Congratulations on being offered a place at Queen's! I organise the teaching of English at Queen's, as well as teaching the literature courses at the modern end of the syllabus. Although you will be taught by a variety of tutors with different specialisms during your time at Oxford, I’ll be advising you and organising your English tutorials for you throughout the course.

You’ll be studying two papers in English in the first year: Paper 1: Introduction to English Language and Literature, and **your choice of one of the following papers**: Paper 2: Early Medieval English Literature, 650-1350, Paper 3: Literature in English, 1830-1910 or Paper 4: Literature in English, 1910 to the present day. Reading lists are attached. Classes for both your papers will run throughout the first two terms, followed by revision work in the third term. Given the pressure of work in term, it is vital that you read the key texts for both papers before you arrive in Oxford: you will not have time to read the ‘primary texts’ (the novels, plays and poetry) for the first time, as well as the ‘secondary texts’ (criticism on the primary material) that you’ll be researching too.

You’ll find that many of these works are much more enjoyable and easier to follow if you devote extended periods of quality reading time to them. Remember to take good notes. I recommend taking notes on a separate piece of paper, or in the front or back of the book (remember to list page numbers!), rather than simply underlining passages as you read, which makes it difficult to revisit your ideas. Note anything you find interesting and want to talk about: it might be parts that you find difficult or confusing, sudden changes of style, or moments where the author seems to be stating a political position or a stylistic programme. When you finish reading a text, make sure you take some time (even if only half an hour) to brainstorm some immediate reactions and think about which ideas you might want to pursue further. This will make it much easier to return to the texts during the term. If there are authors or texts that don’t appear on the reading lists for the relevant period that you would like to work on next year, do mention them in the first week meetings. Although I will expect you to have read all the works on the reading lists, as core texts of the periods, it is often possible to accommodate particular interests as well. Indeed, the aim of the Oxford course is to develop your individual interests, while giving you a strong framework in which to interrogate them.

You need your own copies of all the primary texts listed, but you don’t need to buy new editions if you already have copies, and it’s fine to buy second-hand copies: searching Amazon and Abe Books on-line is the easiest way to find second-hand copies of particular texts and editions, but second-hand bookshops will also have many of the texts. If you are buying copies, try to buy editions with good introductions and notes: Oxford World’s Classics, Penguin Classics or Norton Critical editions (unless other editions are stated). Keep your receipts: you can apply for a book grant when you arrive to reimburse you for two thirds of the cost of the books.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write to me at rebecca.beasley@queens.ox.ac.uk. In any case, **please can you contact me by 1 September to tell me which of Papers 2, 3, or 4 you have chosen to study**.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to write to me at rebecca.beasley@queens.ox.ac.uk. I hope you enjoy your summer’s reading: I’m very much looking forward to seeing you again in October.

Dr. Rebecca Beasley  
Fellow in English
Paper 1: Introduction to English Language and Literature

This paper is intended to introduce you to English language and literature as a discipline, and to a variety of approaches to reading texts. It will introduce you to formal study of the English language, with particular reference to its historical development, its use as a literary medium, and the role of cultural and social factors on its development and use. The paper will also acquaint you with a wide range of theoretical issues and reading skills, but in doing so seeks to encourage you to think for yourself and to exercise critical scrutiny.

The English Faculty Library’s Guide to Prelims 1 (https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/english-prelims-paper-1) contains direct links to an invaluable range of online and bibliographic resources. Many of these are essential for work on the language section of the paper.

Approaches to Language (Michaelmas)
In your first term, you will be working on Section A of the paper. This focuses on the English language, and will challenge you to think about its history, varieties and uses.

To familiarise yourself with some basics of the history of the language, please read Jonathan Culpeper’s History of English (London: Routledge, 2nd edition 2005). You may also enjoy this 10-minute animated history: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H3r9bOkyW9s. The core book for this part of the paper is Ronald Carter and Walter Nash, Seeing Through Language: A Guide to Styles of English Writing (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990). You should read this book carefully over the vacation, and as you will need to refer to it regularly while working on this paper, you may want to consider buying it. If you feel your knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology would benefit from an overhaul, an excellent resource is the Internet Grammar of English (http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/home.htm).

