

Repression, Subversion, Expression: Gender and Sexuality in British Literature

LMH Summer Programmes are provided by Lady Margaret Hall, a college in the University of Oxford

Course:	Repression, Subversion, Expression: Gender and Sexuality in British Literature
Available:	Programme Session 1: 30 th June 2025 to 18 th July 2025
Lectures:	18 Hours
Seminars:	12 Hours
Tutorials:	3 Hours
Independent Study:	Approximately 120 Hours
Recommended Credit:	15 CATS / 7.5 ECTS / 4 US Credits

About this Course:	<p>How have expressions of sexuality and gender in British literature been shaped by the social constraints of different periods? How have female authors navigated systems of patriarchy, and what has been the role of literature in confirming and subverting gender norms? And how are the rapid changes in approaches, attitudes, and practices around gender and sexuality since the 20th century reflected in contemporary British writing? This course offers a unique and exciting opportunity to explore these questions and more, examining a wide range of British literature from various genres and periods through the lens of gender and sexuality.</p> <p>You will discuss representations of the changing roles of women in Early Modern England, from Isabella Whitney's <i>A Sweet Nosegay</i> and William Shakespeare's <i>Love's Labour's Lost</i> in the 16th Century to 'breeches' plays of the 17th Century. You will explore themes of womanhood, sexuality, and maternity in Romanticism and the Gothic through works such as Mary Shelley's <i>Frankenstein</i>. Further areas of discussion will include censorship and (homo)sexuality, and differing constructions of masculinity in 20th Century British literature, as well as exploring queer literature in contemporary Britain, such as the works of Mary Jean Chan. Theoretical frameworks, including feminist literary theory and queer theory, will be examined and applied throughout the course, and lectures and supplementary resources will equip you with the historical and cultural knowledge to contextualise the texts you will study</p> <p><i>Repression, Subversion, Expression</i> is the perfect course for you if you are a Humanities student seeking to develop your knowledge of British literature and culture, your analytical skills, and your understanding of varied forms of self-expression.</p>
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<p>Course Overview:</p>	<p><u>Week 1: Gender and Sexuality in pre-Modern and Early Modern British Literature</u></p> <p>In Week One we begin with examples from pre-Modern and Early Modern British literature in order to establish how the combination of various pressures – from patriarchal social structures, through Classical (mis)understanding of human biology, to Christianity – affected the expression of sexuality and gender roles. In our discussions we will touch upon biography and drama, poetry and prose, allegory and fantasy, philosophy and theology. We will investigate how opportunities for exploring one’s sexuality were both offered and denied by contemporary society, and how emerging female authors had to navigate societal tensions through their works.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Modern Sexed and Gendered Bodies • Gender and Sexuality in Medieval English Literature • Women Writers and the Renaissance in Britain • From Gender Roles in Shakespeare to the Breeches Plays of the Restoration <p><u>Week 2: 17th to 19th Century British Literature</u></p> <p>From the 17th to the 19th century British society still remained a male monopoly in terms of political power and cultural authority, but it was also a time of growing literacy for women facilitated by increasingly affordable printed media and more accessible libraries. With the emergence of new genres of sentimentalism, Gothic, and Romantic literature, and a proliferation of female writers and actors, there was greater visibility – and desirability – of women. We will examine the ways in which traditionally ‘feminine’ ideals such as chastity, maternity and domesticity were explored in literature of this period, and look at the ways in which more open discussions of sexuality and gender roles spilled over into politics, philosophy, and science.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex and the Enlightenment • Sex and Gender in British Gothic and Romantic Literature • Jane Austen: Gender Feminist or Conservative? • The Brontës and Domestic Abuse <p><u>Week 3: From Modernism to the Present</u></p> <p>From the early 20th century Britain witnessed rapid changes in approaches, attitudes, and practices around sexuality and gender. The social and legal status of women was altered several times, views on same-sex relationships continued to change, new intellectual lenses and social movements such as feminism emerged. Week Three of our course traces these changes against the backdrop of political and economic activities, class tensions, and the influence of new media such as film and television.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modernism, Sexuality, and Gender • Contemporary Queer Literature in Britain • 20th Century Gay Literature in Britain • Gender and Sexuality in Popular Fiction and Television
<p>Key Texts:</p>	<p><i>Maurice</i>, E. M. Forster <i>Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit</i>, Jeanette Winterson <i>Flèche</i>, Mary Jean Chan <i>The Book of Margery Kempe</i>, Margery Kempe <i>A Sweet Nosegay, or Pleasant Posy</i>, Isabella Whitney <i>Love’s Labour’s Lost</i>, William Shakespeare <i>Frankenstein</i>, Mary Shelley</p>

