



**Programme Handbook for:**

**MSt in Modern Languages**

and

**MPhil in Modern Languages**

**2024-2025**

**Applies to students commencing their studies in 2024-25**

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## WELCOME

Welcome to postgraduate study in the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, which belongs to the Humanities Division at the University of Oxford - we hope you will enjoy your studies with us!

Please note that from the start of the 2025-26 academic year, the Faculty will relocate to the new Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities in the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter. More detailed information on arrangements for the Faculty's move to the new building, including the Graduate Office location and opening hours, graduate study and social space, and library resources, will be communicated separately to all continuing graduate students during 2024-25.

This handbook provides an overview of the teaching and assessment on your course, and a guide to other University services which may be relevant to you. You do not need to read it in one sitting, but please do familiarize yourself with the contents in case you need to refer to it at any time during the year.

This handbook applies if you are commencing your studies in 2024-25, and should be read alongside the 2024-25 special subjects and method options guide. Other detailed course information can be found on [Canvas](#), the University's virtual learning environment.

The [Oxford Students website](#) is also a key source of information about the rules applying to, and the services available to support you in, your studies.

### Your key Faculty contacts:

Dr Rajendra Chitnis, MML Director of Master's Courses [dmc@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dmc@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)

Prof. Katherine Ibbett, MML Director of Graduate Studies [dgs@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dgs@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) has oversight of all the postgraduate taught and research degrees offered by the Faculty, but works in partnership with the DMC, who takes primary day to day responsibility for the management of the MSt and MPhil courses.

Graduate Studies Office [graduate.studies@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) The people behind this email are: Sandra Beaumont, MML Graduate Studies Officer and Lucy Venables, MML Education Manager. They can help with queries about any aspect of your on-course administration – they may need to refer you to staff at your College in order to initiate some processes.

### Other important contacts:

Graduate Tutor or Academic Office at your College. You will be assigned a College Advisor, who can provide guidance on pastoral matters.

Depending on the time of year, your Special Subject tutor (Michaelmas/Hilary Term) or your Dissertation/Thesis supervisor (Trinity Term)

Student representatives: postgraduate student reps are elected for each course, and for each language sub-faculty, to ensure students have a voice on key committees. Their names are published on the graduate representatives webpage on the [Faculty website](#). If you would like to stand for election as a student rep, look out for emails from the MML Graduate Office at the start of the year when we ask for volunteers.

## GETTING STARTED

Congratulations on becoming a student at the University of Oxford. You can find lots of information and advice to help you settle into life as an Oxford student on the University website here: [New students | University of Oxford](#)

Take a look around the website to familiarise yourself with the information there: the sections on 'before you arrive' and 'your first few weeks' will be particularly useful in the first instance. You should also take a look at the 'getting started with IT' web pages: [Getting started | IT Services \(ox.ac.uk\)](#) and make sure you know what to do so that your University card can be issued, and you can set up your access to IT facilities and fully register on your course.

[Graduate study guidance](#) is an especially useful section of the Oxford students website, and you will also need to access various processes via the [Student Self Service](#) page.

## COURSE STRUCTURES

### MSt students

This is a one-year course: you will complete two special subjects, a method option, and a dissertation over the course of the year, as follows:

Michaelmas Term (MT)	Hilary Term (HT)	Trinity Term (TT)
<b>Special Subject 1</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>MT Week 10</i>	<b>Special Subject 2</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>HT Week 10</i>	<b>MSt Dissertation</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>TT Week 7</i>
<b>Method Option</b> <i>Assessment submission HT Week 10</i>		

### MPhil students

This is a two-year course: you will take two special subjects and a method option in your first year, and a further special subject and a thesis in your second year, as follows:

	Michaelmas Term (MT)	Hilary Term (HT)	Trinity Term (TT)
Year 1	<b>Special Subject 1</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>MT Week 10</i>	<b>Special Subject 2</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>HT Week 10</i>	<b>Dissertation/thesis workshops</b>
	<b>Method Option</b> <i>Assessment submission HT Week 10</i>		
Year 2	<b>Either Special Subject 3</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>MT Week 10</i>	<b>Or Special Subject 3</b> <i>Assessment submission</i> <i>HT Week 10</i>	
	<b>MPhil Thesis</b> <i>Assessment submission TT Week 7</i>		

### Award requirements

All of the programme components must be passed – i.e. you must achieve a mark of at least 50% for all assessments - in order to qualify for the award of MSt or MPhil. The following award classifications are available:

Award classification	Overall average mark
Pass	50% or above
Merit	65% or above
Distinction	70% or above

The **overall average marks** are calculated as follows:

**MSt:** the two highest marks from the three special subject and method option courses taken count for 50%, and the dissertation mark counts for the other 50%, of the overall average mark.

For example, a student with the following marks profile would have an overall average mark of 70.8 (discounting the 68 for the method option) and therefore an award classification of Distinction:

Special Subject 1	72
Special Subject 2	71
Method Option	68
Dissertation	70

**MPhil:** the three highest marks from the four special subject and method option courses taken count for 45%, and the thesis mark counts for 55%, of the overall average mark. For example, a student with the following marks profile would have an overall average mark of 68.8 (discounting one of the 64 scores) and therefore an award classification of Merit:

Special Subject 1	73
Special Subject 2	72
Special Subject 3	64
Method Option	64
Thesis	68

If any component is **failed** at the first attempt\*, you are entitled to resit it once (the resit submission date is 12.00 on the last Monday of the September following your first attempt). The mark awarded for a resit is capped at the pass mark for the course (50%); and you should note that if *any* course components are passed at resit, rather than at the first attempt, you cannot be considered for an overall award classification of Merit or Distinction.

\*If you do not submit any work by the deadline without permission (i.e. an extension), or within the timeframe given by the Proctors for making an application for mitigating circumstances (14 days from the approved deadline) you will fail the course.

Where exceptional circumstances, e.g. for late or non-submission, are accepted by the Proctors, or a dispensation granted by Education Committee, allowances may be made in respect of resit attempts. You can find the Student Guide to MCEs on the [problems completing your assessment](#) webpage.

### Transferring between courses

As you can see, the MSt and MPhil courses follow the same curriculum structure for the first two terms; so students can, in theory, transfer between the MSt and MPhil up until the start of Trinity Term, at which point the courses diverge. If you are thinking about transferring between courses, please let us know, as you will need the permission of the DMC. You will need to complete a GSO.28 form which is available on the [graduate forms webpage](#), and which requires you to have discussed the proposed programme change with your supervisor and your college. For a move from the MSt to MPhil, assurance that you have the necessary funding and permission to remain in the UK for an

additional year (as necessary) will also be required. If you are a student visa holder wishing to transfer from MSt to MPhil, please take advice from the [visa and immigration](#) team (email [student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.immigration@admin.ox.ac.uk)) before you start your application.

