

HL8026: Women's Literature and the Contemporary

Women's Literature and the Contemporary presents an eclectic range of fiction by women writers from the late 20th Century to the present. We will explore the ways in which women writers engage with and dramatise some of the situations and issues that characterise contemporary experience. The module's texts have been chosen to reflect the diversity of subject, style and form in contemporary women's writing. Film adaptations of some of these texts will be woven into our discussions to expand our appreciation of the critical and creative responses to the material. Over the course of the module, we will identify and explore some of the themes that characterise fiction by women writers, such as:

- feminism;
- gender, sexuality and identity;
- family and marriage;
- diaspora and cross-cultural engagement;
- global capitalism and cosmopolitanism;
- popular culture.

Throughout the module, we will engage with a variety of feminist theorists for the framework that they provide for reading text. Our discussions will consider the ways in which women writers rewrite, challenge and destabilise structures of power in fiction that engages with a contemporary world defined by some as postcolonial, postmodern and post feminist. Within this context, we will explore issues of gender as they intersect with ethnicity, sexuality, class and national identity.

Core Texts

Fiction

- Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (London: Vintage, 2006)
- Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (London: Picador, 1996)
- Zoë Heller, *The Believers* (London: Penguin Books, 2009)
- Jhumpa Lahiri, *The Namesake* (New York: Mariner Books, 2004)
- Hwee Hwee Tan, *Mammon Inc.* (London: Penguin Books, 2002)

Film

- *The Company of Wolves*, Dir. Neil Jordan (ITC, 1984)
- *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Dir. Sharon Maguire (Universal Pictures, 2001)
- *The Namesake*, Dir. Mira Nair (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2006)

Assessment

Coursework essay: 50%

Examination: 50%

Lecturer

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Week	Topics	Readings/Films	Lecture Hours
1	Module introduction		3
2	Feminisms: an overview		3
3	Fairy tales: a feminist revision (1)	Angela Carter, <i>The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories</i> (1979)	3
4	Fairy tales: a feminist revision (2)	FILM: <i>The Company of Wolves</i> (1984)	3
5	Rewriting a classic for popular culture (1)	Helen Fielding, <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> (1996)	3
6	Rewriting a classic for popular culture (2)	FILM: <i>Bridget Jones's Diary</i> (2001)	3
7	Satirising global capitalism (1)	Hwee Hwee Tan, <i>Mammon Inc.</i> (2002)	3
	RECESS WEEK		
8	Satirising global capitalism (2)	<i>Mammon Inc.</i>	3
9	Cross-cultural engagement (1)	Jhumpa Lahiri, <i>The Namesake</i> (2003)	3
10	Cross-cultural engagement (2)	FILM: <i>The Namesake</i> (2006)	3
11	The personal is political (1)	Zoë Heller, <i>The Believers</i> (2008)	3
12	The personal is political (2)	<i>The Believers</i>	3
13	Module conclusion		3