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Approaches to Literature (Hilary)
This half of the paper is intended to introduce you to English literature as a discipline, and to a variety of approaches to reading literary texts and literary criticism. It will acquaint you with a range of theoretical issues and reading skills but in doing so, seeks to encourage you to think for yourself and to subject them to critical scrutiny. So we’ll be talking about some of the big issues that are raised by the study of English literature. What counts as literature? Who decides? What do we do when we read a text? Is it possible to agree on what we think about a text? Does it matter if we can’t agree on what’s good and what’s bad? What’s the role of the literary critic? The classic book that outlines some of the approaches critics have historically taken to answering these questions is Terry Eagleton’s Literary Theory: An Introduction, rev. edn (Blackwell, 2008), which is very readable, and interestingly opinionated. I’d recommend reading at least the introduction and first chapter—more if you’re enjoying it. A more recent work is Andrew Bennett’s and Nicholas Royle’s An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory, 5th edn (Routledge, 2016). It’s also an informative and approachable book, with a somewhat different approach from Eagleton’s. Although these books are most relevant to the Hilary term part of this course, they will be useful for all the work you do while you’re at Oxford, and I’d suggest that you buy the Bennett and Royle, at least, and start dipping into it before coming up. Also, buy and read John Lennard’s excellent The Poetry Handbook: a Guide to Reading Poetry for Pleasure and Practical Criticism, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Finally, you might want to read now, or over the course of the year, a history of English literature, which will help you place your reading in context. There are two currently in print to choose from: Andrew Sanders’s The Short Oxford History of English Literature, 3rd edn (Oxford University Press, 2004), and Michael Alexander’s A History of English Literature, 3rd edn (London: Palgrave, 2013).
All such histories are subjective, partial, and open to question, so when reading them, bear in mind the questions Eagleton, Bennett and Royle remind you to ask.

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Paper 2: Early Medieval Literature (c. 650-1350): Michaelmas and Hilary

This paper focuses on early medieval language and literature. It covers a vast period of some seven-hundred years, stretching from the very beginnings of literacy and book-production in Anglo-Saxon England in the early seventh century, across the Norman Conquest of 1066, right through until the time of the Black Death in the mid-fourteenth century. This is a period marked by an incredible vitality and inventiveness, as the linguistic and literary climate responded to and reflected rapid and often dramatic cultural changes. From a linguistic point of view, the paper covers the development of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ language (‘Old English’) from its Germanic origins into ‘early Middle English’ in the period after 1066. From a literary point of view, it covers a period which poses exciting challenges to our modern critical expectations and assumptions, asking fundamental questions about the nature of authorship, ideas of reception and performance, multilingualism, and the importance of literary, historical, and cultural contexts, as well as pushing our understanding of the boundary between the ‘literary’ and the ‘non-literary’.

Our work for this paper – which takes place across the first two terms of your first year – will be split between a general study of early medieval literary culture, encompassing a wide range of thematic and contextual approaches, and a close study of the language and style of four ‘set texts’. This structure is replicated in your end-of-year exam, in which you will be asked to write two essays and to produce a critical commentary on a passage from one of the set texts. For our commentary work, we will study four Old English poetic texts:


- *The Wanderer*: a lyrical and evocative lament that interrogates the human experience of loss, hardship, nostalgia, and a sense of the futility and mutability of earthly life.

- *The Battle of Maldon*: a poetic account of a historical battle fought between an army of Anglo-Saxons and a Viking raiding party near Maldon, Essex, in the year 991.

- ‘Beowulf’s fight with Grendel’: a short extract from the much longer poem *Beowulf*, in which the eponymous hero fights and defeats Grendel, a monstrous, troll-like figure who has been persecuting the inhabitants of the fabled hall Heorot for the past twelve years.