<p>Learning Outcomes:</p>	<p>By the end of this course, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the role of gender and sexuality in a range of British literature. • Be able to assess the changing role of gender and sexuality in British literature of diverse periods and genres. • Be able to evaluate the relationship between literary texts and their historical and cultural contexts. • Be able to apply key theoretical frameworks including feminist theory and queer theory to literary texts.
<p>Admissions Requirements:</p>	<p>LMH Summer Programmes are designed for students who want to gain and develop knowledge in their chosen subject area. LMH Summer Programmes are intensive courses of study aimed at undergraduates who have completed one, two, or three years of their degree, or entry level postgraduate students.</p> <p>We will consider each applicant’s academic ability and expect successful applicants to have a minimum grade point average equivalent to 2:1 level on the British grading scale. For example, this would mean at least a 3.2 GPA on the 4.0 grading scale in the United States, and 80% in China.</p> <p>This course would suit students of the Humanities, especially those with an interest in English Literature, Theatre, Dramatic Arts, or History.</p> <p>To participate fully in the programme all students will need to have proficiency in English.</p> <p>English language requirements for students who are not native English speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TOEFL iBT score of 98 • IELTS score of 7.0 (no less than 6.5 in each component) • Duolingo English Test score of 125 (no less than 115 in each section) • Cambridge English Scale score of 185 <p>If the language of instruction in your home institution is English you do not need to provide evidence of your English proficiency.</p>
<p>Teaching Methods:</p>	<p>Core syllabus material will be covered in lectures. Students attend four lectures each week and each lecture lasts 90 minutes. Seminars in smaller groups offer students space to discuss and debate, to dig deeper into difficult concepts, and to explore their own ideas. Student contribution to seminars is vital, and tutors will ensure everyone takes part in discussions. Seminars last 1 hour and students will take part in four seminars each week.</p> <p>Independent study is a crucial part of an LMH Summer Programme and of the Oxford teaching model. Tutors will recommend important reading to do between lectures and seminars that will enable students to come to class equipped to understand the information presented and prepared to take part in discussion and debate. Each week students will have an assignment of independent work to complete and submit in advance of the tutorial. There is an appropriate amount of space in the timetable to complete the necessary reading, preparation, and assignments. Students should expect to do around 40 hours of independent study each week.</p> <p>The final class each week is a tutorial, a very small class typically including only 2-4 students and central to the teaching methods used by the University of Oxford and on LMH Summer Programmes. Guided by their tutor, students will receive feedback on their assignments and be challenged to defend, justify, or even rethink their work and ideas. These rigorous academic discussions help develop and facilitate learning in a way that cannot be done with lectures and seminars alone.</p>

Assessment:	On a three-week LMH Summer Programme students produce one piece of assessed work every week, which is submitted to the tutor and then discussed in a tutorial. At the end of each week students will receive a percentage grade for their submitted work. Each week's work counts for a third of the final percentage grade, so the final grade is an average of the mark received for each piece of work. Students who stay for six or nine weeks will receive a separate grade for each 3-week course.
Academic Credit:	Lady Margaret Hall will provide a transcript of students' assessed work, and can send this directly to your home institution if required. LMH Summer Programmes are designed to be eligible for academic credit, and we will communicate with home institution to facilitate this as needed. As a guide, we recommend the award of 15 CATS / 7.5 ECTS / 4 US Credits for each 3-week course.