



Faculty of Arts, Design and Social Sciences

*Newcastle – History, Literature and Culture – Regionalism and Literature
as a lens to explore British history and culture during the 19th and early
20th centuries*

Session 2018-19

Level: 5

Semester: Summer

Credit Points: 15

All **visits** depart from the turning circle outside of the Business School Building, East Campus. Please be there 5 minutes before the departure time. Departure times differ for trips so please check the class schedule or with your class tutor.

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Synopsis:

The course will provide a cultural and historical overview of Britain during the 19th and early 20th century through the lens of regional literature, history, and cultural developments that relate to the North East of England and primarily the city of Newcastle during the era of industrial expansion in Britain. This is the period when people of the region – known as ‘Geordies’ – had a distinct and strong regional identity. It will explore how/whether this regional cultural identity remains.

Alongside the study of historical evidence and sources this course allows students to examine the inter-disciplinary connections between history and literature (fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, diaries and letters) to examine the social and historical contexts of literary works. Though its main focus is historicism it will also, through an examination of genre, style, character presentation, language (particularly the use of colloquialism by authors) and reader reception, use gender studies, cultural materialism and Marxist theory to explore, and challenge, concepts of class, gender and culture.

As this module is specifically for international students this provides a manageable way to explore and examine key historical, cultural developments and a range of literature that relate to class, gender, industrial development and decline, alongside regionalism. Teaching includes both broad interpretive lectures and detailed and focused seminar discussion and textual analysis/deconstruction, often of textual extracts from novels, poems and songs produced within, or about, Newcastle.

The module will also include study visits, for example, to Beamish Museum, Cragside House and The Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle, as well as a visit to the city archives, in order to directly relate class based learning and analysis of literature sources (novels, poetry, diaries and letters) to historical sites and evidence.

Aims of the Module:

1. To introduce students to some of the main themes in the development of British culture and Northern English literature in the 19th century and early 20th century and ways to explore these through analysis of literary sources (fiction, nonfiction, other)
2. To allow students to explore ideas concerning regionalism as a lens to explore national historical and cultural developments
3. Introduce students to literary theory to analyse the author’s selection of genre, language, theme, style and character representation and how these evoke specific reader response
4. To make students aware of conceptual issues associated with studying ‘British’ culture and the use of literature as a cultural signifier
5. To give students experience in working with primary historical evidence, which includes fiction, nonfiction, poetry and other printed sources

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the module students should:

1. Have an awareness, and explored, some of the main contours of British culture during the 19th century and early 20th Century and how the analysis of fiction, nonfiction and other literary works, are used as sources to explore and examine important ideas
2. Have acquired an awareness of the relationship between regional and national historical and cultural developments
3. Have examined a range of literary theory to analyse the author's selection of genre, language, theme, style and character representation and how these evoke specific reader response
4. Have examined conceptual issues associated with studying 'British' culture and the use of literature as a cultural signifier
5. Have experience in working with primary historical evidence, which includes fiction, nonfiction, poetry and other printed sources

Teaching

Teaching will be a minimum 3 hours a day over 3 weeks. Visits, for example, to Beamish or Cragside House, will be all day.

Timetabling will be completed prior to the course start but a typical non-study visit day will consist of a lecture, coffee/lunch break, followed by a seminar.

Indicative Lecture/Seminar/Study Visit topics, Summer 2019

Week 1, over this week we look at:

- Introduction to the module and overview of the historical development of the city. From the Roman river crossing and settlement called Pons Aelius during the 2nd century, the naming of the city as Newcastle by the Normans in the 11th century, and the major changes that took place during, and after, Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s. The development and decline of the industrial North. This class to be done as a visit to Houseteads, (class to take place in the educational room).
- Visit to the Tyne & Wear Archives to examine historical evidence, focusing on diaries and letters, relating to the city. As the Archives are situated in the Discovery Museum we will also look at how the City's main museum portrays the city and region's past.
- Theoretical concepts concerning regionalism and nationalism, history and culture, and inter-disciplinary historical and literary approaches to

researching the past. In particular we will examine the use of literature as a historical source and Historicism, New Historicism and Cultural Materialism as theoretical approaches to literary works.

- ‘Geordie’ – people, culture and dialect. Inhabitants of Newcastle, and to some extent the surrounding area are called Geordies. A distinct part of this ‘identity’ is the Geordie dialect – or slang. There is even a Geordie dictionary. We examine this dialect, particularly the author’s choice of colloquial language, and its influence on the reader and regional identity, through popular songs, such as The Blaydon Races, and works from some of the ‘pitman’ poets, such as Tommy Armstrong.
- End of week Photo exercise – Discussion of photos you have taken in the first week from a selection of themes that allow you to explore representations of ‘Britishness’

Week 2, over this week we look at:

