

BA (Hons) English



ROMANTIC LITERATURE

LEVEL 2 UNIT GUIDE
Semester 1 2008/2009

1.0 Unit Details

Unit Code:	P-E-S-2-201
Unit Level:	2
Credit Value:	1
Student Study Hours:	150 Hours
Class Contact Hours:	45 Hours
Private Study Hours:	105 Hours
Pre-Requisites:	Level One Units
Course(s)	English Studies SH; Creative Writing and English; CH English Studies
Unit Co-ordinator:	Dr. Suzanne Scafe
UC Contact Details	scafes@lsbu.ac.uk ; 020 7815 6149
Teaching Team	Dr. Suzanne Scafe

2.0 Short Description

This unit focuses on the body of work defined as ‘Romantic’ literature, produced during the period 1760-1830. Although hundreds of novels were written during the period defined as ‘Romantic’, the late eighteenth-century in England is characterised by the production of poetry. The writers now most closely associated with this literary period are Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron. In addition to works by these writers, we will also be exploring poetry and non-fiction prose by less well-known women writers. The unit closes with a study of two novels, one by Anne Radcliffe and the other, a Gothic parody by Jane Austen Northanger Abbey.

3.0 Aims

The aim of the unit will be to introduce students to the literary production of the period 1760-1830. You will be asked to consider the extent to which historical, social and cultural factors influenced the style and content of the literature of the period. You will also be asked to explore and determine the dominant literary values and attitudes of the period, while recognising the difference in individual production.

4.0 Learning Outcomes

4.1 Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the unit students will be able to:

- critically analyse a selection of prose and poetry which represents both canonical and non-canonical literary production of the period;
- relate the literature of the period to the context of its production;

- make reference to relevant and recent background criticism in the analysis of primary texts;
- demonstrate an awareness of the significance of genre in relation to literature of the period;
- explore in class discussions and in written assignments the dominant themes of the literary production of the period;
- show a general understanding of the distinctive literary styles and concerns of writers of the period.

4.2 Transferable Skills

Students will have the opportunity to develop:

- interactive skills through seminar and workshop activities
- oral communication skills through seminar discussion
- public reading/speaking skills through informal presentation

5.0 Assessment

1x 2hour exam

1x 2,500 word essay

6.0 Feedback

Feedback will normally be given to students 20 working days after the submission of an assignment.

7.0 Introduction to studying the unit

7.1 Overview of the Main Content

The unit will explore definitions of ‘Romanticism’ in relation to literary production in England during the period covered by the unit. You will be asked to examine contemporary cultural constructions of the poet as ‘visionary’ or ‘prophet’ and the impact of this on the writing of the period. The texts studied will be related to non-fiction by writers such as William Hazlitt, Edmund Burke, Mary Wollstonecraft and the poets themselves. You will be asked to examine in close detail examples of theoretical, critical and political writing by the poets of the period.

One session will focus on a small selection of the many women poets writing during the period and students will be asked to consider the significance of gender in relation to poetic form and poetic authority during the Romantic period. You will also be asked to examine the influence of Gothic themes and to explore its representation in poetry and prose. The unit will close with the study of two novels, one by Jane Austen and *A Sicilian Romance* by Anne Radcliffe.

Overview of types of classes

1x1 hour informal lecture which introduces the topic and 1x 2 hour student-led seminar discussion. Topics for discussion will be distributed **in advance** of the seminar. Students are asked to identify the topic of their choice at least a week before the relevant seminar discussion.

7.3 Importance of Student Self-Managed Learning Time

A certain amount of information will be conveyed in weekly lectures, primarily through Blackboard. Students, however, are expected to read and think about the primary texts and assigned secondary reading in advance of the class; students should come prepared to discuss the topic and questions set out in the weekly teaching programme.

Students will be given discussion guidelines ahead of the session. Study time outside of class should be spent reading the poems and secondary literature detailed in paragraph 8.

8.0 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

WEEK 1

Lecture: Unit Outline

Social, political and cultural context for the study of Romanticism in Britain, with reference to Marilyn Butler, Stuart Curran, Kelvin Everest and M.H.Abrams. We will also examine some of the important concepts in the literary production of the period such as the sublime; the power of nature; the uses of mythology.

A close reading of examples of archetypal ‘Romantic’ poetry by the writers we are studying on the unit.

WEEK 2

Lecture: Childhood

A child’s point of view and the child as addressee: William Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The child as autobiographical subject in Coleridge’s ‘Frost

at Midnight' and extracts from Book One of Wordsworth's 13 book *Prelude* (handout).

Seminar: You are asked to read the following poems: 'Introduction' to Songs of Innocence; 'The Echoing Green'; 'The Lamb'; 'The Chimney Sweeper'; 'Holy Thursday'; 'Infant Joy'; 'Nurse's Song'; and in Songs of Experience: 'Holy Thursday'; 'The Chimney Sweeper'; 'Infant Sorrow'

WEEK 3

Lecture: Nature and the Natural World in the poetry of John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley. In the lecture we will be looking at extracts from Keats's letters and from contemporary critics who wrote about Keats's poetry.

Seminar: A discussion of the following poems: Shelly's 'Ode to the West Wind'; 'To a Skylark' and 'The Cloud': Keats's 'To Autumn'; 'Ode to Psyche'; 'Ode to a Nightingale'.

WEEK 4

Lecture: Representations of Women in Wordsworth's poetry, focusing on the role and function of Margaret in the poem 'The Ruined Cottage'.

