

SYLLABUS OF M.A. (ENGLISH), 2010

The M.A. English programme in the Institute of Distance and Open Learning, Gauhati University, aims at bringing students to the field of English literary study. This field has its own recognisable methods and vocabulary showing thus its ancient origins and its ability to absorb innumerable collective contributions as well as different concerns over time. In our programme, established canonical texts thus are required to be properly studied while additional texts are also included so that our learners, who join our programme from diverse fields of study, also gain a meaningful familiarity with the living dynamism of literary study. The focus, on the whole, is on helping our learners to acquire a firm foundation in the practices of literary analysis, a firm grasp of the strengths of literary study to address a wide range of texts, and its ability to extend beyond its own limiting borders to interact with a range of allied disciplines. Thus the programme is built around a core of recognised genres and texts.

The programme takes the learner through the study of 5 courses (Papers) in each semester, to a total of 20 courses in all. Each course (Paper) carries an academic load or weightage of 6 credits adding up to 30 credits in each semester.

The evaluation process is an attempt to both test the learner's grasp of the various courses and the depth of study as well as to make provision for the distance and open learner's needs and difficulties regarding time and distance.

Options in completing the courses in the final semester

The 30 credits of the final (4th) semester can be completed as follows :

Option I

A candidate can take all 5 courses in the examinations, equivalent to 30 credits [6 x 5].

Option II

A candidate can choose to take any 3 of the above courses (6 x 3 = 18 cr.) given in Option I, and also submit a dissertation (= 12 credits).

This dissertation can be based on a subject of her/his choice from any of the core courses,

or

on a subject taken from a list of disciplines other than English, as specified herein:

- i. Assamese (literature & language)
- ii. Mass Communications & Media Studies
- iii. Humanities and Social sciences

- Topics that come under other allied social science disciplines like folklore studies, history, philosophy, and economics will be first considered and approved by concerned disciplines for writing of the dissertation.
- Topics for interdisciplinary dissertations should focus on broadly theoretical, socio-historical or cultural areas. Guidelines pertaining to dissertations will be made available separately.

Allocation of marks

Semester-end examinations:

Examinations will be held at the end of every semester. An examination paper will carry 64 marks, with longer essay-type questions of not more than 12 marks each, and shorter questions of between 4 to 6 marks each. Together with the internal assessment of 16 marks each, **the total** out of which a student will be marked in any single course **is 80**.

Internal Assessment:

will be in the form of home assignments, objective-type tests and seminar presentations.

Note:

Presentations: Students can opt to present a seminar paper in a course at IDOL Office building in accordance with date & time to be decided by concerned faculty.

In a given semester therefore a student will be marked out of 400 (80 marks x 5 courses). In the final (4th) semester, in cases where the student opts to submit a dissertation, such dissertation will be marked out of 160 marks.

Self-assessment tests for students to practice with are available on the IDOL e-portal, 'Bodhidroom'.

Details of the programme are as follows:

Semester 1

Paper One

Literature & Social History I – The Medieval, the Early Modern & the Enlightenment 6 credits

This paper, along with Paper 6 in the second semester (Literature & Social History II), comprises a single unit which introduces students to English social and cultural history against a larger European and the global context. Students are expected to gain knowledge of the social and cultural production of texts in English and to learn here the various methods by which such seminal connections are to be made between the texts they are required to study and the contexts that invariably come to light as literary study proceeds. It is expected that students will hereby train in grasping the complex interplay of the literary and the non-literary elements that constitute literary writing.

In order that students find their study both manageable and meaningful, the three blocks detailed below cover roughly the period after the Norman Conquest till our own times in the nineteenth century. In the first part of this very wide area of study the focus turns to the earlier part of the historical background of the initial chapters of English literary history. the second part delves into the period of the early modern and traces the underlying continuities well into modern industrialised society of the late Victorian period. Students will gain a familiarity with the ideas and events that enter into the beginnings of English literary history and thus mark the trajectory of socio-cultural changes in England along some of the best known milestones on it.

Block I – Medieval

- Unit 1. Feudalism
- Unit 2. Role of the Church
- Unit 3. Towns and Urbanization

Block II – Early Modern

- Unit 1. Humanism and the English Renaissance
- Unit 2. The Print Revolution
- Unit 3. The Beginnings of Colonialism

Block III – The Enlightenment

- Unit 1. Ideas of the Enlightenment
- Unit 2. The Beginnings of Modern Democracy
- Unit 3. Colonialism to Imperialism

Paper Two

Poetry I – Chaucer to the Neoclassical poets 6 credits

The student is introduced, in this paper, to the English poetic tradition from the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer to the eighteenth-century. The paper is a companion paper to Papers 8 (2nd semester, Romantic poetry), 14 (3rd semester, Victorian poetry and 15 (3rd semester, Modern Poetry), all three of which bring the student to the study of the traditions of poetry in English. The texts prescribed for study are merely representative and must be read with the poets' other poetic writings in order that students may become clearer as to the issues involved in poetic analysis. The term-end question-paper of 64 marks will test the student's textual knowledge, besides her/his familiarity with English poetry in general and with the relevant major poetic texts.