- ‘The Industrial North’ – after an examination of industry in the region prior to the Industrial Revolution, industry during the Industrial Revolution of the early 19th century, we will explore the impact of the Second Industrial Revolution of the 1870s and rise of heavy industry, particularly the influence of coal mining, steel production and ship building within the region and its influence on regional/national culture. We will visit the Central City library archive to look at newspapers and nonfiction works from this period to gain an insight into some of the major events occurring in the city.
- We will visit and then discuss in class the ‘bridges’ of Newcastle – Newcastle is a river city and along with an exploration of the Quayside, once a bustling, teeming, hub of sea-based commerce and fishing fleet activity that is now an area that rarely sees any type of boat or ship, and is a recreational and cultural area, we will look at the 7 bridges of Newcastle as each tells a story about the development of industry and culture in the city. For example, the High Level Bridge, a cast iron tied arch bridge, built with 5050 tons of iron and opened by Queen Victoria in 1849, was designed by the Railway Engineer Robert Stephenson to allow the first steam trains to cross the river and ultimately connect the railway system from London to Edinburgh. Using nonfiction and fictional (poetry) sources we will explore how some authors of the period depicted these events and deconstruct the works to look at the ideas they project through them and how these relate to Goerdie cultural identity.
- The Swing Bridge, opened in 1876, was built by William Armstrong, who started out as a solicitor in Newcastle but would become one of the most influential entrepreneurs and inventors of the Victorian era. He would be

made Lord Armstrong. We will look at his life and achievements as this highlights the changes – many introduced by Armstrong – that dominated the development of industry in the region and had a major impact on the city and its inhabitants.

- Visit to Cragside House – Lord Armstrong’s country house. Like the city’s bridges this house and estate, provides a wealth of evidence to explore the Victorian era. It is the first house to have electric lighting – and this powered by hydro-electricity – and is full of other inventions and stories that are historically and culturally informative.
- Screening of the TV drama *The Gambling Man* – adapted from the novel of the same name by Catherine Cookson.
- **Assessment 1** - End of the week online test – 50% of module mark. IT room based, Covering material from weeks 1 & 2.

Week 3, over this week we look at:

- Lectures on the works and life of Catherine Cookson and Jack Common. Both local authors whose novels were set around the turn of the twentieth century and reflecting on their own experiences of growing up in Newcastle. We analyse extracts, looking at genre, content, language, from the works of *The Gambling Man* by Catherine Cookson and *Kiddar’s Luck* by Jack Common as a means of exploring and understanding ideas, and how the two authors examined and question/confirm prevalent ideas, of class, gender, place and people.
- Visit to Beamish Museum. Beamish Museum is the creation of the local historian Frank Atkinson who in the 1960s was seeing the demise of heavy industry in the region and the loss of the traditional ‘Geordie’ way of life. Coal mines were closing all over the region, steelworks alongside them, and shipbuilding in the UK as a whole, but particularly along the river Tyne, was entering into a recession from which it would never recover. In order to preserve a sense of past for future generations he developed the Museum, the main section of which is set in 1913, the year in which North East coalmines broke all previous coal production levels and there were 220,000 men and boys working in the regions’ mines. Beamish Museum offers a first hand insight into the living conditions and culture that both Catherine Cookson and Jack London write about. Many of Cookson’s novels, like *The Gambling Man*, have been adapted for TV and filmed at Beamish.

- Through the use of extracts from books, songs and documentary clips we will look at some of the distinct aspects of the region we would have been introduced to when visiting Beamish Museum, the suffragette movement, pitmen, class divide and 'Geordie' pastimes. Leek growing, pigeon racing, whippet racing, flat caps and posy mats.
- Presentation workshop. To discuss topics and time to work on presentations.
- **Assessment 2** – Presentations – 50% of module mark

Assessment: Assessment for this module is an online test (50%) and individual presentation (50%)

Online Test

30 questions on topics – facts, ideas, theory covered in weeks on and two that are a mixture of multiple choice and short paragraph length answers. 90 minutes. IT room under exam conditions.

Presentation

10 minute individual presentation on a topic covered on the course. Using one of the class topics as a case study.

Examples:

- Gender relations in the early twentieth century – using *The Gambling Man*

- Class divide – using *Kiddar's Luck* or Cragside House or Beamish
- Influence of industrialisation on Newcastle and its people – using historical evidence and sources
- Dialect and regional identity – Geordie slang
- Bridges as gateways to history – Newcastle's bridges

A full list of options will be included on the course Blackboard site but students are also encouraged to come up with their own course related topic for their presentation.

All students will agree the topic for their presentation with the tutor, providing a brief written synopsis, prior to giving the presentation.

Reading Material

All primary material and essential secondary reading will be provided online in a digitised format. Whilst extracts will be available for both *The Gambling Man* and *Kiddar's Luck* it would be useful to read both of these should time permit. Both are readily available on Amazon. Whilst your course site will have a list of additional secondary material available from Northumbria University online as e-texts the Library also carries an extensive range of hard copy texts that will also be available for you to use.