### **Withdrawal or suspension of studies**

If you encounter circumstances which prevent you from pursuing your studies for a period of time, which mean that you need to suspend your studies, please seek advice from your College and the MML Graduate Office.

To apply for suspension of status, you will need to complete a GSO.17 form, available from the [graduate forms web page](#), and submit it to the MML Graduate Studies Office. If the application is approved, you will not be liable to pay fees during the period of suspension and will automatically resume your former student status at the end of the period (you will need to complete a GSO.17a form prior to your return). MSt and MPhil students are generally expected to return at the equivalent point of the following academic year, but this should be discussed with the Faculty prior to submitting the GSO.17 form, depending on the circumstances and the point of the programme at which you suspend your studies.

Should it prove necessary to withdraw from your course, you will need to complete the GSO.29 form, which is available via Student Self Service.

You can find more information about changes in student status on the University website here: [Changes in student status | University of Oxford](#)

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The emphasis of the MSt and MPhil courses is on self-directed learning. The courses provide a framework within which you are encouraged to develop your own programme of study based on your academic interests, and teaching is tailored accordingly.

Your progression from the Special Subjects to the dissertation/thesis should enable you to discover and define your own interests and to explore them with increasing independence. You may already be clear about the topic you are interested in, in which case the Special Subject enables you to begin investigating it in depth. Or you may be looking for a research topic, in which case a broadly defined Special Subject promotes wide but focussed reading within a general area. The theoretical/methodological seminars open up a range of critical perspectives which should both enlarge your understanding of your field of study and equip you with research skills for further study. Finally, the dissertation, which usually develops a theme from your Special Subjects, allows you to write a substantial piece of original scholarly work that benefits from the new perspectives opened up by the theoretical/methodological seminars.

Students are free to attend any lectures and seminars advertised on the [Lecture List](#), as well as the various Humanities seminars and events that are advertised throughout the year. You also have access to the UG course resources via your Canvas dashboard.

Both the MSt and MPhil programmes are intensive and challenging courses. Graduate students should look upon their study as a full-time occupation and be prepared to commit at least 40 hours each week. While you may wish to take on additional non-academic commitments (e.g. paid work) the University recommends that this be limited to a maximum of eight hours per week. Further information can be found on the [Paid Work Guidelines for Oxford Graduate Students](#) web page.

## Supervision

Your supervisor will change each term, depending on the courses you are taking, so that special subject tutors and dissertation supervisors can all write reports on your progress through the year (GSR – see below). In Michaelmas and Hilary terms, your supervisor will be your tutor from the special subject you are taking that term, while in Trinity Term your supervisor will be your dissertation or thesis supervisor.

GSR, or Graduate Supervision Reporting, is a system used by students, supervisors, college and faculty staff to track your progress through your course. You are strongly encouraged to take the opportunity to review and comment on your academic progress, any skills training you have undertaken or may need to undertake in the future, and on your engagement with the academic community. When reporting on academic progress, you should review progress during the current term, and measure this progress against the timetable and requirements for your programme of study. You should also reflect on the skills required to undertake the work you intend to carry out and identify any skills you wish to gain or strengthen through further training. Your tutor/s should discuss these reports with you, as they will form the basis for reviewing your progress and agreeing plans for the term ahead.

Access to GSR is via [Student Self Service](#) - you are asked to report between weeks 7 and 9 of each term. You will be sent a GSR automated email notification with details of how to log in at the start of each reporting window, and who to contact with queries; however, should you need additional support, please contact the Graduate Studies Office in the first instance.

Once you have completed your sections of the online form, it will be released to your Special Subject tutor/s for completion in Michaelmas and Hilary terms, and your dissertation supervisor in Trinity term. When the tutor/supervisor's sections are completed, you will be able to view the full report, as will the Director of Graduate Studies and your College Advisor. Directors of Graduate Studies are responsible for ensuring that appropriate supervision takes place, and this is one of the mechanisms they use to obtain information about supervision. College advisors are a source of support and advice to students, and it is therefore important that they are informed of your progress, including concerns (expressed by you or your tutor/supervisor).

## Special subjects

Details of all the Special Subjects (and method options) offered in 2024-25 can be found in the options brochure which accompanies this handbook and on the relevant language sections of the [MML graduate studies web pages](#).

Each Special Subject runs in either Michaelmas or Hilary Term, and normally involves four meetings, which will take the form of seminars (where there are three or more students) or tutorials (where there are one or two students). These meetings may be weekly or fortnightly. Seminars are generally delivered as 4 x 1.5-hour meetings; while tutorials will be 4 x 1-hour sessions.

Formative feedback for Special Subjects may take a number of forms, including oral comments on oral presentations, annotations on draft bibliographies, email responses to proposed research questions, and so on (as appropriate). The Special Subject tutors will normally read and give formal written feedback and indicate a predicted mark range (pass, merit, distinction), on one or two pieces of written work during the term; where these pieces are subsequently revised and presented as a portfolio for assessment, the Special Subject tutors should not generally offer additional written comments on the revision. In cases where the proposed submission for assessment differs very substantially from the piece/s submitted during the term, the Special Subject tutors may also read, comment on, and indicate a predicted mark band for this piece too, provided the work is submitted for comment by Friday of 8th week at the latest.

The portfolio you submit for summative assessment is usually either one or two essays, as you prefer, to a total of 5,000-7,000 words; however, some courses specify a required format for the portfolio (e.g. a single full-length essay) so you should check with your course convenor.

### **Method Option courses**

You will take one of the following four Method Option courses:

- German Cultural Theory: The critical tradition from Schiller to Arendt and Jaeggi
- Key Questions in Critical Thought
- Spaces of Comparison
- Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities

Details of the method options offered in 2024-25 can be found in the options brochure which accompanies this handbook.

The Method/Theory course runs through both Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and involves a series of hour-long lectures and - depending on student numbers - either seminars or tutorials lasting up to 2 hours, in which students give presentations to their tutor/s and peers. In Week 10 of Hilary Term, you must submit a 5,000-7,000 word essay. The topic of your essay will arise out of the issues and/or be an analysis of the topics explored in the lectures or during the seminars. The Method Option convenors provide students with guidance on their essays, but they should be independently produced pieces of research.

### **Dissertation/Thesis**

The MSt dissertation is 10,000-12,000 words in length, and contributes 50% to the overall award classification. You will normally start working on it after you have made your Hilary Term coursework submissions, but you will be allocated a dissertation supervisor earlier in the year (around the start of Michaelmas Term) according to the proposed topic/title you gave in your application, and you should have a preparatory meeting with them by mid-Michaelmas Term (they will not be set up formally as a supervisor until Trinity Term).

The MPhil thesis is 20,000-25,000 words in length and contributes 55% to the overall award classification. You will do most of the work on it in your second year, but preparatory work will start in the first year, with the initial allocation of supervisors and a workshop run by the Director of Master's Courses.