Introductory reading

While you will come to know the set texts particularly well, we shall also be looking at a wide range of early medieval English texts, and you are encouraged to read as widely as possible in the literature of the period and to familiarize yourself with the historical contexts from which it originates. Detailed reading lists for this paper will be provided at the start of Michaelmas Term but you should start your background reading now. To begin with, the original language of these texts will look very unfamiliar – don’t panic! This is the same for everyone, and we will learn how to read and translate the original texts when we begin the paper in Michaelmas. For now, you should read the texts by way of facing-page translations.

The best place to start is *Beowulf*, the most famous text of the early medieval period. I recommend getting hold of *Beowulf: Second Edition (with facing page translation)*, ed. and trans. R. M. Liuzza (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2013), which includes useful information in both the Introduction and the Appendices.

After that, it would also be a good idea to buy a copy of *Old and Middle English c. 890–c.1450. Third Edition*, ed. Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), which includes a good selection of early medieval texts with short introductions. Don’t feel that you have to read everything in this book
all at once, but try to read critically and keep notes on your impressions of the texts you look at.


Finally, to prepare for studying early medieval (Old English) language, it would be useful to look at Bella Millett’s ‘Introduction to Traditional Grammar’: http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/notes/grammar.htm

Please feel free to get in touch with me by email if you have any questions about this paper or would like any further information about what we will be doing for Paper 2 next year.

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Paper 3: Literature in English, 1830-1910 (‘Victorian’): Michaelmas Term

Think about similarities and differences between the texts listed in each week’s reading list. What might be interesting ways to relate them to each other? I’ve deliberately not specified individual poems to look at, because I’d like you to get a sense of whole collections of verse, making your own decisions about which poems you want to spend more time on. You won’t have time now to ‘close read’ every single poem in the collections (working out metres, thinking about imagery and references): you should read through all the collections specified, and then look at a few poems by each poet in detail to get under the skin of the style.

You’ll be writing an essay on each of the topics listed below, apart from the final two: you can choose whether you want to write on Pre-Raphaelite poetry or Aestheticism. Ideally, you’ll still read the works listed for both over the summer—the point of the course is to give you a broad knowledge, not just material for essays—but if you run out of time, you can focus on just one of these areas.

Introductory reading

If possible, read one of these books as background to the first term’s work. You don’t have to buy these secondary texts (apart from the Williams, they are expensive), but if your local library doesn’t have them, and you don’t yet have reference access to your nearest university library (they may not give you access until you have your Oxford student card), you may need to wait until you get to Oxford to read one. If you see cheap second-hand copies, snap them up.


Michaelmas Term

‘Modern’ Victorian poetry


The dramatic monologue

Robert Browning, the selections from *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842), *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845), and *Men and Women* (1855), in *The Major Works*, ed. by Daniel Karlin and Adam Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

The rise of the novel and the ‘Condition of England’

Charlotte Brontë *Shirley* (1849)
Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854)
Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (1854-5)

Hilary Term

‘The Woman Question’

*New Realism*
Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* (1891), *Jude the Obscure* (1895)
George Gissing, *The Nether World* (1889)

**Pre-Raphaelite poetry**


**Aestheticism**
Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), and *The Turn of the Screw and Other Stories*, ed. by T.J. Lustig (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Vernon Lee, *Hauntings, and Other Fantastic Tales*, ed. by Catherine Maxwell and Patricia Pulham (Peterborough, ON: Broadview, 2006)

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Paper 4: Literature in English, 1910 to the present day (‘Modern’): Hilary Term

Think about similarities and differences between the texts listed in each week’s reading list. What might be interesting ways to relate them to each other? I’ve deliberately not specified individual poems to look at, because I’d like you to get a sense of whole collections of verse, making your own decisions about which poems you want to spend more time on. You won’t have time now to ‘close read’ every single poem in the collections (working out metres, thinking about imagery and references): you should read through all the collections specified, and then look at a few poems by each poet in detail to get under the skin of the style.

