

English 369: The Novel
London in Fiction and Drama
Draft Syllabus for Study Abroad Proposal
London Fall 2024
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NOTE:

Even though this course is not one I have taught before and has been developed specifically for this proposal, this draft syllabus is probably closer than the syllabus for the Shakespeare course to the syllabus that would actually be used, given the dynamic possibilities inherent in a changing theatre schedule that might affect the course on Shakespeare. But there are certainly ways that this course could also flex in response to opportunities that would change the syllabus. First, I have made extensive use of London as a living lab, scheduling visits to key museums and historical sites. This schedule will undoubtedly change, as new opportunities from special exhibitions open up and other itineraries look less important because students have done the things suggested as class activities on their own. Second, although most of the reading for the course is fiction, I have assigned three plays, Thomas Dekker's *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1598), Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) and George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912), perhaps better known in its incarnation as the musical *My Fair Lady* (1956); the first is an example of the 'city comedy' which captures the flavor of London in the Elizabethan and Jacobean period better than any prose fiction from the period; the last two capture London at its apogee in importance in the late Victorian and Edwardian period. It is easy to imagine these being changed or slightly reshuffled in order to take advantage of productions taking place during the semester. *Pygmalion* is being performed in London right now in 2023, but unfortunately this probably makes a performance in Fall 2024 less likely. Any number of other city comedies would work as well as the one I have chosen, and I would gladly substitute a city comedy (by Jonson or Middleton or others) we could see for one that we couldn't. In the same vein, although *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the best known of Wilde's major plays, there are others that are just as good, both as plays and as illustrations of the London of this era, so if *An Ideal Husband* or *Lady Windermere's Fan* were produced during the semester, I would be happy to make this change. In the same vein, it is easy to imagine other theatrical productions—plays by Noel Coward or

Tom Stoppard come to mind—that I would love to have the students see if they were on when we were in London, whether or not we also read them as well, and a production of *My Fair Lady* might serve as a substitute for—not a complement to—reading Shaw’s original play.

Course Description:

If you are tired of London, you are tired of life, Samuel Johnson famously declared 250 years ago. No longer the world’s largest city, as it was in Johnson’s time, it is still one of the most fascinating, a city with possibly the best museums in the world, and certainly the best free ones, perhaps the best performing arts in the world (and certainly the best English-language theatre), and a cosmopolitan melting pot (even after Brexit) that continues to be an indispensable center of world culture.

This course will focus on London as the subject and setting for literature in English, from the 14th century to the present. We will actively use London as a living laboratory, with expeditions most weeks to historically and culturally important sites in the city as well as parts of the city featured in the literature. The course will proceed chronologically, beginning with Chaucer’s “General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” and ending in the present.

This survey of writing set in London across over 600 years will serve both as an introduction to the history of London and as a survey of literature in English. I say literature in English and not just English literature, since one theme of the course is the difference between an English conception of London and the conception of London by writers in English who are not themselves English. One factor in Brexit was undoubtedly the sense of many English that London was ‘no longer theirs,’ that the most important city in the country was now more a global city than part of the English nation; the issues and tensions here are complex and they are not new. Students and faculty visiting London from the University of Hawaii are of course part of that story of globalization and its discontents, so your experience living and learning in London will not be something separate from the themes of the course.

Learning Objectives:

The student who completes the course successfully will **know**

- 1) much more about the history of English literature, having read a representative selection of texts from the 14th century to the present;

- 2) much more about London, as a city, as a setting for literature, and as one of the most important cultural centers in the world at least from 1590 to the present;
- 3) much more about fiction, in terms of its history, sub-genres, and relationship to a real place, and more about the theatre, the relation between playscript and live theatre, and the performance culture of English theatre today;

will **do** or **have done** or **have accomplished**:

- 4) the task of reading a substantial body of literature from a number of different periods, and will have seen some of these works live in the theatre;
- 5) a great deal of in-class discussion of the themes of these works, enhancing his or her ability to discuss and interpret literary works and debate issues raised by them;
- 6) three essays developing his or her power to analyze literary and dramatic texts;

will (or should) **value**

- 7) the importance of a major city in the life of the mind;
- 8) the role of such major cities in creating the globalized culture of the present day, against which we are experiencing a backlash (or 'whitelash');
- 9) fiction and drama as important parts of our imaginative inheritance and cultural tradition.