Block I – Chaucer to Donne

- Unit 1. Chaucer's *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*
- Unit 2. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* 19, 73, 107, 144
- Unit 3. John Donne's "The Good Morrow", "The Sunne Rising", "The Canonization", "At the round earth's imagin'd corners", "Death be not proud"

Block II – 17th & 18th century poetry

- Unit 1. John Milton's *Paradise Lost* Bks I & II
- Unit 2. John Dryden's *MacFlecknoe*
- Unit 3. Alexander Pope's *Dunciad*, Bk IV

Paper Three

Fiction I – The Novel in the 18th and the 19th Centuries 6 credits

This is the first of the three courses (Paper 3 in the 1st semester, Paper 9 in the 2nd semester, Paper 11 in the 3rd semester) on fiction. In this course the student is taken

through the study of three novels roughly covering the period stretching from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth in order to deepen understanding of the various strains of thought characteristic of the times and innate to literary writing. The student will read and study these representative texts in order that they learn the proper modes of analysis of works of fiction from the perspectives of various critical approaches, including theories of narrative, while gaining a sound knowledge of contextual relations of the texts.

Block I – Daniel Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. themes and Techniques

Block II – Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes and Techniques

Block III – Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes and Techniques

Paper Four

Non-fiction – Letter, Essay, Biography & Autobiography 6 credits

This paper is designed to introduce the student to the different formal categories under which non-fictional prose writing can be arranged. The learner is taken through different genres of prose-writing emerging from diverse historical and cultural contexts. It is expected that the student will thus be involved in the study of the texts prescribed in order to learn the range of concerns basic to literary study, from textual exegesis to the larger intellectual concerns that give shape to these texts and to explore the strategies by which the writer underscores a distinction between the categories of the fictional and the non-fictional.

Block I – Letters & Essays

- Unit 1. Non-fictional Prose – General Introduction

Unit 2. Joseph Addison’s *The Spectator Papers: The Uses of the Spectator, The Spectator’s Account of Himself, Of the Spectator*

Unit 3. John Keats’ (Letters): To Benjamin Bailey, 22 November, 1817. To John Hamilton Reynolds, 3 May, 1818.

Unit 4. Charles Lamb’s “My Relations”

Unit 5. Matthew Arnold’s “Preface” to *Poems* (1853)

Unit 6. Virginia Woolf’s “How It Strikes a Contemporary”

Unit 7. Rabindranath Tagore’s “Nationalism in the West”

Block II – Biography & Autobiography

Unit 1. Samuel Johnson’s “Life of Milton”, “Life of Cowley”

Unit 2. Bertrand Russell’s *Autobiography*

Paper Five

Theory I – Classical & Neoclassical critical theories 6 credits

This is the first of the three courses (Paper 5 in the 1st semester, Paper 7 in the 2nd semester, Paper 13 in the 3rd semester) on the study of western literary theory and criticism. As the English critical tradition traces its origins as a branch of a common Graeco-Roman classical heritage foundational to European thought, this course is focused on the major works of classical theory which continues as a major influence into eighteenth century English neo-classicism. The student’s competence with regard to the knowledge of theoretical concepts and the major instances of the application of classical and neo-classical theories will be tested.

Block I – Classical Theory

Unit 1. Classical Theory & Criticism

Unit 2. Aristotle’s *Poetics*

Unit 3. Longinus’ *On the Sublime*

Block II – Neoclassical Theory

Unit 4. Neoclassical theory and criticism

Unit 5. Samuel Johnson’s “Preface” to *Plays of William Shakespeare*

Semester 2

Paper Six

Literature & Social History II – The Romantic Age, the Victorian, the Modern & the Post-Modern 6 credits

This paper, along with Paper 1 in the first semester (Literature & Social History I), comprises a single unit which introduces students to English social and cultural history against a larger European and the global context. Students are expected to gain knowledge of the social and cultural production of texts in English and to learn here the various methods by which such seminal connections are to be made between the texts they are required to study and the contexts that invariably come to light as literary study is conducted. It is expected that students will hereby be trained in grasping the complex interplay of the literary and the non-literary elements that constitute literary writing.

