

## Survey British Literature and Culture (part 6): From the Second World War to the New Millennium

Time: TUE 10-12 / Philosophie-Gebäude, H4

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The lecture will offer an advanced introduction to the literatures and cultures of the British Isles (and Britain's former colonies) in the long period from the late 1930s to the second decade of the new millennium.

*Programmatic context:* The lecture is part of a cycle of lectures that the Chair of English Literature and British Cultural Studies (Lehrstuhl für Englische Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft) provides under the umbrella title 'Survey British Literature and Culture.' Designed to provide an overview of the most important periods, developments, texts and phenomena in literary and cultural history, the cycle consists in a sequence of lectures that begins with the early modern period and progresses until the very present. The focus is on the literatures and cultures of the British Isles. However, an effort will always be made to address the world-wide impact of British imperial/ist policies and the evolution of Anglophone literatures all around the globe. Indeed, a final lecture in the cycle systematically discusses the New Literatures in English produced in the context of postcoloniality and migration.

### **READING REQUIREMENTS:**

In preparation for the lecture (that is: already *before* the beginning of the lecture period), participants are strongly advised to read the respective sections in Paul Poplawski, ed., *English Literature in Context*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017) – see especially the following chapter: John Brannigan, "The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries, 1939-2015" (541-618) [file to be found on WueCampus].

Moreover, students will be expected to have read *at least TWO* of the following literary (key) texts by the end of the lecture period:

- George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937)
- George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)
- Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Engl. premiere in 1955)
- John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1956)
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)
- John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969)
- Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine* (1979)

- Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)
- Sarah Kane, *Blasted* (1995)
- Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)
- Zadie Smith, *NW* (2012)

The lecture offers students a basis for extensive self-directed reading not only of seminal literary texts but also of respective scholarly accounts. The bibliography at the end of this syllabus provides first suggestions for such reading.

### PROGRAMME:

Please visit the WUECAMPUS course room immediately after registering for the lecture and then at least once a week. For each course week/topic, there is an open DISCUSSION FORUM on WueCampus. This is where comments and queries can be posted.

This programme lists only the TEXTS SELECTED as *key examples* for the lecture. These texts, I believe, are good examples of dispositions or trends in the literature and culture of their times. Please, read and prepare as many as possible. Of course, the selection is quite restrictive. Other important texts will be mentioned in the lecture.

#### 22/10 Introduction / The Thirties

George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937)

- ❖ ASSIGNED READING: Brannigan, "The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," 541-566 [WueCampus]

#### 29/10 The Second World War and the Post-War Moment

Cecil Day Lewis, "Where Are the War Poets" (1943) [WueCampus]

Virginia Woolf, "Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid" (1940) [WueCampus]

George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

- ❖ ASSIGNED READING: Brannigan, "The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," 566-593

#### 05/11 Contextualization & reflection I

[Preparation: Please post your comments and questions in the DISCUSSION FORUM by 03/11.]

#### 12/11 The Fifties

Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (Engl. premiere 1955)

John Osborne, *Look Back in Anger* (1956)

- ❖ ASSIGNED READING: Brannigan, "The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries," 594-618

19/11 **The Sixties**

Philip Larkin, "Annus Mirabilis" (1967/1974) [WueCampus]

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966)

26/11 **Contextualization & reflection II**

[Preparation: Please post your comments and questions in the DISCUSSION FORUM by 24/11.]

03/12 **The Seventies**

Linton Kwesi Johnson, "Bass Culture" (1975/80) [WueCampus]

John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969)

10/12 **The Eighties**

Caryl Churchill, *Cloud Nine* (1979)

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)

17/12 **Contextualization & reflection III**

[Preparation: Please post your comments and questions in the DISCUSSION FORUM by 15/12.]

[Christmas break]

07/01 **The Nineties**

Sarah Kane, *Blasted* (1995)

14/01 **The 'New Millennium' I:**

**Contexts -- National reinvention and nationalist regression**

21/01 **The 'New Millennium' II:**

**International British literature and Black British literature**

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

Zadie Smith, *NW* (2012)

28/01 **Revision and Conclusion**

04/02, 14-16: **Final test** – room TBA

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:**

★ → These titles are especially recommended as first introductions or general study aids.

All titles are held by the university library. Some can be accessed online (see respective information in the list). Wherever I think that students might generally profit from actually buying a title, I have indicated an approximate price (but this is not to say that the respective books *need* to be bought for taking part in the lecture).

**1) Particularly useful as basic reading for the lecture:**

★ Poplawski, Paul, ed. *English Literature in Context*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017.

[C. € 29,-, but a used copy of the 1st edition would do almost as well.]

→ For the present lecture, see especially chapter 7 ("The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries, 1939-2015") and perhaps also chapter 8 ("Postcolonial Literature in English"). [WueCampus.]

★ Vernon, James. *Modern Britain: 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017).

[C. € 22,-.]

[Vernon offers a comprehensive survey of modern 'British' history that puts a particular emphasis on social history and social politics. Designed for (slightly advanced) students, this is certainly the best book of its kind.]

→ For the present lecture, see parts IV ("1931–1976: Society Triumphant") and V ("1976–: A New Liberalism?").

**2) General reference:**

★ See especially the various reference works accessible/searchable through the website *Oxford Reference*: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/>. [Accessible online through the university's intranet.]

Nünning, Ansgar, ed. *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie*. 5th ed. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2013. [Accessible online through UBW.]

**3) Study aids in literary studies:**

★ Baldick, Chris. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. 4th ed. Oxford UP, 2015. [Accessible online through *Oxford Reference*. / c. € 14,- / any used ed. will do.]

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. 1997. 2nd ed. Oxford: OUP, 2011.

**4) General histories of literature etc.:**

Nowak, Helge. *Literature in Britain and Ireland: A History*. Tübingen: Francke, 2010. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Seeber, Hans Ulrich, and Ingo Berensmeyer, eds. *Englische Literaturgeschichte*. 5th rev. ed. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2012. [Accessible online through UBW.]

### 5) Specific works on the literature of the 'period':

Bradbury, Malcolm. *The Modern British Novel*. 1993. London: Penguin, 1994.

[Still standard reading on the topic!]

Falci, Eric. *The Cambridge Introduction to British Poetry, 1945-2010*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Görtschacher, Wolfgang, and David Malcolm, eds. *A Companion to Contemporary British and Irish Poetry, 1960-2015*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2021. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Nicol, Bran. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodern Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Nünning, Ansgar. *Der englische Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Klett, 1998.

### 6) History / Cultural history / 'Contexts':

Black, Jeremy. *A History of the British Isles*. 1996. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003.

Cannon, John. *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997 [and later reissues/editions]. [Accessible online through UBW.]

★ Cunliffe, Barry, et al. *The Penguin Illustrated History of Britain and Ireland: From Earliest Times to the Present Day*. London: Penguin, 2004.

★ Higgins, Michael, Clarissa Smith, and John Storey, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Malpas, Simon. *The Postmodern*. The New Critical Idiom. London: Routledge, 2004. [Accessible online through UBW.]

McHale, Brian. *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Morgan, Kenneth O. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*. 1984. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Morgan, Kenneth O. *Twentieth-century Britain: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000. [Accessible online through UBW.]

Sandbrook, Dominic. *The Great British Dream Factory: The Strange History of Our National Imagination*. London: Allen Lane, 2015.