In addition to these course objectives which would be valid for this course if taught on the Mānoa campus, courses in the Study Abroad Program have certain common course objectives that reflect the goals of Study Abroad. Students in a Study Abroad Program should gain 1) a deeper knowledge and understanding of other cultures and their environments; 2) different perspectives in regard to other nations; 3) increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints; and 4) increased respect and tolerance for differences. These goals are closely aligned with the goals of every course I teach. The first two are essentially content goals, the second two method goals. As my classes are always Socratic discussions in a seminar format, the very format of the class necessarily enhances the method goals of being able to work through complex issues with an enhanced appreciation of and ability to handle difference. And with the crucial addition of other times to other cultures and other nations, students in every class I teach will gain a deeper knowledge and understanding and different perspectives on other

cultures, other nations, and other periods in history. But obviously, these objectives take on particular force in a Study Abroad context: the students are gaining that deeper knowledge and appreciation simply by their experiences in a foreign country, and the cross-registration in which students from various programs would be taking courses together will present students with even more disparate viewpoints and differences than they would have at home.

So from those four objectives of Study Abroad come four additional learning objectives for this course:

1. In the extended encounter with the history of London and literature in English across the centuries, the student who completes the course will learn an enormous amount about his or her own cultural values and biases and how this may affect his or her ability to work with others.
2. He or she will learn a tremendous amount about that very different cultural perspective.
3. Successful participation in class will necessarily include and involve appropriate and effective communication with diverse individuals and groups.
4. The completion of the essay assignments will necessarily increase the student's capacity to analyze issues with an appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

It perhaps goes without saying that the process of studying in London, visiting its historical sites, museums and theatres, and of course the experience of living in the intense multicultural and global space that is London will reinforce all of these objectives and specific course learning objectives. The final text we will read for the course, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, is an example of the contemporary literature referred to as "Black British," a catch-all term for work from writers resident in Britain with roots from around the world, and this immersion in Black British literature is simultaneously an immersion in the culture of globalization.

Course Format:

This course will be run as a seminar in which all students are expected to come to class having done the assigned reading and come prepared to discuss that reading. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum, only engaged in at those moments where some contextual background is essential to understanding the text or to introduce key concepts. In addition to seminar discussions on the reading, we will also spend a fair amount of time seeing historical sites and museums in London; these are part of the class, not 'extras.' These expeditions should also be thought of as discussions, if peripatetic ones: I will

be posing questions, not delivering answers, and the key to successful visits to these sites will be your engagement with them.

Textbooks:

Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall* (Fourth Estate)

Thomas Dekker, *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (Bloomsbury)

Daniel Defoe, *Journal of the Plague Year* (available for free on iBooks)

Frances Burney, *Evelina* (available for free on iBooks)

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (available for free on iBooks)

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Dover)

George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion* (available for free on iBooks)

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Penguin)

Monica Ali, *Brick Lane* (Simon & Schuster)

Course Requirements and Grading

Your grade for the class will come from four different components, two of which will count for 20% of the grade, or 20 points on a 100 point scale, and two of which will count for 30%. The four components are 1) attendance and participation in class (20%); 2) two short papers due early in the semester (30% or 15% each); 3) a longer paper due during the final week of classes (25%); 4) a final project due during the final exam period (25%).

Attendance and Participation in Class:

The quality of the class will be created in large measure by your attendance and participation in class. It is not what I bring to each class but what you bring which will make the biggest difference. So I expect everyone to be in class, having completed the assigned reading and with questions (not answers) about what we have read. Attendance is mandatory: you are permitted two unexcused absences, and absences will be excused only for situations in which you have written documentation for university-related obligations, accidents, illnesses or emergencies. You will lose a point in your overall grade for every unexcused absence above the approved limit.