You will be asked to confirm your dissertation/thesis title early in Hilary Term – the deadline for response will be in HT Week 4 – on the basis of which examiners with the appropriate academic expertise will be assigned. It is still possible to make changes to your title after this time, but you must notify the Graduate Studies Office ([graduate.studies@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)) of your intention, as a significant change in topic may require new examiners to be found. You should discuss any potential changes of focus with your supervisor, who will be able to advise whether this will be necessary.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Rules and regulations**

Students for the MSt and MPhil in Modern Languages are examined entirely on the basis of submitted work. Make sure you understand the rules governing the assessment of your course – apart from this handbook, the key sources of information are:

- Examination regulations – find them on Canvas (under '[Assessment and Feedback](#)') or on the [Exam Regulations](#) web pages:



[MSt Modern Languages regulations 2024-25](#)

[MPhil Modern Languages regulations 2024-25](#)

- Examination Conventions – find them on Canvas (under '[Assessment and Feedback](#)') This is the formal record of the specific assessment standard for the course and it governs the examination process for these courses. They set out how your examined work will be marked and how the resulting marks will be used to arrive at an overall classification for your award. They include information on: marking scales, marking and classification criteria, progression, resits, penalties for late submission, and penalties for over-long work.
- Guidance on the format of assessed work and how to avoid plagiarism, which you can find on Canvas, under '[Assessment and Feedback](#)'.
- [Problems completing your assessment](#) website – guidance on what to do if you experience difficulties with meeting assessment requirements.
- Examinations and Assessment Framework – this is primarily procedural guidance for examiners and other staff who manage the assessment processes, but you can download it from the [Academic Support website](#)

#### *Note on English C courses*

If you are taking an English course in place of your Michaelmas Term or Hilary Term Special Subject, you will be assessed according to the relevant Faculty of ELL examination conventions – staff in the English Faculty Graduate Office can provide you with these – contact them on [graduate.studies@ell.ox.ac.uk](mailto:graduate.studies@ell.ox.ac.uk)

### **Marking**

All submissions are 'blind double-marked', with two markers making an initial assessment independently of each other, and then meeting to agree on a final mark for the work. For Special Subjects, the first marker will be the course convenor (or one of them if it is taught jointly by two or more academics) and the second marker will be the PG examiner for the relevant language. For Method Options, first and second markers may be the course convenors (where a course is jointly taught), or the course convenor and a second member of staff with academic expertise that is relevant to the topic you have addressed in your portfolio. For the dissertation/thesis, first markers are assigned on the basis of the title/topic you notify us of in Hilary Term, and a member of the board of examiners will usually be the second marker, unless the PG examiner for your language was your supervisor, in which case an alternative second marker will be appointed.

An external examiner is provided with samples of assessed work and marksheets, in order that they can make a judgement on the standards of marking and of student achievement, and provide assurance about the fairness and integrity of the assessment process. The external examiner for the Modern Languages courses is currently Dr Peter Arnds of Trinity College Dublin, who has commented on how much he has enjoyed reading the work produced by our MSt and MPhil students.

### **Entering for assessment**

You must formally enter for your assessments with the Examination Schools - see [Examination entry | University of Oxford](#). This should be done through your college in Michaelmas Term of the academic year in which the examination is to be taken (MPhil in the second week and MSt in the eighth week of term). If in doubt, consult the Tutor for Graduates or Academic Office at your college, as failure to enter for the correct assessment units on time will incur a fee.

### **Submitting your work**

Submission of essays is due by 12 noon on Thursday of the specified week for each assessment, unless a deadline extension is obtained from the Proctors, in which case they will notify you of your new deadline.

All assessments are submitted electronically via Inspera. Please do take time to read through the guidance on how to submit your coursework on Inspera, as making an error in uploading/submitting your work is not accepted as a reason for missing a deadline. Full information is provided on the student web pages: [Submission of coursework assessments | University of Oxford](#)

You can find guidance on [Canvas](#) in relation to the format of work – some of the key things to remember are that your work should be submitted as a pdf file, it should be identified only by your candidate number (not your student number), and a word count must be declared on the first page of your submission. Don't forget to insert page numbers throughout your document – this makes it a lot easier for markers to give feedback on specific points.

### **Penalties – late submission or exceeding word limits**

Penalties will be applied for late submission without permission from the Proctors or a dispensation from the Education Committee. You can find these penalties listed in the examination conventions (section 3.7). They accumulate with time, so that a submission which is an hour late would incur a penalty of -3 marks, a submission which is 5-12 hours late would incur a penalty of -5 marks (-3-2), and a submission which is, for example, four days late would incur a penalty of -11 marks (-3-2-[3x2]).

Penalties are also applied to submissions which exceed the word limits – these are also set out in the examination conventions (section 3.8). As noted above, the word count\* must be given on the first page of all submissions.

\*The word count includes:

- Main text of the essay
- Headings of each section of the essay, such as 'Introduction' or 'Conclusion'
- Content of footnotes (including works cited but excluding English translations of quotes given in the original language within the main text)

*It does not include:*

- Cover page
- Table of contents
- List of figures
- Acknowledgements
- Bibliography or works cited
- Page numbers
- Footnote numbers
- Headers repeated at the top of each page (e.g. containing page numbers, candidate number, assessment unit number, etc)
- English translations in footnotes of quotes given in the original language within the main text.

As noted in section 3.5 of the examination conventions, there are no specific penalties for a submission which is shorter than the lower end of the word count range. However, work that is significantly under-length is more likely to be inadequate in its coverage and content in the context of the marking criteria.

### **Language of submission**

Work for the MSt and MPhil in Modern Languages is normally written in English, but may be submitted in an appropriate language other than English, with the permission of the Director of Master's Courses. The application form is available on Canvas, which you should complete in discussion with your course tutor and return to the Office for sign-off by the DMC.

The following restrictions in respect of language of submission apply:

- Method Options: the essays submitted for the courses on Key Questions in Critical Thought, Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities, and Spaces of Comparison must be written in English. Those written for the German Cultural Theory course may be written in English or German;
- At least one of the pieces of written work you submit over the course of the programme must be in English.
- A lack of competence in academic English is not an acceptable reason for requesting submission in another language.

Before seeking permission to write in a language other than English, you should consult with your course supervisors and give careful consideration to the wider implications of your request. It is important to recognise that the language of the thesis will to some extent determine the opportunities for subsequent publication and, ultimately, future career choices.

### **Mitigating circumstances**

If you are experiencing issues which are impacting on your ability to complete your assessment on time, please refer to guidance on the website: [Problems completing your assessment | University of Oxford](#) Your college can also offer advice and guidance if you are experiencing difficulties with your studies.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism (e.g. presenting the work or ideas of others as your own) is a serious breach of the examination regulations which can result in severe penalties if you are referred to the Proctors and found to be in breach. You can find out more about the definitions of plagiarism and how to avoid - deliberately or inadvertently - being guilty of this form of cheating on the [plagiarism web page](#) of the Oxford students website. There are also a range of [study skills guides and courses](#) available to help you develop good academic practice in your studies.