The period covered here is roughly the ‘modern’ period arising from the socio-cultural context of the turn of the century at the end of the Victorian period to the tumultuous beginnings of the twentieth century. Several major movements are covered in this course but it is also recommended that the student does not leave out references to other parallel movements that complete a full description of the era.

Block I – Romanticism

- Unit 1. The French Revolution and After
- Unit 2. Romantic Themes

Block II – Victorian

- Unit 1. Darwinism
- Unit 2. The Working Classes
- Unit 3. Feminist Movements

Block III – Modern

- Unit 1. The Modernist Movements in the Arts
- Unit 2. The Crisis of Empire
- Unit 3. The Rise of ‘English’

Block IV – Post-Modern

- Unit 1. The Postcolonial Perspective
- Unit 2. Culture Studies
- Unit 3. Globalization

Paper Seven

Theory II – Romantic & Victorian Theory & Criticism 6 credits

The student is here introduced to some of the concepts basic to the thought of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century. The three theorists – Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Arnold – are taken as being representative of the line of thinkers who are known by this name and were influential in terms of literary and critical theory. The student will undertake in this course to make a study of the works of critical thought prescribed for the purpose as well as refer to materials essential to an understanding of this category of writing.

Block I – Romantic Critics

- Unit 1. Romantic Theory & Criticism
- Unit 2. Wordsworth’s ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads* (Second Edition)
- Unit 3. Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* (Chapter XIII)

Block II – Victorian Critics

- Unit 4. Victorian Theory & Criticism
- Unit 5. Arnold’s “The Study of Poetry”

Paper Eight

Poetry II – Romantic Poetry 6 credits

The texts prescribed for study in this course are representative ones and the student is expected, for a deeper understanding of the genres of Romantic poetry, to relate these prescribed texts to other relevant writings. The Romantic era stands as the moment of introspection for many thinkers of the time so that their espousal of an altered sense of being is pervasive in their poetic expressions. Thus it is suggested that the student will

make the necessary connections between the poems to be studied and such other writings that ensured the pervasive influence of the Romantic thinkers.

Block I – Early Romantics

- Unit 1. William Blake’s “Holy Thursday”(Songs of Innocence), “London”, “The Tyger” (Songs of Experience)
- Unit 2. Wordsworth’s “Composed Upon Westminster Bridge”, “Ode on Intimations of Immortality”

Block II – Later Romantics

- Unit 1. Lord Byron’s *Don Juan* (Canto XI)
- Unit 2. Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind”
- Unit 3. Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale”

Paper Nine

Fiction II – 19th to the 20th Century

6 credits

This course forms the second part of the group of three courses (besides Paper 3 in the first semester, and Paper 11 in the third semester) in the study of fiction. The three novels prescribed for study here, Dickens’s *Hard Times* (1853), Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886) and Forster’s *Passage to India* (1924), take into their ambit the preoccupations that permeate the period’s complex of ideas. These novels are also representative of the line of major works in English fiction while their historical ramifications provide us with instances of textuality rendering the non-textual. As major works of English fiction, these novels will be the sites of theoretical analyses of fiction as well. The student will be required to gain a sound grasp of both narrative theory as well as cultural-historical work related to these novels.

Block I – Thomas Hardy’s *The Mayor of Casterbridge*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block II – E.M.Forster’s *A Passage to India*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block III – Charles Dickens’ *Hard Times*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Paper Ten

Drama I – Renaissance Drama

6 credits

‘Renaissance Drama’ is the first of a set of two courses in the study of major dramatic works in English history (along with Paper 12 in the 3rd semester). This course takes in the three great early modern English dramatists, Marlowe, Shakespeare and Jonson. Shakespeare is represented through four plays from three different categories, while Marlowe and Jonson are represented through their best-known plays. Students will be required to work towards a comprehensive understanding of these plays ranging from the problematics of stagecraft to the cultural semiotics of drama.

Block I – Shakespeare’s Contemporaries

- Unit 1. General Introduction to English Renaissance Drama
- Unit 2. Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*
- Unit 3. Ben Jonson’s *Volpone*

Block II – Shakespeare’s Plays

- Unit 1. A General Introduction to Shakespeare
- Unit 2. *Hamlet*
- Unit 3. *Henry V*
- Unit 4. *Much Ado About Nothing*
- Unit 5. *The Tempest*

Semester 3

Paper Eleven

Fiction III – The Twentieth Century

6 credits

This course entails the textual study of three major works of twentieth-century English fiction. Apart from the theoretical grounding that analysis of fictional works calls for, the student will be required explore textualisation of ideas and concerns that emanate from the historical context or from intellectual movements of the time. It is thus

recommended that the student undertake the study of these works of fiction with the help of more than a single set of critical ideas so as to understand finally how comprehensive but rigorous literary analysis should be done.