You’ll be writing an essay on each of the topics listed below, apart from the final two: you can choose whether you want to write on postmodernist fiction or postcolonial poetry. Ideally, you’ll still read the works listed for both—the point of the course is to give you a broad knowledge, not just material for essays—but if you run out of time, you can focus on just one of these areas.

Introductory reading
If possible, read one of these books as background to the term’s work. You don’t have to buy these secondary texts (they are more expensive than the primary texts), but if your local library doesn’t have them, and you don’t yet have access to your nearest university library (they are unlikely to give you access until you have your Oxford student card), you may need to wait until you get to Oxford to read one. If you see cheap second-hand copies, snap them up.

Tim Armstrong, Modernism: A Cultural History (Polity, 2005)
---, Modernism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011)
Peter Nicholls, Modernisms: A Literary Guide, 2nd edn (Macmillan, 2008)
Jeff Wallace, Beginning Modernism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011)

Michaelmas Term

Realism, impressionism, modernism: the modernist novel
Ford Madox Ford, The Good Soldier: A Tale of Passion (1915)
James Joyce, Portrait of the Artist (1916)
Virginia Woolf, Jacob’s Room (1922)
---, Mrs Dalloway (1925)
---, To the Lighthouse (1927)

Everyday life and mass culture
James Joyce, Ulysses (1922). If you are buying this new, I recommend Ulysses: The 1922 Text, ed. by Jeri Johnson (Oxford World’s Classics), which has an excellent introduction and very good notes. If you have a copy without notes and synopses of chapters, you might want to buy or get from the library Harry Blamires, The New Bloomsday Book: A Guide Through Ulysses (Routledge, 1996). Don’t worry too much about understanding everything: even the experts don’t! Read through fairly swiftly, taking general notes and noting connections across the text.

Symbolism, imagism, modernism: early modernist poetry
T.S. Eliot, Prufrock (1917) (i.e. the poems under this collection title, not just the collection’s title poem ‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’), Poems (1920), in Collected Poems, 1909-62, new edn (Faber) or Complete Poems and Plays (Faber)
Peter Jones, ed., Imagist Poetry, new edn (Penguin). Please read the poems by Aldington, Hulme, H.D., and Lowell. You should find the introduction and the extra material at the back of the book helpful.
Ezra Pound, the selections from Personae, Ripostes, Lustra, in Selected Poems, 1908-69, rev. edn

**Hilary Term**

**History, tradition, myth: the modernist long poem**
Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), the selections from *The Cantos*, in *Selected Poems, 1908-69*, rev. edn (Faber)

Don’t worry about understanding every reference in *The Waste Land*, *Mauberley* and *The Cantos*: think instead about what this poetry seems to be trying to do, and what seems innovative about it to you (especially in relation to the previous week’s reading). There are line-by-line guides available. For Eliot: B.C. Southam, *A Student’s Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Faber, 1994), in print, and Harry Blamires, *Word Unheard: A Guide Through Eliot’s Four Quartets* (Methuen, 1969), out of print, but sometimes turns up in second-hand bookshops, and will be in libraries. For Pound: Peter Brooker, *A Student’s Guide to the Selected Poems of Ezra Pound* (Faber, 1979) and Christine Froula, *A Guide to Ezra Pound’s Selected Poems* (New Directions, 1983), both out of print, but available on Amazon second hand and in libraries. These guides are by no means required reading at this stage, but they are very useful when delving further into the poetry—and using them is not cheating.

**Late modernism and drama**
Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914) and *Four Saints in Three Acts*, in *Selected Writings* (1934) (Vintage)

**The emergence of postmodernism**
John Barth, *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) (Anchor)

**The black Atlantic: Postcolonial poetry**
Grace Nichols, *i is a long memoried woman* (1983) (Karnak)
Derek Walcott, *Omeros* (1990) (Faber)

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