

Course Syllabus

Identity Crisis: A Survey of 20th-Century British Literature

If, in the nineteenth century, “the sun never set on the British Empire,” the twentieth century witnessed an era of setting suns and new dawns of national consciousness. The intervention of two world wars, the rise of the welfare state, and the growth of immigration ensured that the social and aesthetic “composition” of British culture would radically transform in a relatively short space of time. Taking into consideration a wide range of novels, short stories, poems, and plays, this course examines the way twentieth-century British literature engages in a continual renegotiation of cultural identity in response to change. As we trace the “art of mutability” from modernist disenchantment to postmodern pluralism, we will focus on the manner in which British culture reads and critically restages its own (literary) history as it attempts to articulate a new conception of Britishness.

Students will complete two papers and a final exam. Students will also receive an additional grade based on attendance and class participation.

Grading

Paper 1	30%
Paper 2	30%
Final Exam	20%
Participation	20%

13-Week Syllabus

Weeks 1-2, (Dis)Connection

Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction” and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown”
E. M. Forster, *Howards End*

Weeks 3-4, Identity Theft

Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier*

Weeks 5-6, Among the Ruins

W. B. Yeats, “Leda and the Swan,” “The Second Coming,” “Sailing to Byzantium,” and “Byzantium”
T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and *The Waste Land*

Week 7, Restaging the Past

Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts*

Week 8, The End in the Beginning

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*

Weeks 9-10, Poetry after Potsdam

Edwin Muir, “The Absent” and “One Foot in Eden”
Dylan Thomas, “Fern Hill” and “Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night”

Edith Sitwell, "Three Poems of the Atomic Age"
Philip Larkin, "Church Going" and "Dockery and Son"
Ted Hughes, "Theology" and "Crow's First Lesson"
Denise Riley, "Dark Looks" and "Oleanna"

Week 11, Voyaging In

Salman Rushdie, *East, West*

Weeks 12-13, Cosmopolitanism(s)

Zadie Smith, *White Teeth*