Dear All.

Welcome to Oxford. We are very much looking forward to working with you for your degree, and meeting you next term. This document provides the lists of reading to be covered in preparation for your first term in Oxford. We are also attaching a separate introductory explanation of the tutorial teaching system, which outlines what is expected of you.

The English and Modern Languages course in Year 1 consists of 4 papers (Oxford nomenclature for examined parts of the course). Two of these are in your chosen modern language, and your tutors on that side of the course will be in touch with you about these. For English, there are two papers that you will cover in Year 1:

**Paper 1 (Introduction to Language and Literature)** – taught across the year.

**AND** a choice between **Paper 4: Modern Literature** (studied in Hilary (Spring) term) **OR Paper 2: Early Medieval Literature** (a mix of language and literature work in Michaelmas (autumn) Term and essays in Hilary Term).

In terms of planning the year, you should have a read through the various reading lists, and then decide which course you would like to do from the choices above, and let us know before the art of the academic year. Do contact us if you would like to discuss!

Before you arrive, it’s a good idea to read as widely as possible from the attached reading lists. Many of these books will be available online once you get your access codes for the Bodleian though you can find a lot on google books or in cheap editions via Abe books. Get into the habit now of reading critically and carefully, and of making notes on anything you read, either in the margin of the text, or the end-papers (as long as it’s not a library book!) or on a separate sheet of paper or electronically. If you are reading electronic texts, use the note-taking function. You will find that reading attentively during the vacations in Oxford makes the terms much easier. For print texts, one method is to use the blank pages and inside cover at the front of the edition to keep track of topics. (This has the advantage of keeping everything in the one volume.). You should, for example, have entries for major characters, for the narrator (if there is one), for significant examples of narrative technique (flashback, prolepsis, ellipsis …), and for topics. The texts themselves will to a large extent guide you in this latter category, but here are some standard examples: gender, class, race, death, marriage, servants, money, colonialism, war, pity, anger, elegy, love (of various kinds) – see the possible topics for Paper 3 tutorials and classes. So, you will end up with entries which look something like:

servants—51, 65, 72-4, 113. [And marks in the margin on the corresponding page].

You might also at this stage find it useful to buy J. A. Cuddon’s *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* or *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* ed. Chris Baldick. If you feel in need of brushing up on the basics of prosody (poetic form and metre), it would be a good idea to read Jeffrey Wainwright, *Poetry: The Basics*, 3rd edn (2015). It will be available freely online via the Bodleian Library once you have your Bodleian card (issued to you at the start of your first term). Malcolm Hebron’s *Mastering the Language of
Literature (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) is also a useful purchase, especially in view of the commentary element it contains (this forms part of the number of the papers which you will cover in the first year, as well as later). Ideally, we should like you to at least skim read two books about Literary Studies, Terry Eagleton’s Literary Theory: An Introduction (1983) and An Introduction to Literature, Criticism, and Theory by Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle. Both are available in paperback.

You should of course get into the habit of using a good English dictionary (not a concise one). The complete Oxford English Dictionary will be available to you electronically and free of charge, once you are at Oxford. Do get in touch with us if you have any urgent questions—otherwise we’ll see you in October. In the meantime, we hope you have a good and productive summer, in spite of the unusual circumstances in which we all currently find ourselves.

Best wishes,

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READING LISTS

Paper 1

This paper is an introduction to critical concepts and problems in both literature and language, and will introduce you to ways of reading and analysis which will be useful in all your subsequent work on literature and language. It has two parts: Section A: English Language; Section B: Approaches to Literature. The paper as a whole will be examined by a portfolio in your third term (Trinity). There will also be plenty of time for revision sessions early in that term before the question paper is issued.

Core texts: Section A

This will be taught across Michaelmas 2020 and Hilary Term 2021. If possible, try and read these texts** before you arrive in Oxford. Our first class will be on persuasion, language, and constructing identity.


Additional background reading:


Prelims Paper 2: Early Medieval Literature 650–1350

Covering a period of some seven centuries, Prelims Paper 2 gives you the opportunity to study the beginnings of English literature from the time at which Christian missionaries introduced technologies of writing to the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of Britain in the seventh century. Most of the work for this paper will focus on Old English literature produced during the Anglo-Saxon period (c. 650–c. 1100), but we shall also have the opportunity to look at the literature produced in England in the period after the Norman
Conquest in 1066 and consider the effects that the Norman invasion might have had upon the history of English literature.

