study feminist theory in translation, by writers such as de Beauvoir and Irigaray. For fiction and poetry, it is necessary to stick to works originally written in

English, including the writings of Jane Austen, Mary Shelley (Wollstonecraft's daughter), Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Toni Morrison, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Those last two names serve also to highlight the importance in recent feminist thought of the concept of intersectionality, which includes the aim of underlining the importance of the experiences and voices of women of colour (cis- and trans-) in discussions of gender relations and sexuality.