



**LT322 CONTEMPORARY BRITISH  
FICTION**  
IES Abroad London

**DESCRIPTION:**

This course is designed to provide participants with an opportunity to read and study contemporary British fiction around the theme of being embattled. The texts under scrutiny range from novels about the World Wars, post-2nd WW challenges and speculative (ir)realities to fictions about the societal demands that have resulted from the changing nature of Britain - dystopian, political, feminist and postcolonial writings. The authors - ranging from British novelist, Pat Barker to Japanese/British Nobel Prize-winning Kazuo Ishiguro and ground-breaking fantasy author, Susanna Clarke - all demonstrate that the novel, as a literary form, is successful in engaging with complex realities. Through reading, critical analysis, presenting reviews and essays on the different texts, the students will gain more insight into the strengths of the modern British novel and discover some of the best stylists writing today.

**CREDITS:** 3 credits

**CONTACT HOURS:** 45 hours

**LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION:** English

**PREREQUISITES:** Students will not be expected to have any prior acquaintance with these texts but they must be prepared to engage with an intense reading and learning experience and to approach the material with an open mind

**ADDITIONAL COST:** None

**METHOD OF PRESENTATION:**

- Lecture
- Open Discussion
- Field Trips
- Debates

**REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:**

- Participation in class - 10%
- Review of a novel or adaptation of a novel - 20%
- Mid-term Essay - 30%
- Final Paper - 40%

**Course Element**

The course is focused on late 20th century and early 21st century novels by writers broadly classified as British - though some were born elsewhere, and most are read globally - and there is a movement through the weeks from historical fiction about the first and second world wars to 21st century writings about the contemporary moment and the speculative future. The course depends on participants reading all the set texts and taking part in group discussions and exercises to develop critical skills and appreciation of the novel form. In addition to the class sessions, there are two visits – one workshop at the Black Cultural Archives, and one trip to the British Museum - to enhance understanding of the literary texts and contexts. During the course, there are a number of visual sources available too - films of writers discussing their work, film adaptations of some of the novels - and students are encouraged to read secondary texts as time allows.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Global brilliance begins here.\*

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- Understand and appreciate the range of the Modern British Novel from late 20th century to today
- Think and write critically about the novels being studied, using a range of literary theories including feminist, postcolonial, psychoanalytic theories, and make connections with other literature they have studied
- Respond to and take part in discussions around writers' strategies – characters, plot, place, for example - and from listening to different writers develop their responses to contemporary texts
- Speak and write about the various texts, understand their cultural relevance through visits, and writing exercises.

#### ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Regular class attendance is mandatory. Irregular attendance may result in a lower grade in the course, and/or disciplinary action. The IES Abroad London class attendance policy does not allow for unexcused absences, and grades will be docked one-half letter grade for each such absence. Rare exceptions will be made for the following reasons:

- The student is too sick to attend class. In this instance, the student must call the IES Abroad Centre before class to notify any of the IES Abroad staff. It is not sufficient either to email, send a message with a friend or call the Centre after the class has started.
- A serious illness or death in the immediate family requiring a student to travel home. This requires written approval from the Centre Director before departure.

Arriving more than 10 minutes late to class may count as an unexcused absence. Immigration laws in the UK are extremely strict, and we jeopardize our legal status in hosting students who do not regularly attend class. Students who do not attend class regularly will be reported to the appropriate officials and risk dismissal from the program and deportation from the UK. If a student incurs absences representing 25% of the total class hours, they will be contacted by the Academic Programme Manager (APM) and Centre Director (CD). If these absences are made up exclusively of unexcused non-attendance, this will trigger a disciplinary review. If these absences are made up of excused non-attendance, a meeting will be held to discuss the underlying reasons for lack of attendance, and to discuss ways it can be maintained for the duration of the term. If the 25% threshold is reached due to a mixture of excused and unexcused absences, students will also be asked to attend a meeting to discuss.