Work for this paper is divided between classes aimed at developing your appreciation of the language of early medieval texts and tutorials in which we shall consider thematic and contextual aspects of the literature. This structure is replicated in your end of year prelims exam, in which you will be required to write two essays on a range of topics/texts and one critical commentary on the language of an extract from the set texts. For the Old English period there are four set texts, all poems, which we shall be studying in detail over the course of the year: *The Dream of the Rood*, *The Wanderer*, *The Battle of Maldon*, and an extract from the long poem *Beowulf*. Whilst you will need to know these texts particularly well, we shall also be looking at a wider range of early medieval English texts, and you are encouraged to read as widely as possible in the literature of the period covered and to familiarize yourself with the historical contexts from which it originates.

Detailed reading lists for this paper will be provided in Michaelmas Term but it would be helpful to start thinking about the literature of this period now. Below are some starting points which you should explore:

☐ The most famous work of literature from the period covered by this paper is the Old English poem *Beowulf*. You should read a modern English translation of this poem as soon as possible to get a feel for the style of Old English poetry. There are many published translations (including the recently published one by Pembroke alumnus J. R. R. Tolkien), but I would recommend *Beowulf: A Prose Translation*, trans. E. Talbot Donaldson, ed. Nicholas Howe (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2002), which contains some excellent background information and some critical perspectives on the poem, which you should certainly also read.

☐ A short, but valuable, introduction to the history and culture of the earlier period studied for this paper is John Blair’s *The Anglo-Saxon Age: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2000). Two further accessible studies of the literature of this period are Hugh Magennis’ *The Cambridge Introduction to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011) and Mark C. Amodio’s *The Anglo-Saxon Literature Handbook* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013). It would be very useful if you could look through one or more of these in preparation for this paper. For the post-Conquest period, the best short introduction is Elaine Treharne’s *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020–1220* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).


**Prelims Paper 1B (Approaches to Literature)**

You’ll attend classes and tutorials across Michaelmas and Hilary Terms for Prelims Paper 1B, and will submit a piece of coursework for examination. Paper 1 is an introduction to the discipline. We’ll weigh up and question our practices and methodologies—Paper 1 is about being aware of the work we do as scholars. The skills you learn in Paper 1 will inform your research for the period papers over your three years at Oxford. We’ll discuss topics such as canon formation, literature and identity, and the use we make of historical context, to name a few. You’ll read a range of theoretical and literary texts for this course, and will think about the ways in which
they illuminate and complicate one another. If you have any questions during the vac, don’t hesitate to get in touch (ushashi.dasgupta@pmb.ox.ac.uk).

Happy reading!

General preparation

This course is designed to introduce you to key ideas in critical theory—a challenging but rewarding area of literary studies. To get ready for our conversations about how we read and interpret literature, please go through Peter Barry’s Beginning Theory cover to cover, preferably in its most recent edition. It’s a comprehensive and accessible introduction to major schools of theory. You might also want to get a flavour for the theory itself over the vac. Some of the reading for this course will be drawn from Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan’s Literary Theory: An Anthology. Please dip into this anthology if you can—once you are assigned an Oxford log-in, you should be able to access an electronic version via our library platform, SOLO. You could also try David Lodge and Nigel Wood’s Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader. These anthologies will give you a sense of where to go for further reading once you’ve explored material in class.

First class: Week One

The first compulsory lecture, and our corresponding class, is entitled ‘What is Literature (…and Who Decides)?’. For this class, please read:

(1) the interview and extracts provided below.
(2) https://www.millsandboon.co.uk/np/Content/ContentPage/8.
(3) any Mills & Boon novel you can find.
(4) Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s Americanah (2013). This novel can also be used for Prelims Paper 4.

I’ll circulate some further literary and theoretical extracts closer to the time.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Americanah (2013)

Adichie in conversation with Zadie Smith, 2014, ‘Between the Lines’ at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

ZS: Romantic relationships in your books are not a light matter. You spoke a little bit in a certain interview about Mills & Boon as, in some way, a context for this book. But I was thinking also of Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God, it’s structured on a series of romances… It seems like a light structure but actually it’s a really profound question… the women in your books, they do make choices…
CNA: Did you read Mills & Boon when you were growing up?
ZS: No, I never did… my mother… banned… from the house.
CNA: Ah! That’s terrible… growing up, even if my mother had… it had nothing to do with my mother… kids, we just found a way… every girl who grew up in Nsukka when I was growing up read Mills & Boon, and I think I read maybe 200.

ZS: In those books girls wait, no? Your girls don’t wait.

