British Literature (Master Year 1 / Fall)

Master in English and American Language, Literature and History / Faculty of Liberal Arts

Introduction

Be it on our bookshelves, on stage or on our screens, historical fiction has become ubiquitous in our cultural landscape. Answering to both an interest in past eras and a craving for adventure and entertainment, it provides the public with a way to relate to people of the past in the most human way possible – storytelling. Its popularity means that historical fiction has become a multimedia and multifaceted genre: multi-volume novels, plays, graphic novels, series, blockbusters, or video games targeting different audiences are all widely available. Historical fiction tells personal histories that merge with History. By linking the individual adventures of characters to the collective story of a group or a nation, it can reinforce the dominant historical narrative or provide food for historical thinking, for instance by adopting the point of view of the defeated or the forgotten of history (an approach praised by historians such as Reinhart Koselleck). For example, postcolonial or female perspectives provide readers with stories which contrast with those traditionally told – and therefore offers us different perspectives on History. This course will start by exploring several definitions of historical fiction and pose a working definition of the genre. It will trace the history of the genre from its origins with Walter Scott's Waverley novels in nineteenth-century Britain to its most recent twenty-first century developments, and try to understand the reasons behind the collective appetite for such works of fiction.
The material studied in class will include academic articles, 19th & 20th-century novels, contemporary fiction, as well as historical period drama (mini-series and film). A bibliography will be handed out at the beginning of term.

Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Know about the history of historical fiction and about the ongoing debate about the definitions of historical fiction
- Have refined their technique of text / film / image analysis
- Be able to reflect on the interaction between history, fiction and storytelling
- Produce a structured critical discourse about a piece of historical fiction, whether it be a text, a film, a painting, etc.

Duration

1 semester

Teaching languages

- English

Conditions of submission

If you need more information about this course, kindly send an email to: incomingdri@icp.fr

Admission

Prerequisite

Prerequisites training

B2/C1 level of English.

Program

Methods of Instruction

Seminar with in-class participation

Assessment and Final Grade

- 12-page term paper with full bibliography (80%)
- participation mark (20%)

Course Requirements

Attendance is compulsory