I expect participation in class. Come prepared to discuss (not debate), come prepared to ask questions, come prepared to rethink your perspective, on the

play, on the issues in the play, even on life. This is why we have classes. If you are not naturally active in class discussions, let's discuss how we can create an environment in which this changes. I am happy to give anyone in class a 'status check' on my assessment of their class participation grade halfway through the semester.

The class will be a mixture of seminar discussion of written texts and visits to key locations in London, including possibly some visits to see live theatre.. Participation in discussion by all students is essential to the success of the discussion, and obviously participation is impossible without attendance. On the field trips to the location, attendance is even more essential, as there will be literally no class unless you are present.

The 20% assigned to attendance and participation will be split evenly between these two components (unless absences are so numerous that the attendance component is <0).

The Two Short Papers:

Each short paper will be a comparison of the themes of two works, due the class after we finish the second of each pair. The first two works we will read, *Wolf Hall* and *The Shoemaker's Holiday*, though very different in tone, both deal with the struggle between the old and the new economy, between the aristocracy and the merchant classes, between the countryside and London. Both are also 'historical' in a sense: Dekker's play is set around 150 years before it was written in 1598, while Mantel's contemporary novel is set nearly 500 years earlier, in early Tudor England. Later in the semester we will read *Evelina* and *Oliver Twist*, the first written in the 18th century and the second in the 19th, and both are centrally concerned with that fundamental English obsession, class.

I will give out some prompts for these papers in class but the basic assignment is a comparison of the themes and social stance of the two works, in a paper to be 3-5 pages.

Paper #3:

The final paper can be about any work we have read or seen for the class, and I would be open to your suggesting other works we have not read as well. There are two possible topics, and I won't set a maximum length for this paper, since there may be a lot to write about, but it should be at least 6 pages.

The first topic is to connect one of the works we have read to its physical setting. How important is the physical setting? How fully is it depicted? How accurately is it depicted? If the setting plays an important role in the action, almost a character in its own right, what is that role? And what attitude

towards the setting is implicit or explicit in the work? Does the meaning or impact of the work change if one knows the physical location in the way you probably didn't at the beginning of the semester but do by the time you write the paper? These are probably too many different issues to tackle in a single paper, but tackle the subset of them that interest you the most in a paper about a work of literature that relies upon London as a setting.

The second would be to discuss a performance of a play that you have seen this semester, either as part of the class or on your own. (This does not have to be one of the plays we read for the class.) I will be distributing in class a 'check list' containing some of the aspects of the live production you should be considering, but roughly the issues fall in two categories: aspects of the production which strike you as bringing the play to life in the theatre, and aspects of the production which strike you as embodying the production's interpretation of the play. In the first category, what choices were made about sets, props, costumes? Was music used in the play? How did the acting bring scenes to life as opposed to your experience reading the play? In the second, what choices were made about casting, in terms of gender, race, age, appearance that strike you as different or surprising? Was the entire play performed? Was any of the text changed? Which of the choices described in the first category strike you as modifying or interpreting the play? Setting *Romeo and Juliet* as the story of gangs in New York City in the 1950s, as in *West Side Story*, is a classic example of a transformative production, so transformative that it constitutes another work of art. Where is the production you are writing about on the faithful to transformative continuum? My strong advice would be to see the play you wish to write about a second time if possible: re-read or read the play between the two performances and go to the play with a list of things to look for and think about the second time.

A Note on all the papers:

Regardless of your major or proposed career, the ability to produce high quality, error-free prose in English is an important life and workplace skill, so the quality of the writing in the papers will be a concern as well as the content. I reserve the option of asking for papers to be revised and resubmitted, and where I see issues with student writing, I will work with the student one-on-one to identify and address the issues.

Final Project:

You will have had a rich experience of English literature and history, of the city of London, of the theatre, and of living in England in ways that will deepen your apprehension of all of the aspects of the semester.