### **Academic appeals**

An academic appeal is an appeal against a decision made by an examination board. It may only be made on certain grounds (for example, there was an error or bias in the decision-making process), and not on the basis that you disagree with the academic judgement of the examiners who marked your work. You can find out more about the grounds for appeal, and the process you should follow, on the [complaints and academic appeals](#) web page on the Oxford students website. **You should NOT contact the assessors or examiners directly about an academic appeal.**

If you have extenuating circumstances which require an adjustment to the examination regulations that apply, you may also apply for a [dispensation](#) from the Education Committee.

## **STUDY SUPPORT AND WELFARE**

### **Library and study guidance**

As a MML student, you have access to the Taylorian library, which is the largest and best resourced Modern Languages library in the country. Find out more about the library and its collections here: [Taylor Institution Library | Bodleian Libraries \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

It is important to make yourself familiar at an early date with all the bibliographical tools of research available in Oxford. Many of these will be found in the Catalogue Room of the Bodleian. Many books on European languages and literatures (not only pre-nineteenth century books) are in the Bodleian. The Bodleian itself contains a world-famous collection of manuscripts, both medieval and later. Books can be borrowed from the Taylorian and from college libraries. The holdings of the older

college libraries may also be of interest, especially to those working on pre-1800 literature (request for access should be addressed to the librarian). In addition, the library of Rhodes House contains material of considerable importance for modernists.

If you feel you would benefit from study skills training or guidance to help you perform to your best ability on your course, check out the courses and resources available to you here: [Study skills and training | University of Oxford](#)

### **Help and Feedback on Writing – Royal Literary Fellow**

We are pleased to advise that, for the 2024-25 academic year, the Faculty has a dedicated Fellow in post to assist graduate students with their writing and academic literacy.

Julia Hollander is a professional writer who can help you improve your writing and make the whole process more enjoyable. The session lasts 50 minutes and is free and confidential: this service is independent from university services for students.

Possible topics to discuss include: understanding the title, essay planning, structuring your argument, writing clearly, critical thinking, rewriting and editing. The session will focus on your specific needs. Ahead of the meeting have a think about what you would like help with. It can be useful for Julia to see a sample of your work ahead of the session, so please e-mail her if possible two to three days before the appointment around 5-7 pp (max) of the work you would like her to look at. Email copy as a Word.doc to: [Julia.Hollander@rlfeducation.org.uk](mailto:Julia.Hollander@rlfeducation.org.uk)

This service will be starting up again for the forthcoming academic year in -1 week of Michaelmas Term, **from Tuesday 1 October** (Tuesdays and Wednesdays: 10.00 am – 1.00 pm and 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm.).

This is your service so please don't hesitate in making an appointment, click on the link below, and follow the instructions:

<https://calendly.com/julia-hollander/1to1>

Please note all sessions are in person in office F8, situated on the first floor, 47 Wellington Square (MML Faculty).

In exceptional circumstances sessions can be offered online. If you have a good reason for not being able to attend in person, please email Julia to request an online booking explaining your situation.

It's best to book some way ahead of a deadline, so you've got time to apply the advice you receive. Only make one booking. If you are unable to attend please try to give at least 48 hours' notice so that your slot can be offered to another student.

**Please note that this service is only available to students currently living in the UK. It is not suitable for students who require specialised English language help (e.g. TEFL, EAP).**

By making an appointment you indicate that you understand and accept the following:

#### **Disclaimer:**

The Fellow is not employed by the university or funded by it; the Fellow is a self-employed published writer and provides an independent service as a non-academic expert in writing; the Fellow is required to work within parameters established and monitored by the Royal Literary Fund (RLF), organiser and funder of the service; the Fellow may therefore be unable to assist with certain types of enquiry and, with reference to these parameters, has the right to refuse to provide the service to any student; the Fellow and the RLF do not accept any liability for any direct, indirect, special,

consequential or other losses or damages of any kind arising from use of the service by a student; students retain sole responsibility for their own work.

### **Privacy**

*The Royal Literary Fund stores the data you provide for the duration of the Fellowship. The Fellow also completes and retains a record of each tutorial session. This data is stored electronically. We collect and store this data solely for the purposes of providing the Fellowship service and monitoring the effectiveness of that service, and retain it only as long as is necessary for these purposes. Only RLF staff and contracted personnel have access, and that data is not shared with any third party. The university/college and its staff are not given access to your personal data.*

### **Faculty facilities**

A common room with kitchen facilities is available for graduate student use in 47 Wellington Square.

There is one PC in the common room, and one PC in the ground floor workspace opposite the Graduate Common Room in 47 Wellington Square. The Graduate Workspace also has desk space for six students to work using their own laptop. Your University card should automatically allow you access to both these rooms.

There is another computer room for Modern Languages students on the second floor at 47 Wellington Square. It contains 1 PC connected to a laser printer for high-quality printing. All the computers are connected to the University network for services such as e-mail. There is also desk space for five students to work using their own laptop.

If you wish to use the computer facilities please contact our IT team at [it-support@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:it-support@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk) for log-in details. The central University IT Services team runs regular courses which students are encouraged to attend. Details of courses and support for any other IT issues can be on the [IT Services website](#)

### **Wellbeing**

The University's unique and close-knit collegiate system provides a wealth of pastoral and welfare services for students to support engagement with studies and University life, promoting student wellbeing by providing opportunities for social interaction and sport and arts. Additionally, the central Student Welfare and Support Services department offers professional support that complements provision in colleges and departments.

Information about the student welfare services available can be found on the [Welfare and Wellbeing pages](#) on the University website:

- The [Disability Advisory Service](#) (DAS) can provide information, advice and guidance on the way in which a particular disability may impact on your student experience at the University and assist with organising disability-related study support.
- The [Counselling Service](#) is here to help you address personal or emotional problems that get in the way of having a good experience at Oxford and realising your full academic and personal potential. The counselling team is committed to providing culturally sensitive and appropriate psychological services. Students can request to see a male or female therapist, a Counsellor of Colour, or to attend a specialist group such as the LGBTQ+ or Students of Colour Groups. All support is free and confidential.
- The [Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service](#) provides a safe and confidential space for any student, of any gender, sexuality or sexual orientation, who has been impacted by sexual harassment or violence, domestic or relationship abuse, coercive control or stalking, whenever or wherever this took place.