Block I – Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block II – Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block III – D.H.Lawrence’s *Sons & Lovers*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Paper Twelve

Drama II – Modern Drama

6 credits

This course takes the student to dramatic works of the modern period. As a mode of representation, drama and stagecraft provide an all-important index to the cultural histories of any society. These are some aspects that our student of ‘Modern Drama’ must grasp through this course.

Block I – Modern Drama

- Unit 1. Introduction to Modern Drama
- Unit 2. George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*

Block II – The Modern and the Absurd

- Unit 1. Modern Drama and the Absurd
- Unit 2. Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*
- Unit 3. Harold Pinter’s *The Birthday Party*

Paper Thirteen

Theory III – Twentieth Century Criticism

6 credits

The student is here introduced to the major theorists of the twentieth century. In terms of their pervasive influence beyond the confines of literary activity, these thinkers have given to the nature of twentieth century thought its unique character. The student will undertake in this course to make a study of the works of critical thought prescribed for the purpose as well as refer to materials essential to an understanding of this category of writing. While the course takes into its ambit many of the best-known works or essays of these thinkers, among the most familiar of the critical movements are also included. The student is recommended to study both the prescribed essays as well as to work towards a grasp of the applications of these theories against the wider awareness that literary theory has been an almost foundational movement in the twentieth century given the manner in which many other disciplines like history and ethnography have been compelled to a fresh understanding of their disciplinary practices.

Block I – Trends in Formalism

- Unit 1. New Criticism
- Unit 2. “The Heresy of Paraphrase” (Brooks)
- Unit 3. “The Line of Wit” (Leavis)
- Unit 4. “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (Eliot)
- Unit 5. Russian Formalism
- Unit 6. “Art as Technique” (Viktor Shklovsky)

Block II – Later Trends

- Unit 1. Literary Theory: A Composite View
- Unit 2. Major Movements
- Unit 3. Structuralism to Post-structuralism
- Unit 4. Jacques Derrida
- Unit 5. Roland Barthes
- Unit 6. Psychoanalysis and Jacques Lacan
- Unit 7. Feminism

Paper Fourteen

Poetry III – Victorian Poetry

6 credits

The texts prescribed for study in this course are representative ones and the student is expected, for a deeper understanding of the genres represented here, to relate these prescribed texts to other relevant writings. Poetry through the Victorian till the present time, has been sustained through its engagement with society as much as with experiments in the literary art. While its literary status has seen a steady decline through this same period, it remains a category of writing that has not lost its value as a mode of thought and representation. Thus it is suggested that the student will make the necessary connections between the poems to be studied and such other writings that went into the making of these famous literary texts.

Block 1–Major Statements

- Unit 1. Poetry in the Victorian world
- Unit 2. Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (Sections 7, 35, 50, 96)
- Unit 3. Browning’s “Fra Lippo Lippi”, “A Grammarian’s Funeral”
- Unit 4. Arnold’s “Dover Beach”, “Yea, in the sea of life enisled”
- Unit 5. D.G.Rossetti’s “The Blessed Damozel”
- Unit 6. Hopkins’s “The Windhover”, “Pied Beauty”, “God’s Grandeur”

Paper Fifteen

Poetry IV – Modern Poetry

6 credits

By this stage, the student will have already gained familiarity with the practice of poetic analysis. Poetry in the 20th century presents an almost startlingly different experience in the way it frames its perceptions of its situation. This course requires the student to explore and analyse the significance of this poetry through its multiple registers.

Block I – Defining the Modern

- Unit 1. Poetry in the Modern World
- Unit 2. Yeats’s “Sailing to Byzantium”
- Unit 3. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*
- Unit 4. Auden’s “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”

Block II – More Modern Explorations

- Unit 1. William Carlos Williams’ “Spring and All”
- Unit 2. Wallace Stevens’ “Emperor of Ice-cream”
- Unit 3. Philip Larkin’s “Church Going”
- Unit 4. Ted Hughes’ “Thrushes”, “Pike”
- Unit 5. Dylan Thomas’ “Poem in October”
- Unit 6. Seamus Heaney’s “After a Killing”

Semester 4

Paper Sixteen

Contemporary Indian Writing in English – I

6 credits

Block I – History of Indian English Literature

- Unit 1. Beginnings
- Unit 2. Early Twentieth Century
- Unit 3. Post-Independence period