For your final project, I would like to see a record of all your experiences during the semester that seem relevant to the themes of the course. We will as a class visit quite a few important cultural sites, and the record would have as its core your reaction to these. I am particularly interested in seeing how your perception of a work of literature changes when you know its physical setting. It should include substantive reactions to all of your visits to the theatre, not just the productions we saw as a class. It should also include the historical and cultural sites you visit this semester outside of class (in London or elsewhere if you travel) with whatever reflections you have on these experiences. This can be a traditional paper journal or something more contemporary involving multimedia—your choice as long as it is in a form I can access at the end of the semester.

Class by class Schedule

- Aug 26: Introduction to the course
- 28: Visit to the Museum of London Docklands
- Sept 2: Chaucer, from the “General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales” (lines 1-42 & 715-858); Visit to Southwark, including Southwark Cathedral and the Globe Theatre
- 4: Hilary Mantel, *Wolf Hall*
- 9: Visit to Hampton Court
- 11: Mantel
- 16: Visit to the National Portrait Gallery
- 18: Dekker, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*
- 23: The Banqueting Hall, St. James Park and Palace
- 25: Daniel Defoe, *Journal of the Plague Year*; paper #1 due
- 30: Trip to Greenwich
- Oct 2: Defoe (skip 289-357 of 590)
- 7: Walking tour of City Churches: Monument to St. Paul’s
- 9: Burney, Book 1 of *Evelina* (Letters 1-31)
- 14: Visit to the Wellington Museum—Apsley House
- 16: Dickens, *Oliver Twist*

- 21: Visit to the Dickens Museum
- 23: Dickens
- 28: Visit to the Wallace Collection
- 30: Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*; paper #2 due
- Nov 4: George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*
- 6: Visit to Victoria and Albert Museum to see the theatre collections formerly in the London Theatre Museum
- 11: Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
- 13: Woolf
- 18: Visit to the Imperial War Museum
- 20: Woolf
- 25: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*
- Dec 2: Ali
- 4: Trip to the East End

Dec 9-12 Study Days and Final Exam period: final paper and final project due

Additional Resources:

Participating in a Study Abroad program requires that the student abide by the rules and regulations of the Study Abroad program in addition to those that all UH students need to abide by.

If you consider that you need a reasonable accommodation because of the impact of a disability, please contact the KOKUA program (956-7511 or 956-7612). It is located in Room 013 of QLC, and although the program will work with students remotely, it would obviously be preferable to be in contact before leaving O'ahu. I will be happy to work with you and the KOKUA program to meet your access needs related to a documented disability.

Please do not take this class if you cannot attend regularly and cannot be present for the entire course. I understand emergencies happen, so please let me know if you find yourself in an extraordinary situation.

My office hours are listed above. If you need to see me and those times don't work, please email me or speak to me before or after class or call me during

office hours to set up an alternative time to meet. I am happy to discuss ideas for papers, questions or thoughts about the reading, and questions or concerns about how the course is going for you.

I expect the written work presented for a grade to be your original work. If you draw on the work of others, that indebtedness needs to be documented through proper attribution. If you have any questions about that process or its opposite—plagiarism—please see me before you turn in work to be graded. I am not requiring the use of secondary sources in the papers for the course but I certainly encourage it for the final paper and many topics will be very difficult to pursue without research using secondary sources. In such a case, proper documentation of your sources is essential, and the MLA Handbook is an appropriate guide to such documentation.

Course grades for this course will be reported using pluses and minuses. The Grade Scale:

A+ 97-100 A 93-96 A- 90-92

B+ 87-89 B 83-86 B- 80-82

C+ 77-79 C 73-76 C- 70-72

D+ 67-69 D 63-66 D- 60-62

F <60

Please remember that if you are an English major, you need to receive at least a C for this course to count towards your degree requirements in English.

Incompletes will be given only if 1) you are unable to finish the final paper or take the exam because of a medical emergency or personal or family crisis; and 2) you make a written request in advance of failing to submit the work and we are able to discuss your request.