- A range of services led by students are available to help provide support to other students, including the [peer support network](#), the Oxford SU's [Student Advice Service](#) and Nightline. Oxford SU also runs a series of [campaigns](#) to raise awareness and promote causes that matter to students. There is also a wide range of [student clubs and societies](#) to get involved in.
- Additionally, every college has their own systems of support for students, including the college tutor for graduates, a designated college adviser for each student, the Chaplain, and the college nurse and doctor. In addition, there is peer support from the Middle Common Room (MCR), which elects student officers with special responsibility for welfare. Please refer to your College handbook or website for more information on who to contact and what support is available through your college.

## Equality and diversity

*"The University of Oxford is committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all its staff and students are respected. We recognise that the broad range of experiences that a diverse staff and student body brings strengthens our research and enhances our teaching, and that in order for Oxford to remain a world-leading institution we must continue to provide a diverse, inclusive, fair and open environment that allows everyone to grow and flourish."* [University of Oxford Equality Policy](#)

As a member of the University you contribute towards making it an inclusive environment and we ask that you treat other members of the University community with respect, courtesy and consideration.

The [Equality and Diversity Unit](#) works with all parts of the collegiate University to develop and promote an understanding of equality and diversity and ensure that this is reflected in all its processes. The Unit also supports the University in meeting the legal requirements of the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with and without the 'protected characteristics' of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and/or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Visit our [website](#) for further details or contact us directly for advice on [equality@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:equality@admin.ox.ac.uk)

The Equality and Diversity Unit also supports a broad network of harassment advisors in departments/faculties and colleges and a central [Harassment Advisory Service](#). The harassment officers in the Faculty of MML are: Alice Brooke, Alejandra Crista and Seth Whidden.

There are also a range of faith societies, belief groups, and religious centres within Oxford University that are open to students. For more information visit the EDU's [religion and belief](#) page.

## DEVELOPMENT AND FURTHER STUDY

### Funding

The Faculty encourage graduate students to make visits abroad, familiarise themselves with library resources, make contact with scholars in their field, and attend conferences (particularly if giving a paper). There are a number of prizes and awards available to Modern Languages graduate students – a list is available on the Graduate Studies [Canvas](#) site.

Modern Languages students may also be eligible for funding from the wider University. You should consult the [student fees and funding website](#) for more information.

## Careers

The University's Careers Service offers a range of advice on potential next steps after your Master's course, and continue to provide support for two years after you have graduated – take a look at their web pages at [Home | Oxford University Careers Service](#)

The [Humanities Researcher Development and Training Programme](#) is open to all postgraduate students (Master's and DPhil) and early career researchers (including college appointments and those on teaching-only contracts) in the Humanities Division. An extensive programme of opportunities runs throughout the academic year, arranged into a number of training pathways. You can find the [training and resources available to Master's students](#) on the website, or email the Humanities Researcher Development and Training Manager, Caroline Thurston, at [training@humanities.ox.ac.uk](mailto:training@humanities.ox.ac.uk) if you have any queries.

## Further study

In Michaelmas Term, the DMC and DGS host a workshop for Master's students on applying for a DPhil – look out for the email from the MML Graduate Office. If you wish to apply to stay in Oxford to do a research degree, you should start thinking about this early in the academic year and begin talking to relevant people as soon as possible. Consult with your Special Subject tutors, dissertation supervisor, the Director of Masters Courses, and the Graduate Studies Office for advice in Michaelmas term. Applications should normally be made in the first two submission rounds (November or January). While applications may be allowed after this date, these cannot be considered for funding support. Admission to the DPhil depends primarily on your mark in the MSt/MPhil dissertation/thesis, where a mark of 70 or better will normally be expected.

## Graduate conference

Each year the student reps (through the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee) organise a conference for all graduate students, with speakers invited from around the world. Look out for the emails advertising the event and calling for papers.

## STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Oxford University is a world-leading centre of learning, teaching and research, and is committed to providing a high quality educational experience, fully supported by academic and administrative services and facilities, to all of our students. However, we recognise that occasionally things can go wrong, and measures are in place to address student concerns about different aspects of their experience.

We always try to resolve any problems locally in the first instance, so if your concern relates to teaching or services provided by the Faculty, please bring it to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies ([dgs@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk](mailto:dgs@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)). If you are not happy with the outcome of the local investigation, you may escalate your concern to the Proctors – the procedures to be followed are set out on the [complaints and academic appeals web page](#) on the Oxford students website.

General concerns affecting the student cohort should be brought to the attention of your [student reps](#), who can raise the matter at the Graduate Joint Consultative Committee (GJCC), Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), or with the Committee on Library Provision and Strategy (CLiPS).



## **MSt & MPhil in Modern Languages**

### **Guide to the Special Subject & Method Option courses running in 2024-25**



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## Introduction

This guide provides details of the Method Option and Special Subjects which make up the taught elements of the MSt and MPhil in Modern Languages programmes, and which are offered in 2024-25.

MSt and first-year MPhil students take one Method Option course (taught across Michaelmas and Hilary Terms, and assessed in HT) and two Special Subjects (one in Michaelmas Term and one in Hilary Term). MPhil students take a third Special Subject in either MT or HT of their second year.

**Please refer to the MSt/MPhil course handbook for further details about the programme requirements.**

## Method Options

**German Cultural Theory: The critical tradition from Schiller to Arendt and Jaeggi**

Convenors: Prof. Ben Morgan and Prof. David Groiser

This course is taught by a series of lectures and by a series of seminars in the first and second terms. Graduates from all languages are welcome; readings have been chosen that are available in both German and in translation. The course deals with historical writers such as Kant, Schiller, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Benjamin, Wittgenstein, Arendt and Adorno, and also with contemporary thinkers such as Rahel Jaeggi and Hartmut Rosa. Every student is expected to make at least one short presentation (no more than ten minutes) to the seminar. Work submitted may be written in English or German.

**Key Questions in Critical Thought**

Lecture Series Convenor: Prof. Jane Hiddleston

In 2024-25, students will be taught in either a group led by Profs Jane Hiddleston and Barry Murnane, or by Profs Bernhard Malkmus and Emily McLaughlin.

This is taught by a lecture series Key Questions in Critical Thought during Michaelmas term, and by three seminars in Michaelmas followed by two seminars in Hilary. You will then have an individual meeting with one of the course tutors to discuss your essay. The course covers a range of topics including feminism and gender, post-colonialism and globalisation, affect theory, eco-criticism and the new materialism, ethical criticism, and the debate about humanities and education. The seminar provides a forum for detailed discussion of some of the issues that have been raised in the lectures and that students want to explore further. Every student is expected to make a short presentation (no more than fifteen minutes) to the seminar.

## Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities

Convenor: Prof. Henrike Lähnemann

The course provides hand-on training in dealing with manuscripts, books and digital resources across different historical periods and European languages. The aim is to combine philological training with project work which takes seriously the material turn in Modern Languages and will enable students to do editorial work in the age of Digital Humanities. Within the framework of knowledge exchange, the Method Option is taught in Michaelmas Term through a series of workshops and masterclasses in cooperation with colleagues and institutions around Oxford, particularly Emma Huber for Digital Editions. In Hilary Term, students develop a self-devised project based on holdings in the local libraries. This unlocks the unparalleled richness of Oxford resources, especially the Taylorian Institute and the Bodleian. The course has its own blog, [History of the Book](#), which features the work of students throughout the year. Further examples of past work from the course can be found at: [editions.mml.ox.ac.uk](#), in blog posts presented on the [Teaching the Codex blog](#), and the [Conveyor](#)

## Spaces of Comparison: Approaches to Comparative Literature

Convenor: Prof. Katherine Ibbett

In 1827, Goethe stated provocatively that ‘National literature has become rather meaningless. The time has come for world literature’. This view may seem once again particularly pertinent today, in an age of globalisation. Yet there is little sign that literature is becoming homogenised or flattened. For some of us, our limited linguistic competence and our specific cultural identities entail that we are most familiar with the literature of our own culture, and that other literatures are ‘foreign’ to us. The historical events and developments that help to shape literature differ between nations, and each literature has its own major authors and texts acting as models to be emulated or refuted. But this does not mean that literature is constrained by national or cultural boundaries. Writers and readers move between literatures and bring them into play with each other. This course proposes that reading comparatively is a rich way to think about cross-cultural understanding in the world today.

This course brings together graduates with expertise in different literatures and periods, providing an opportunity to engage in debate on theoretical and methodological questions central to comparative work. The course will be taught in five fortnightly seminars (in weeks 1, 3, 5 of Michaelmas Term and weeks 1 and 3 of Hilary Term, with one-to-one sessions on your essay in week 4). Each student is expected to contribute one short presentation to the seminar. Students should also attend weekly lectures on comparative literature and critical translation (in weeks 1-6 of Michaelmas and Hilary Terms – these are available alongside the students for the Masters in Comparative Literature and Critical Translation).

We will explore debates central to the field such as the question of national and world literatures; translation; and engagements with the marginal, minor or periphery. (NB: we will not fall into easy generalisation about languages and difference: we will be focussing on reading texts and responding to the arguments of other scholars.) We will also spend some time

engaging with recent work by scholars working in comparative literature, and thinking about the different models of reading they propose.

## Special Subjects – Interdisciplinary options

### Enlightenment Debates (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. Kate Tunstall

This special subject invites students to consider the question ‘What was Enlightenment?’ by exploring some of the key debates in the history of the ideas as found in the writings of a range of thinkers from across Europe. The special subject is taught by colleagues from French, German, Italian, and Russian in four seminars, in which all students will have the chance to give presentations. Topics may include: The Public Sphere; Savagery and Politeness; Gender and Sexuality; Nation and Cosmopolitanism; God and Nature; Origins; Aesthetics; Print Culture; Science; Commerce and Money; Luxury; Tolerance.

### Rethinking Subjectivity: Technology, Ecology, Critique (Michaelmas Term)

Convenors: Prof. Nikolaj Lübecker and Prof. Barry Murnane

Over the last twenty years, ecological and technological developments have prompted a rethinking of human subjectivity: in the age of the Anthropocene and an increased hybridisation of technology and biology, we are no longer sure about the limits of the human subject. As Rosi Braidotti therefore writes: ‘We need a subject position worthy of our times’ (Posthuman Knowledge (2019)). These seminars interrogate what such a subject position might look like through the study of literature, film and philosophy from the last couple of decades, but also going back to earlier texts that may inspire new approaches to the present challenges. Engagements with late-Enlightenment writing and Romantic natural philosophy reveal thought-provoking parallels with contemporary debates in ecology and pharmacology. Likewise, modernist engagements with biology and technology in literature and film remain a key reference point for current theories of non-human subjectivities and speculative materialisms. This special subject will discuss key questions such as: are we still ‘human’, were we ever ‘human’, and if so, what did and does ‘we’ mean? Topics and names discussed may include: cybernetics, general ecology, the world brain, science fiction, cyborg, contagion, pharmaceuticals, posthumanism and transhumanism, Gregory Bateson, Gilbert Simondon, Gilles Deleuze, N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Isabelle Stengers, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Franz Kafka, and Alain Resnais.

### Writing the Enlightenment (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. Kate Tunstall

This subject focuses on achievements in various literary forms and genres, including the novel, the dialogue, the philosophical tale, dictionaries and encyclopedias, travel writing, epic, pornography, satire, theatre. Texts may include:

Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*; Graffigny, *Letters of a Peruvian Woman*; Voltaire, *Candide*; Rousseau, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*; Diderot, *Rameau's Nephew*; Goethe, *The Sufferings of Young Werther*; Moritz, *Anton Reiser*; Richardson, *Pamela*; Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey*; Beccaria, *On Crimes and Punishments*; Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveller*; Mozart's Operas and Da Ponte's Libretti.

### Contesting Colonialisms: Theories, Practices, and Texts (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. Jane Hiddleston

This cross-disciplinary special subject introduces MSt candidates to authors and texts from the nineteenth century to the present that consider and critique the ideologies and institutions of colonialism and ethnocentrism, and that propose and/or problematize different modes of anticolonial or decolonial thinking. The study of texts from across periods, languages, and traditions will enable students to gain a fuller understanding of the distinct historical, racial, cultural, and political contexts that give rise to critique of colonial systems and also their comparability.

Instructors: María del Pilar Blanco (Spanish); Arthur Wotton (Spanish); Jane Hiddleston (French); Phillip Rothwell (Portuguese)

## Special Subjects – French

### Writing Women in the Middle Ages (Michaelmas Term)

Convenors: Prof. Sophie Marnette and Prof. Helen Swift

Whether as patrons, addressees, characters, or even authors, women were absolutely central to Medieval French and Occitan Literature. The main focus of this course is twofold, considering women as objects of writing, typically in male-authored texts (including writings with a fairly misogynistic bias such as *Le Roman de la rose*), and women as writing subjects (such as the *Trobairitz*, Marie de France and Christine de Pizan). It also considers the issue of gender fluidity in comic and courtly narratives such as *Trubert* and *Le Roman de Silence*.

It is strongly recommended that students choosing this option have a knowledge of French and that they let the course convenor know as early as possible of their intention to choose the topic in order to access background resources in Medieval French Literature.

### Early Modern Inventions (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Dr Raphaële Garrod and Prof. Wes Williams

For this paper, we'll be working on a wide range of materials (mainly in French) from the 16th and 17th Century: books, maps, mechanical instruments and visual art (drawings and paintings). The term invention denotes both the faculty of devising, finding out, contriving and making up, and the products stemming from these processes. It involves discovery and deceit, creativity

and contrivance, inspiration and heresy, theory and fiction. Invention is, in historiographical terms, an actor's category, which means that it played an important part in the way in which the early moderns themselves conceived of their own age. It remains central the ways in which scholars reflect on, and assess, the many changes that took place in the early modern period.