Seminar: The representation and significance of women in the following poems: 'The Ruined Cottage', 'The Female Vagrant'; 'The Mad Mother'; 'The Forsaken Indian Woman'; 'The Idiot Boy' and extracts from Book V11 of *The Prelude* (handout).

WEEK 5

Lecture: Nature and rural life in the poetry of Coleridge and Wordsworth including reference to extracts from Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads* and Coleridge's Biographia.

Seminar: discussion of the following poems by Wordsworth: 'The Solitary Reaper'; 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud'; 'Nutting'; 'The Tables Turned' and 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill'. We will look at 'The Eolian Harp' and 'This Lime Tree Bower My Prison' by Coleridge.

WEEK 6

In this week you are asked to prepare for the study of two novels on the unit.

WEEK 7

Lecture: Sexual love and desire in the work of Coleridge, Keats, William Blake and Byron. In the lecture we will contrast: 'The Sick Rose' and 'Ah Sunflower' with Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes'.

Seminar: a more detailed discussion of the following poems: 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' (Keats); 'Dejection: an Ode' (Coleridge) and 'She Walks in Beauty'; 'When We Two Parted'; 'So, We'll Go no More a Roving'; 'Stanzas to August' and 'Fare Thee Well'.

WEEK 8

Lecture: Poetry and Politics

This week we will look at the following themes: post-revolutionary fervour in Shelley's poetry; the experience of revolutionary failure in Wordsworth; the anti-slavery movement. In the lecture we will look at Hannah More's 'The Sorrows of Yamba' and William Blake's 'Black Boy' and extracts from Wordsworth's 13 book *Prelude* and his sonnet 'To Toussaint L'Ouverture'. We will also look at Coleridge's 'Fears in Solitude'.

Seminar: further discussion of the poems referred to above. In addition we will discuss Shelley's 'England 1819'; 'Song: Men of England' and 'Ozymandias'. William Blake's 'London'.

WEEK 9

Lecture: The Romantic Imagination

The lecture this week will focus on extracts from 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' by William Blake, 'Kubla Khan' by Coleridge and 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality' by William Wordsworth.

Seminar: in addition to the three poems introduced in the lecture will look at issues of morality in Blake's 'The Human Abstract', 'A Poison Tree', 'London' and 'The Garden of Love'.

WEEK 10

Lecture An introduction to Gothic themes and representations: the example of *A Sicilian Romance*.

Seminar: a discussion of the dominant themes, the language, narrative style and the imagery used in Anne Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance*.

WEEK 11

Lecture and Seminar: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

WEEK 12

Exam Revision

ASSESSMENT A 1x 2500 word essay

ASSESSMENT B 1x 2hour exam

READING AND OTHER SOURCE MATERIAL

PRIMARY TEXTS

Wu, Duncan 2005. *Romanticism: An Anthology* London, Blackwell

(Any edition of this text will be suitable).

SECONDARY TEXTS

The following texts indicate more recent shifts in critical approaches to the literature of the period. There are a number of texts on specific writers, collections of essays, recent biographies, collections of letters and so on, which are very useful. I have not listed those here but many are in our library. There are also some older collections of critical essays on specific writers of the period in our library; the Prentice-Hall (pubs.) collection is very useful but again I have not listed those titles here.

Aers, D. Cook J., Punter D., 1981. *Romanticism and Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830* (London: Routledge)

Alexander, Meena 1986. *Women in Romanticism* (London: Macmillan)

Bate, Jonathan 1991. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environment* (London: Routledge)

Botting, Fred 1997. *Gothic* (London: Routledge)

Burke, R. 1996. *Romantic Discourse and Political Modernity* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf)

- Butler, Marilyn 1992. *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature And its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: OUP)
- Bygraves S 1996. *Romantic Writings* (London: Routledge)
- Clery, E.J 2000. *Gothic Documents: a sourcebook 1700-1820* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- Chase Cynthia (ed.) 1993. *Romanticism* (London: Longman)
- Copley S., & Whale J.,1992. *Beyond romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts 1780 –1832* (London: Routledge)
- Curran Stuart 1991. *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP)
- Coupe, Laurence 2000. *The Green Studies Reader; from Romanticism to Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge)
- Day Aiden 1997. *Romanticism* (London: Routledge)
- Everest Kelvin 1990. *English Romantic Poetry: An Introduction to the Literary Scene* (Oxford: OUP)
- Hall J. 1991. *A Mind That Feeds Upon Infinity: The Deep Self in Romantic Poetry* (London: Associated University Press)
- Howells, Coral Ann 1978. *Love, Mystery and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction* (London, Athlone Press)
- Jacobus, Mary 1989. *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
- Kelly, Gary 1993 *Women, Writing and Revolution: 1790-1827* (London: Longman)
- Cox, Philip 1996. *Gender, Genre and the Romantic Poets* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- McGann, J.J 1983. *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press)
- Miles, Robert 1995. *Anne Radcliffe: the Great Enchantress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press)
- Mellor, Ann K. ed. 1988. *Romanticism and Feminism* (London: Routledge)
- Punter David 1980,1996. *The Literature of Terror Vol: 1 The Gothic Tradition* (London: Longman)
- Watkins, Daniel P. 1987. *Social Relations in Byron's Eastern Tales* (Vancouver: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press)

Watson, J.R. 1992. *English Poetry of the Romantic Period* (London: Longman)

---. 2003. *Romanticism and War: A Study of British Romantic Period Writers and the Napoleonic Wars* (Basingstoke: Macmillan)

Woof, Robert 2003. *Byron: a Dangerous Romantic?* (Kendal: The Wordsworth Trust)