General Information:

It is recommended that all English Literature students take this module.

The Bible, Greek and Roman mythology, represent some of the central sources for European literary imaginations. Their themes inform writing of all periods and genres, from Dante Alighieri to Philip Pullman, from phrases like ‘a wolf in sheep’s clothing’ to Virginia Woolf. Their authors have inspired the creation of figures such as Aeneas, Beelzebub, Faustus, Odysseus and Satan; the representation of Eve and Judas, of ‘sin’, ‘betrayal’, ‘the underworld’ or ‘hell’; of ‘redemption’, ‘metamorphosis’ and a variety of allegorical modes.

When we understand the ways in which biblical and classical writers shaped their narratives, and how creative authors revised, resisted or radicalised their themes, we have several important keys to unlock crucial facets of English literary tradition. When we appreciate the rich linguistic heritage of sources like the 1611 King James Bible we can recognise the origin of many familiar and reworked phrases (not all of them tasty): ‘bite the dust’; ‘forbidden fruit’; ‘skin of my teeth’; ‘fatted calf’.

Teaching:

There are two lectures and one seminar each week. Lectures will provide an introduction to the ancient source and contextual information for the study of literary texts that we will discuss in detail in seminars. An ancient source and a literary texts will be discussed in parallel to expose the ways that comparison is *mutually illuminating*. We will examine a range of material from the 6th century BCE to the 21st century CE. A full reading list is available at the end of this document.

Assessment:

50% Essay, to be written during the semester
40% Close reading examination, during the exam period
10% Informal seminar contributions (guidelines for participation are on MOLE)

Required Texts:

Most readings will be available online or on MOLE as e-offprints. You should make sure that you have access to the following:

Most of you will be studying Shakespeare later on in your degree so it would make sense to invest in a complete works. Blackwells will be stocking the Norton edition. If you want to buy a single-text edition of *Titus Andronicus*, we recommend the most recent Arden, Cambridge and Oxford edition.

* We will be discussing this play in week 9; you should start reading it now.

2. Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*  
   [https://www.amazon.co.uk/Year-Flood-Margaret-Atwood/dp/0349004072/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1473266654&sr=8-1&keywords=margaret+atwood+year+of+the+flood](https://www.amazon.co.uk/Year-Flood-Margaret-Atwood/dp/0349004072/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1473266654&sr=8-1&keywords=margaret+atwood+year+of+the+flood)

* We will be discussing this book in week 6; you should start reading it now.

3. It is recommended but **not required** that you buy the HarperCollins Study Bible (2006 edition or later); this edition has helpful notes and essays that make understanding the Bible more straightforward.

   [https://www.amazon.co.uk/HarperCollins-Study-Bible-NRSV-Student-Harold-Attridge/dp/0060786833/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1473080168&sr=8-1&keywords=harper+collins+study+bible](https://www.amazon.co.uk/HarperCollins-Study-Bible-NRSV-Student-Harold-Attridge/dp/0060786833/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1473080168&sr=8-1&keywords=harper+collins+study+bible)

   However, **all biblical texts are available online** at biblegateway.com. Please make sure you read the texts according to the New Revised Standard Version; additionally, the King James Version has been influential in literature, and you may find the phrasing helpful in making connections to its literary descendants. If you wish to purchase a KJV, we recommend the Oxford World Classics edition.

   Likewise, **most classical texts** can be found at perseus.tufts.edu.

   A list of useful books is found at the end of this handbook.

**Schedule & Texts**

**Week 1**

26 September, 28 September  
Introduction: Historical Context & Methods  
Read for seminar: Extract from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (on MOLE) and Carol Ann Duffy's poem 'Mrs Midas': [http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/mrs-midas](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/mrs-midas)  
** please come to seminars prepared with an example of a text that you think interprets themes found in classical or biblical texts **

**Week 2**
3 October: Homer’s *Iliad*
Read: *Iliad* Books 1, 6, & 24
Available:
listen: https://librivox.org/the-iliad-pope-translation-by-homer/

5 October: Professor Adam Piette, Homer’s Epics in Contemporary Culture
TW: war violence
OR Available via the link on MOLE
Read: “The Helmet”, “The Parting”, and “Ceasefire”
Available:
http://nauplion.net/HELMET.HTM
http://resources.teachnet.ie/ckelly/ceasefire.htm
https://briefpoems.wordpress.com/tag/michael-longley/

**Week 3**

10 October: Dr Katherine Ebury, Joyce, *Ulysses*
Read: Episode 4, “Calypso” and Episode 18, “Penelope”
Available on MOLE

14 October: Homer’s *Odyssey*
Read: *Odyssey* Books 1-2, 5.1–279, 7.236–297
Available:
listen: https://librivox.org/the-odyssey-by-homer/

**Week 4**

17 October: Creation
Read: Genesis 1-2
Optional: John 1:1–18

19 October: Dr Iona Hine, William Blake, *The First Book of Urizen*
Read: *The First Book of Urizen*
Available:
http://mail.nysoclib.org/digital_archives/ebooks/Blake_Book_of_Urizen/OCTAVO/BLKURZTR.PDF
Or
http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/work.xq?workid=urizen&java=no