Block II – Poetry

- Unit 1. Jayanta Mahapatra: “The Abandoned British Cemetery at Balasore”
- Unit 2. Keki N.Daruwalla: “Wolf”, “Hawk”
- Unit 3. Kamala Das: “A Hot Noon in Malabar”, “My Grandmother’s House”
- Unit 4. Adil Jussawalla: “Missing Person”, Part II
- Unit 5. Vikram Seth: “The Humble Administrator’s Garden”

Paper Seventeen

Contemporary Indian Writing in English – II

6 credits

Block I – Indian Drama

- Unit 1. *Tughlaq* (Girish Karnad)
- Unit 2. *Where There’s a Will* (Mahesh Dattani)
- Unit 3. *Lights Out* (Manjula Padmanabhan)

Block II – Indian Prose

- Unit 1. Raja Rammohan Roy: Letter to Lord Amherst, 1823
- Unit 2. Aurobindo Ghosh : “A System of National Education”
- Unit 3. Rabindranath Tagore: “Nationalism in India”
- Unit 4. *Speeches*
 - i) The Quit India speeches, August 8, 1942
 - ii) Speech at the Round Table Conference, Nov.11, 1931
- Unit 5. Nehru’s *Autobiography* (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 19, 51, 53)
- Unit 6. Nirad C.Chaudhuri’s *A Passage to England* (Part I, Chapter 7; Part II, Chap.2; Part III, Chaps. 1 & 3)

Paper Eighteen

Contemporary Indian Writing in English – III

6 credits

Block I – Raja Rao’s *Kanthapura*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the novel
- Unit 3 . Themes & Techniques

Block II – Anita Desai’s *Fasting, Feasting*

- Unit 1.Introducing the Author
- Unit 2. Introducing the novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block III – Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*

- Unit 1. Introducing the Author
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Block IV – Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*

- Unit 1. Background
- Unit 2. Introducing the Novel
- Unit 3. Themes & Techniques

Paper Nineteen

European I – Modern Dramatic Works

6 credits

Two great European dramatists, Anton Chekhov and Henrik Ibsen, have been familiar to all English-speaking audiences. The literary transactions between these artists have given us the plays of these playwrights in English translation and made them both products as well as the creators of a distinctive socio-cultural context. In this course, the student is made familiar with two famous works, an understanding of which will entail the proper study of these texts and the application of a proper theoretical approach.

Block I – Unit 1. Russian Drama

Unit 2. Anton Chekhov’s *The Seagull*

Block II – Unit 1. The Background of Norwegian Drama

Unit 2. Henrik Ibsen’s *The Wild Duck*

Block III – Unit 1. Italian Dramatic Conventions

Unit 2. Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of An Author*

Block IV – Unit 1. German Drama

Unit 2. Bertolt Brecht’s *Mother Courage & Her Children*

Paper Twenty

European II – Modern European fiction

6 credits

The historical, political, and cultural connections between England and the rest of the European continent are crucial to English literary study. Major works of European literature have been important influences on the course of English culture and its literary history. We can count the works of both Franz Kafka and Albert Camus among those that are important to our understanding of the English literary mind. In this course, therefore, the student is required to study two such famous works. As with the other earlier courses in the study of fiction, the student will be required to be familiar with modes of critical analysis properly brought to bear on such works.

Among the major Russian writers stand Gogol, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Russian literary traditions have been important to Western intellectual thought. The course here is focused on three well-known texts by these Russian artists. Of these, Dostoevsky’s novel is the only one example of longer fiction. The analysis of novels has become a well-

established critical method. Short fiction calls for its own distinct set of critical approaches appropriate to the form. The student must develop a familiarity with these distinctions and analytical tools in order to obtain a proper grasp of the texts.

Block I – Short Russian fiction

Unit 1. Russian Short Fiction

Unit 2. Nikolai Gogol’s “The Overcoat”

Unit 3. Tolstoy’s *The Death of Ivan Illyich*

Block II – The Novel in Russian

Unit 1. The Russian Novel

Unit 2. Dostoevsky and his works

Unit 3. *Crime and Punishment*

Unit 4. Themes & Techniques

Block III – The Novel in German

Unit 1. The German Novel

Unit 2. Kafka & his works

Unit 3. Kafka’s *The Trial*

Unit 4. Themes & Techniques

Block IV – The Novel in French

Unit 1. The French Novel

Unit 2. Albert Camus & his works

Unit 3. Camus’ *The Outsider*

Unit 4. Themes & Techniques