#### CONTENT:

Week	Content	Assignments
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introductions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• The Modern British Novel: millennial optimism and postcolonial melancholia</li> <li>• Working together – course structure, reading, aims and assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a list of 3-5 books you've enjoyed reading. Any novels on your list? If not, do you know why?</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Historical Fictions: Pat Barker's <i>Regeneration</i> (1991)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to the themes, characters, setting.</li> <li>• Situating Pat Barker</li> <li>• Intertexts: WW1 poetry: Sassoon &amp; Owen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pat Barker's <i>Regeneration</i> pages 1-74</li> </ul>

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Historical Fictions: Pat Barker continued</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Origins and qualities of sub-genre</li> <li>Intertexts: Freud and Virginia Woolf</li> <li>Appreciating the skills involved in writing historical fiction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pat Barker's <i>Regeneration</i> pages 75- end</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Visit to the Black Cultural Archives</b>  Meeting location TBA	Andrea Levy's <i>Small Island</i>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Historical Fictions: <i>Small Island</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class work on the four main characters</li> <li>Lecture on the themes and research for SMALL ISLAND</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Andrea Levy's <i>Small Island</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Modern Dystopias: <i>High-Rise</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ideas of destroyed society</li> <li>Disciplinary Geographies: post-war transitions</li> <li>Class and close reading exercise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JG Ballard's <i>High-Rise</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Modern Dystopias: <i>Never Let Me Go</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predicting the future / diagnosing the present</li> <li>Lecture on care and care-giving in the twenty-first century</li> <li>Discussion on themes and characters of the novel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kazuo Ishiguro's <i>Never Let Me Go</i></li> </ul>

<b>Week 8</b>	<b>The Reviewers!</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class presentations on <i>Never Let Me Go</i> / <i>High-Rise</i>.</li> <li>See separate instructions on Moodle</li> </ul>	N/A
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>The World We Live Within: <i>Summer</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecture: Playing with time and the 'state' of the nation</li> <li>Close reading</li> <li>Contexts: twenty-first century media ecologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ali Smith's <i>Summer</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Visit to THE TATE MODERN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intermedial research on the themes discussed in Week 9.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N/A</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>The World We Live Without: <i>Piranesi</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lecture on the fantasy genre</li> <li>Intertexts: CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien</li> <li>Class discussion: who is Piranesi?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Susanna Clarke's <i>Piranesi</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Final Exam Preparation Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and revising main themes</li> <li>Preparation for final exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lydia Davis short story TBA</li> </ul>

#### COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Black Cultural Archives
- Tate Modern

#### REQUIRED READINGS:

- Regeneration, Pat Barker
- Small Island, Andrea Levy
- Never Let Me Go, Kazuo Ishiguro
- High-Rise, JG Ballard
- Summer, Ali Smith
- Piranesi, Susanna Clarke
- Lydia Davis short story (an extract will be given out)



All the set texts must be read in full in advance of the relevant class. Moreover, handouts from relevant critical works, newspaper articles, and reviews will be made available as necessary on Moodle.

#### RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Duckworth, A. 'Two Borrowings in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*,' *Journal of Modern Literature* Volume 27 (3) Winter, 2004. Pp. 63-67

Harris, G. 'Compulsory Masculinity, Britain and The Great War: The Literary Historical Work of Pat Barker,' *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, Volume 39 (4) 1998

Birk Laursen, O. 'Telling her a Story: Remembering Trauma in Andrea Levy's Writing,' *Entertext*, Special Issue on Andrea Levy, 9 (2012) pp. 53-68

Duff, Kim. "'House Arrest': Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, Thatcherite Council Estates, and the New Under Class". *Contemporary British Literature and Urban Space: After Thatcher*. London: Palgrave MacMillan 2014, pp. 52-86.

Ellis, A.E. 'Identity as Colonial Production in Andrea Levy's *Small Island*,' *Entertext*, Special Issue on Andrea Levy, 9 (2012) pp. 69-83

Hsu, Shou-Nan. 'Love and Care for Strangers in McEwan's *On Chesil Beach*,' *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, Volume 61 (2014) Issue 2, pp101-116

Baglama, S.H. 'Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*: The Interpellation of the Colonial Subject in Multicultural Britain,' *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture*, Volume 66 (2019).pp 77-90

Yeung, V. 'Mortality and Memory in Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*,' *Transnational Literature* Volume 9: 2 (2017) pp. 1-13

Begley, A. 'Ali Smith: 'The Art of Fiction,' *The Paris Review* Issue 221, Summer 2017.

Malzhan, M. 'Writings on the Margins: *Venus as a Boy* by Luke Sutherland,' *Studies in Scottish Literature* Volume 43 (2), 2017.

#### Books on Adaptations:

Cartmell, Deborah, and Imelda Whelehan. *The Cambridge companion to Literature on Screen*. Cambridge University Press, 2007

Della Coletta, Cristina. *When stories travel: Cross-cultural encounters between fiction and film*. JHU Press, 2012.