

Department of English & Writing Studies

English 3378F (001)

Topics in Twentieth-Century British and Irish Literature: Decline and Fall? Re-evaluating the Past in Twentieth-Century British Literature

Fall 2026

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Prerequisite(s): At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020-1999 or permission of the Department.

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Writers often look to the past for inspiration, but British authors in the twentieth-century saw their nation's fortunes radically altered through the traumas of two world wars, the loss of empire, and declining economies. In the last century national myths were established, reconsidered, and challenged in many cultural arenas, but our focus will be literature. This course will examine the ways in which selected novels, short stories, poems, and a play help to create and question a nation's sense of itself. How does literature contribute, for example, to the creation of the imagined community that is a nation? How are a nation's stories about itself altered over time? And how is this alteration registered? These are some of the questions we will ask in this terms course.

Possible Texts (depending upon availability and other factors)

Between the Acts, Virginia Woolf

The Remains of the Day, Kazuo Ishiguro

"The Demon Lover", Elizabeth Bowen

Poems by Larkin, Heaney, Kipling, Newbolt, Tennyson, and others

Arcadia, Tom Stoppard

Sexing the Cherry, Jeanette Winterson

Eminent Victorians ("The End of General Gordon"), Lytton Strachey

Human Voices, Penelope Fitzgerald

Life After Life, Kate Atkinson

NB. Poems, Bowen's story, and other shorter texts are available online.

Objectives:

Successful students will

- write clear and correct prose, and develop effective arguments.
- see the ways in which history can be used, interpreted and reconsidered.
- reflect on how literature shapes our understanding of historical events.
- gain an understanding of several texts by major British writers.
- improve their analytical and critical skills through their reading, discussion, and writing.
- Employ correct terminology for literary study.
- reflect on the relationships of texts with each other, and gain an understanding of how literary texts are influenced by, allude to, and make use of precursor texts.

Methods of Evaluation

The grade for the course will be arrived at as follows:

Three Reflections (Oct. 8, Nov. 5, Dec. 8)

Test 20% (documentation is required for absences)

Essay 30%

Final 35%
 100%

Essays should be submitted in class. I prefer hard-copies for all submitted assignments. Electronically submitted work on the due date is considered "on time", but I will only read and mark hard copies. The penalty for late essays is 2 marks per working day.

Reflections are to be about 200-250 words (certainly not more than a page) and are to reflect your thinking about the course, issues, readings, etc. The second of these will be written in class time on Nov. 5. Reflections are worth 5% a piece. Unsubmitted reflections receive a mark of 0.

TENTATIVE Schedule of Classes

Sept. 10--Introduction

15 Victorians and Empire--Tennyson, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," "Ulysses," "The Lotus-Eaters"; Kipling, "The White Man's Burden", "The Camel's Hump"; Strachey, "The End of General Gordon" in *Eminent Victorians* (poems and essay are available online); [J.S. Mill, "A Few Words on Non-Intervention"]

22 Victorians and Empire, ct.

29 The Great War--Poems by Rupert Brook, "The Soldier,"; Henry Newbolt, Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and Philip Larkin, "MCMXIV". [*Oh, What a Lovely War*]

Oct. 6 Woolf, *Between the Acts*; **First reflection October 8**

13 Reading Week—No classes.

20; *Mrs Miniver*; [Churchill, “We Shall Fight...” speech]; Auden, “September 1, 1939”
Term test Oct. 22

27 Bowen, “The Demon Lover”; Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* Ishiguro

Nov. 3 Ishiguro, *The Remains of the Day* ct.; **Second reflection, in class, Nov. 5**

10 Fitzgerald, *Human Voices*

17 Atkinson, *Life After Life*

24 Atkinson, ct.; Stoppard, *Aradia*; **Essay due November 26**

Dec. 1 Winterson, *Sexing the Cherry*

8 Larkin, “Church Going”, “High Windows” [Only if there is time...]; **Final Reflection Dec. 8**

End of term.

Methods of Evaluation

Term Test—October 22 20%

Three Reflections (Oct. 8, Nov. 5, Dec. 8)

Essay—Nov. 26 30%

Final Exam Dec/ 35%

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

Statements

Academic Consideration

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student’s Faculty of Registration.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, requests for academic consideration pertaining to the term test **must** be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html> . To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Multicultural Calendar.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support & Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western: <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

-- Using generative AI, including ChatGPT or other AI writing assistants for graded course assessments is a scholastic offence which may be subject to the penalties outlined in the academic calendar. When you use AI to do your work, you are submitting work for academic credit that is not your own. **Consequently, the use of AI is not permitted in this course.**

Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholoff.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.