CNA: …This is in the grand tradition of Mills & Boon, but also its the anti-Mills & Boon. Because it took me a little while to realise that I really don’t like the Mills & Boon format, where the man decides... the destiny of the relationship is in the hands of the man. And it’s OK as well if they meet and don't like each other, then he grabs her at some point, and she melts. And I just thought, you know, that idea that women’s sexuality… that a woman can’t own her sexuality, can’t own her choices, and I thought, you know, this is the anti-Mills and Boon in many ways… the women in my world don’t have to wait because they’re women.

ZS: Maybe it’s that difference Alice Walker pointed out so many years ago between feminine and woman or womanly or womanist, that idea of not being someone who’s just passive, waiting to be taken… something that acts in the world.

CNA: Waiting to be saved and dragged, to which the only appropriate response is melting against him, right? Nobody thinks, well, how about a slap or something.


“…For a long time I’ve wanted to write about two things: a love story that doesn’t apologise for being a love story, in the grand tradition of the Mills & Boon novel; and I also wanted to write about race in America. I hadn’t felt ready until now.”


“He pulled her to him. She moaned and collapsed,” says Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in a stage whisper, throwing back her head and clutching her cheek in a mock display of passion.

The Nigerian novelist is not - fans of her 2007 Orange Prize Winning novel Half of a Yellow Sun will be relieved to hear - reading from her new book, Americanah. Instead, we are discussing her guilty pleasure: Mills & Boon.

“Between the ages of 13 and 16, I must have read a thousand,” she admits. “Some had risqué covers, where the woman was showing more breast. I thought they were fun. But when I look back now, I realise there was a lot of misogyny.”

It's part of the reason that Adichie, 35, has made love the central theme of Americanah - albeit with a feisty female central character, rather than a simpering, gasping heroine.

“We live in an age where, if you write a love story, it has to be ironic or have a twist,” she explains. “But I just wanted to write an old-fashioned romance.”

The novel follows Ifemelu, a young Nigerian woman who leaves her country and childhood sweetheart Obinze, to study in America. Over the ensuing decade, before she returns to Lagos, she embarks on a journey of self-discovery. Issues of race and immigration become central to her story, as Ifemelu discovers what it's like to be a non American Black in America. She's a wry, vivid character - albeit flawed - of who Adichie says, “she's a more interesting version of me.”
You’ll study the Modern paper (‘Literature in English, 1910 to the Present Day’) during your second term at Oxford, but you may wish to get a flavour of the course in advance – it may be especially useful to get a few of longer works under your belt at an earlier stage. None of the texts for this paper are compulsory, and what follows is a partial list – but if you do wish to write about them this year, we think it best to give you the chance to read ahead!

WH Auden, poems.
Elizabeth Bishop, poems.
EE Cummings, poems.
TS Eliot, poems.
EM Forster, *A Passage to India* (1924).
James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914), *Ulysses* (1918-20).
Philip Larkin, poems.
Derek Walcott, *Another Life* (1973), *Omeros* (1990), and other poems.
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *Orlando* (1928),
WB Yeats, poems.

**ENGLISH AT PEMBROKE**

**Tutorial preparation and workload**
The tutorial is at the centre of an Oxford education. It requires all students to have read widely on the topic set for the week and to have produced a piece of work – in the form of an essay, commentary, or oral presentation as set by the tutor concerned -- in advance.

Reading widely and allowing yourself time to think about the topic is important; you should be working, on average, an 8-hour day during term. How you organize that day is up to you. **Tutorials** are the non-negotiable elements in your timetable. Most -- but not all -- **lectures** are optional, and we strongly advice attendance at c. 5-6 per week (shaping a programme that will best fit the range of topics you and your tutor plan to cover during the term).

Extra-curricular activities must fit around your primary commitments. Make sure you are not taking on more than you can handle, but equally make sure you are doing things that take you away from your desk, keep you healthy, and will give you a sufficiently rich hinterland over the course of your university career.

**Writing the tutorial essay:**
You should finish your reading of primary and secondary materials in time to plan, as well as to write (and read through), your essay. The first paragraph should identify the subject of the essay in sufficient detail to make it interesting to your reader; it should also isolate the primary problems of interpretation as you see them. Where a prompt question or quotation has been given, the opening paragraph should consider that
prompt carefully, cross-examine it, and perhaps challenge its terms. The core of the essay should develop and, where relevant, adjudicate on those problems in clearly differentiated paragraphs.

It is generally a good idea to place the simpler matters near the start of the essay, in order to allow the argument to develop in complexity and interest. The conclusion should not be a straight summary or reiteration of what has been said (as would be valid in many Social Science and Science subjects): it should offer a stylish bringing together of the most important insights in the essay and/or a satisfying twist on the original problem. ‘Stylish’ does not mean ‘rhetorical’: well-argued, logical, informed criticism is greatly preferable to wind-baggery! A good essay is a carefully honed argument which uses evidence appropriately to support and develop different aspects of the argument in relation to the question.