This seminar takes invention as its guiding thread to understand crucial changes across the early modern period, and winds its way through Renaissance literary theories of copia, wit, and wordplay to the rise of the mechanical 'arts' (from architecture through shipbuilding and theatre to warfare); we also track the emergence of the 'New Science' (John Donne) born from new techniques of observation and the rise of the experimental method across a wide range of texts and practices. This option should appeal to those who want to work on sixteenth or seventeenth century culture either for the first time or to develop their knowledge of it. Four sessions will take place in the first four weeks of Michaelmas term: 1/Introduction: what was 'invention' for the early moderns? 2/ Printing the world 3/Literary invention, 4/Mechanical inventions.

### **The Birth of Modern Poetry (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenors: Dr Katherine Lunn-Rockliffe and Prof. Seth Whidden

The nineteenth century constituted a period of intense and innovative activity in the field of verse poetry, and this course of seminars will focus on selected works from a diverse group of poets, including Desbordes-Valmore, Lamartine, Musset, Vigny, Hugo, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Mallarmé. The century also witnessed the emergence of 'prose poetry', and during its last three decades in particular the time-honoured conventions of versification — together with the very distinction between poetry and prose — were subverted and overturned. The aim of this course will be to examine and debate, on the basis of close textual readings, the various ways in which poets sought to find a new language and new poetic structures with which to express an increasingly varied and disturbing spectrum of conscious and unconscious perceptions.

### **Contemporary French Thought: Paths of Deconstruction (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenors: Prof. Ian Maclachlan and Dr Emily McLaughlin

This course on key strands in French thought of recent decades focuses particularly on paths to and from the notion of deconstruction associated with Jacques Derrida. Besides Derrida, we will examine texts by Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-Luc Nancy and Catherine Malabou, and these readings will raise fundamental issues relating to language, subjectivity, alterity, community, embodiment, materiality, and affect.

### **Francophone Postcolonial Literature (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenors: Prof. Cecile Bishop, Prof. Jane Hiddleston and Prof. Jennifer Yee

French colonialism profoundly altered perceptions of national and cultural identity, while decolonization was one of the most momentous upheavals of the twentieth century. In this course, you will explore the impact of France's changing relationship with her colonies and ex-colonies, as envisioned by writers and intellectuals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Exoticist works by writers such as Segalen and Loti will be compared with postcolonial literatures emerging from Africa, North Africa and the Caribbean (possible authors for study include Djébar, Chraïbi, Chamoiseau, Condé, Kourouma, Bâ, Oyono). Emphasis will be placed both on the interaction between literature and history, and on the aesthetic originality of the works themselves.

### **Brief Encounters: Medieval Short Narratives (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Daron Burrows

Short narrative forms have been much less studied than their longer counterparts (the *roman* or *chanson de geste*, for example), but are the locus for significant experimentation with and development of storytelling practice. This course considers a range of genres, in both verse and prose, to explore modes of storytelling, and the specificities of their brevity, across *lais*, *fabliaux*, exemplary literature (including fables and miracles), and *nouvelles*. You will also study the presentation and circulation of tales in manuscript compilations.

### **Reality, Representation and Reflexivity in Nineteenth-Century Prose Writing (Hilary Term)**

Convenors: Prof. Tim Farrant and Prof. Jennifer Yee

This course of seminars will be concerned with examples of prose writing by a wide range of authors (Chateaubriand, Constant, Balzac, Stendhal, Mérimée, Gautier, Sand, Nerval, Flaubert, Zola, Maupassant, Huysmans, Rachilde) and will focus on a number of interrelated theoretical and literary-historical issues concerning 'schools' (Romanticism, Realism, Naturalism), genres (the fictional memoir, the novel, the short story), relationships (fiction and history, fiction and science, literature and the other arts, prose and poetry), thematic preoccupations (the individual and society, the fantastic, etc.), and narrative techniques (narrative structures, narratorial point of view, imagery, tense usage, etc.). The aim will be to explore the many different ways in which prose writers of the nineteenth century represented the world of human experience and reflected in theory and practice on the means and the implications of their representations.

## **Special Subjects – German**

### **Contemporary Women's Writing in German (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenor: Dr Georgina Paul

This course offers the opportunity to explore the range and varieties of literature written in German by women after 1945. It was a period of extraordinary change in the status of women writers. In the immediate postwar years, women were still often confined to the domestic sphere

and drew their inspiration for writing from this narrowed environment (e.g. Marlen Haushofer, *Wir töten Stella*, *Die Wand*, *Die Mansarde*). In the 1970s, the New Women's Movement turned to literary expression as a mode of rebellion against societal gender norms (e.g. Verena Stefan, *Häutungen*; Elfriede Jelinek, *Die Liebhaberinnen*; Christa Wolf, *Kein Ort. Nirgends*); by the 2000s a new generation of 'popfeminists' was rebelling in turn against the expectations created by their Second Wave predecessors (Sonja Eismann, ed, *Hot Topic. Popfeminismus heute*; Charlotte Roche, *Feuchtgebiete*; Helene Hegemann, *Axolotl Roadkill*). From the 1980s onward, writing by women authors of migrant background began to make its impact on the sphere of literary publishing and has become one of the most significant aspects of contemporary writing at a time in which immigration and population movement are shaping societies. We will look at a trajectory of change via a selection of novels (Emine Sevgi Özdamar, *Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn*; Olga Grjasnowa, *Der Russe ist einer, der Birken liebt*; Sharon Dodua Otoo, *Adas Raum*). The special subject ends with a topic on 'identity', thinking about gender, ethnicity, and intersectionalism (Sasha Marianna Salzmann, *Ausser sich*; Antje Rávic Strubel, *Blaue Frau*; Mithu Sanyal, *Identitti*). Taught in fortnightly seminars, the special subject will take you through half a century of shifts in women's roles and women's writing, examining sexuality, intersectionality, myth, tradition, different articulations of feminism, and the politics of writing, as well as genre, aesthetic strategy and language within the context of work by important writers of the postwar period.

### **Jews & Judaism in German Literature from 1740 to the Present (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenor: Prof. David Groiser

This course examines the discourses around Jews and Judaism in Germany and Austria against the background of the history of Jewish emancipation, the resurgence of antisemitism, the Holocaust, and recent attempts to confront and comprehend this history. Within this framework, students may wish to give particular attention to one or more of the following: the participation of Jewish writers in the culture of the Enlightenment, as well as the forging of a specific Jewish form of religious Enlightenment in response to the challenges of modernity; the development of a complicated philosemitism within the discourses of emancipation and toleration, and of anti-Jewish and antisemitic images from the Romantics onwards, present within a wide range of texts whose overt ideology was often far more liberal; the complex Jewish identities of such writers as Mendelssohn, Maimon, Heine, Freud, Kafka, Schnitzler, Stefan and Arnold Zweig, Buber, Rosenzweig, Lasker-Schüler, Döblin, Roth or Kraus; the relationship between Jews in eastern and western Europe; attitudes to Hasidism and Kabbalah, neo-orthodoxy and reform; German Jews and the First World War; the 'renaissance' of Jewish culture in the Weimar Republic; languages of Judaism, particularly the relationship between German and Yiddish; the emergence of Zionism and Jewish nationalism; and representations of and responses to the Holocaust; conceptions of exile; and the question of whether a Jewish culture exists in present-day Germany and Austria.