**Week 5**

24 October: Dr Katie Edwards: The Fall
Read: Genesis 3
Optional: 1 Corinthians 15:22; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12–21
26 October: Dr Katie Edwards: Angela Carter, *The Magic Toyshop*
Read: Selected chapters, TBA, available on MOLE

**Week 6**

31 October: The Flood
Read: Genesis 6–11
Optional: 1 Enoch 1–36 (AKA The Book of the Watchers)

2 November: Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*
Read: *The Year of the Flood*

**Week 7 – Reading Week – no class**

**Week 8**

14 November: Sacrifice
*TW: Human sacrifice, intimate violence among families*
Read: Genesis 22, Judges 11

16 November: Dr Madeleine Callaghan: Wordsworth, Michael
Read: Wordsworth, Michael

**Week 9**

21 November: Dr Tom Rutter: Introduction to Ovid
*TW: Sexual Violence*

23 November: Dr Tom Rutter: Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*
Read: *Titus Andronicus*

**Week 10**

28 November: Dr Katherine Ebury: T. S. Eliot, the Bible, & Classics
Available: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/47311

30 November: Transformation

**Week 11**
5 December: Vergil, *The Aeneid*
Read: Vergil, *The Aeneid*, books 1, 2, & 12

7 December: Dr Tom Rutter, Milton, *Paradise Lost*
Read: *Paradise Lost* books 1–2

**Week 12: Exam Prep**

12 December: Dr Amber Regis, Kate Tempest & Tireseas
Read: Kate Tempest, “Tireseas,” in *Hold Your Own* (on MOLE); and http://poetrysociety.org.uk/poems/from-brand-new-ancients/

Watch: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLWlB3ib7ZM

14 December: Extra office hours. Please email for appointments or drop in.
Full Reading List

The Bible & English Literature:


*Retellings: the Bible in Literature, Music, Art and Film* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007)

Reference:


Robert Alter, *Canon and Creativity: Modern Writing and the Authority of Scripture* (New Haven & London” Yale University Press, 2000)


Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983)


Jeanie C Crain, *Reading the Bible as Literature* (Polity, 2010)


Musa W Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000)
Musa W Dube, ed., Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001)


J Cheryl Exum and David J A Clines, eds., The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993)


Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G Stroumsa, Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World (Leiden: Brill, 2003)

David C Fowler, The Bible in Middle English Literature (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1984)

Amelia Devin Freedman, God as an Absent Character in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: a Literary-Theoretical Study (New York: Peter Lang, 2005)


Robert Goss and Monica West, eds., Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible (The Pilgrim Press, 2000)


Deryn Guest, Robert Goss et al, eds., The Queer Bible Commentary (SCM Press, 2006)

Hannibal Hamlin and Norman W Jones, eds., The King James Bible After Four Hundred Years (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)


TR Henn, *The Bible as Literature* (London: Lutterworth, 1970)


Walter S H Lim, ‘Adam, Eve, and Biblical Analogy in Paradise Lost’ *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 30.1 (1990), 115-31

Oliver Lovesey, ‘Reconstructing Tess’, *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 43.4 (2003), 913–38 [available through JSTOR]


———, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

———, *The King James Bible: A Short History from Tyndale to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)


Deborah W. Rooke ed., *A Question of Sex: Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007)


Jon Singleton, ‘The Dissonant Bible Quotation: Political and Narrative Dissension in Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*’, *ELH*, 2011, 78(4), pp.917-941


Ken Stone, ed., *Queer Commentary and the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001)


**Classical Sources and English Literature**

**Electronic Resources**


*The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)


Homer, *The Odyssey* (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2002)

*The Iliad* (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2004)


Ovid: *Tales from Ovid*, ed. Ted Hughes (Faber, 1997)

*Sophocles' Oedipus Rex* (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2007)

Sophocles, *Oedipus Trilogy* (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2006)

Virgil, *The Aeneid* (Salt Lake City: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 1995)

**Reference**

Companion to Literary Myths, Heroes and Archetypes (London: Routledge, 1992)


**Secondary & Critical Material**


Alice Bennett, ‘Unquiet Spirits: Death Writing in Contemporary Fiction’, *Textual Practice*, Vol. 23(3), 2009, p.463-479 – includes discussion of Margaret Atwood’s *The Penelopiad*


Susanna Braund, ‘‘We’re here too, the ones without names’: A study of female voices as imagined by Margaret Atwood, Carol Ann Duffy, and Marguerite Yourcenar’, *Classical Receptions Journal*, Vol. 4(2), 2012, pp.190-208


Anne Carson, *Nox* (New Directions, 2009)


Rama Kundu, ‘Margaret Atwood’s Re-creation of the Philomel myth in “Nightingale”’, *Interlitteraria*, Issue 13, 2008, pp. 382-393


Charles Martindale, *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)


Alice Oswald, *Memorial* (London: Faber, 2011)

Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin Eldon Stevens (eds.), *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction* (Oxford University Press, 2015)