The essay should not summarize plot or content, and it should not seek to incorporate everything you have found out. Keep a full set of notes on your week’s reading that will be your reference point for future revision and reference. The essay should concentrate on answering the problem it has set for itself, and make use of the views of critics *in so far as they serve that purpose*. Only cite a critic when they are saying something you could not say on your own authority, or offering a well-worded insight that you can nuance or that you wish to contest. Critics are often most useful when they seem to you interestingly wrong, or interestingly not-quite-right.

Always attribute material and quotations and make sure that your notes differentiate between your own ideas and comments, and those of critics. Plagiarism always incurs penalties, even when this is done unintentionally. Underline titles of books and journals (or put in italics).

Stretch your vocabulary, where relevant: you need to develop sufficient knowledge of technical terms to give an accurate account of language use, genre, prosody, literary theory, and so forth. You also need to develop a sense of where pithy directness of judgement is more effective than technical description. Your style should increasingly feel like (and be) your own. Avoid clichés, undue colloquialism, vague personal appreciation of a piece of literature, and ‘Therefore, it can be seen that’!

There isn’t a rigid answer to the question of length. 4-5 sides of typed A4, double or 1.5 spaced (never single line spacing please!) is usually about right (c.2,000 -2,500 words), but your tutor may impose different requirements so check if you are unsure. Some tutors will request hand-written essays on the grounds that most of you will
have to hand-write your examination papers at the end of the first (and the third) year, so there are substantial benefits to ‘keeping your hand in’ in this respect. Please number all pages of the essay, write your name at the top of the page, and leave ample margins for tutor’s comments.

Your essay should conclude with a list of the books you have read. This should be reasonably professional in form, and always include author, title and (at least) date of publication. When you cite a particular work, give the publication details and the page cited in a footnote. Details of how to reference are given in the Undergraduate Handbooks. Go to www.english.ox.ac.uk -> Current Students and Staff (Undergraduates) -> Course Handbooks and Specifications, or see the essential *Cite Them Right* by Richard Pears and Graham Shield (10th edn, 2016).

Most tutors are happy to have essays emailed to them, though handwritten ones will need to be handed in at the Porter’s Lodge for the attention of the relevant tutor. Most tutors will want to see work before the tutorial but this can vary; some are happy for you to bring the essay to the tutorial. If in doubt, check with the tutor.

**The tutorial itself**

Punctuality is important. Essays must be on time, and you must be on time for your tutorial session (preferably waiting outside the door a few minutes in advance). Most tutorials are paired (i.e. the tutor meets with two students for an hour), but there may be occasions on which students’ choices of specialist options or the teaching needs of particular individuals make it sensible to see some students in a 3 and others as ‘singletons’ for a week.

The tutorial should be a conversation between tutor and students, in the course of which all participants will develop a deeper understanding of the problems addressed in your written work—with a chance, also, to broaden out and discuss other important aspects of the subject in hand. The quality of the tutorial will be substantially affected by how much work you have done in preparation, and by how much thought you put into your essay. A good tutorial should be invigorating for all those involved.

The tutorial is not the occasion for a mini-lecture by the tutor. Obviously, the tutor will correct errors of fact and misunderstanding, and suggest ways to improve your argument or interpretation. However, tutors will also try to test the strength of your argument by asking you questions not considered in your essay, and moving the discussion in new directions. Much of the conversation is likely to be advanced (on
either side) by observations in the form ‘Yes, but …’. The essential thing is to be positively engaged in the process. In most cases, the work you do for tutorials will not form part of your summative assessment (it is not examined, and in the main you will not be given a mark): it is a chance for you to try new methodological approaches, new ideas, new styles, and to receive constructive feedback—which may at times also mean appropriately robust feedback.

**Feedback:**
Tutors employ different methods and styles of teaching: some will mark all written work in advance; others will mark one of the essays for a paired tutorial and ask the other student to read their work aloud. In either model, you can expect to receive feedback on your work in written and oral form on the day of the tutorial or very soon after (certainly within a week, since the feedback should influence how you go about your next piece of work). Read the comments on essays carefully and use them to improve or extend your command of the material or essay technique.

If you are unhappy with the way in which your tutorials are progressing, or with the quality or intelligibility of the feedback you are receiving, it is vital that you try to express this to the tutor in the first instance. If there is ever a serious problem with tutorial quality (we hope there will not be) you can take your concerns to the Academic Office.