### **Writing Rivers: National Identities, Transnational Contexts, and the Environment**

(Michaelmas Term) Convenor: Dr Joanna Neilly

This subject analyses multiple literary and cultural significances of rivers. It takes a cross-temporal approach, comparing Romantic-era aesthetics with contemporary responses and theories from the Environmental Humanities.

The main focus is German-language representations of rivers in literature, although the double nature of rivers - as territorial borders and natural phenomena that cross borders - means that



comparative approaches are encouraged. In the Romantic era, rivers took on special significance: Friedrich Schlegel's *Rheinfahrt* and the invention of the Lorelei legend might be linked back to Georg Forster's *Ansichten vom Niederrhein* but also forwards, to Heine's *Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen*. If Heine and Wilhelm Müller are more ambivalent about the mythology of rivers, it holds strong in Wagner's Ring Cycle. This period also presents an opportunity to interrogate scientific travel writing as a cultural product of empire – Alexander von Humboldt's writings about the Orinoco are important here.

Students are encouraged, if interested, to bring in comparative readings from the 20th-century or contemporary literary landscape. A striking example is Bachmann's *Malina*, in which the Danube is a landscape of violence in the context of the Holocaust. Jelinek likewise questions the aestheticization of rivers in her experimental *Winterreise*, as part of her longstanding engagement with Austrian *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Yet the Romantic connection between rivers and wanderers survives in a new form, for example in Esther Kinsky's *Am Fluss*, which investigates urban riverscapes and subjectivity, or in Christian Petzold's film *Undine* with its urban reworking of the Romantic myth.

In the seminars you can expect to discuss poems by Friedrich Hölderlin and Wilhelm Müller, Romantic fairy tales with riverine settings such as Hoffmann's 'Der goldene Topf' and Goethe's 'Märchen', and imperial-era travel writing, as well as recent developments in environmental approaches. You are encouraged to develop your own ideas and independent reading for the portfolio submission.

#### Cinema in a Cultural Context: German Film from 1930–2020 (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. Ben Morgan

The course has two possible points of focus. The first is the study of German cinema between the coming of sound and the arrival of New German Cinema: 1930-1970 (the first German talkie was made in 1929; by 1970, Fassbinder had already made 4 feature films). The second is the cinema of the Berlin Republic, with a particular focus on the films of the Berlin School.

Topics for the period 1930-1970 will include propaganda and entertainment films in the Third Reich, the realism of the Rubble Films of the late 1940s, the different strategies for remembering and coming to terms with the past in the popular films of the 1950s and 1960s. German films of the period will be put in dialogue with relevant Hollywood productions of the period. The period includes the political ruptures of 1933, 1945, 1968, and the aesthetic 'new beginning' of the Oberhausen manifesto in 1962. But the focus of the course will be the continuities that can be observed in film style, narrative techniques and in the way film is used as a medium for reflecting on everyday problems during the period.

The Berlin School is the name given to a group of film makers who mostly studied at the Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin with the filmmaker Harun Farocki (1944-2014) and who came to prominence at the start of the new millennium. Key figures include Thomas Arslan, Angela Schanelec, Christian Petzold, Christoph Hochhäusler, and Maren Ade. Arslan first gained recognition with his migrant trilogy *Geschwister-Kardesler* (1997), *Dealer* (1999), and *Der schöne Tag* (2001). But like many other Berlin School filmmakers he is also interested in productive interrogations of genre film, such as the gangster film *Im Schatten* (2010) and the film *Gold* (2013), starring Nina Hoss, which re-imagines the Western. Nina Hoss is a recurring figure in the films in which Petzold explores the social landscape of a globalised world, and revisits key moments from the recent past in search of counterfactual alternatives. Hoss features

in Petzold's *Jerichow* (2008), a re-making of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) which adapts the conventions of film noir for a 21st-century globalised capitalism. Other films to be studied would include Schanelec's *Marseille* (2004) and *Orly* (2010); the tv-trilogy *Dreileben* (2011) which Hochhäusler made with Petzold and Dominik Graf (b. 1952) as part of an exchange between the three filmmakers about the uses of genre cinema; Maren Ade's *Alle Anderen* (2009) and *Toni Erdmann* (2016); Petzold's films for cinema, such as *Die Innere Sicherheit* (2000), *Barbara* (2012), *Phoenix* (2014), *Transit* (2018), *Undine* (2020), but also his work for tv, such as *Toter Mann* (2001), and the episodes he directed for the police procedural *Polizeiruf 110*. Films are available on dvd and many can also be viewed on streaming services. The films are largely available with English subtitles, so this Special Subject is also suitable for students interested in cultural studies or film studies. Over the 4 sessions, the aim would be to cover 4 or 5 films each time, focusing on a range of filmmakers and issues.

You can start familiarizing yourself with the vocabulary of film studies by reading David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson's *Film Art: An Introduction*, currently in its 12th edition (you can read any edition). Otherwise, the best thing to do is to start watching films. For the 1930-1970 strand: You can work by director (e.g. Käutner, Harlan, Sierck), but it is often more productive to watch films with the same star (e.g. Heinz Rühman, Hans Albers, Ilse Werner, Zarah Leander), or from the same year, to get a clearer sense of continuities in style and approach. Similarly, for the Berlin School: watch as many of the films as you can but watch also films with the stars the directors regularly work with (e.g. Nina Hoss, Ronald Zehrfeld, Matthias Brandt, Paula Beer), or films made in same year as Berlin School productions.

### Women's Writing in Medieval Germany (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. Almut Suerbaum

Within a German-speaking context, women's writing happens in a variety of forms and formats: visions and mystical revelations, life writing, religious song and poetry. One of the key works is the C13 'Fließendes Licht der Gottheit' by Mechthild of Magdeburg, but the Special Subject also offers scope to explore life writing (e.g. in the 'Schwesternbücher'), narrative forms, or religious song. The texts represent forms of 'including the excluded', and the course encourages an investigation of gender-specific aspects of female authorship, as well as issues such as the public and private dimensions of literature, the role of the vernacular, the reception of pre-modern writing on modern literature. The focus will be on texts in German, but it is also possible to study this option on the basis of a combination of Latin and German material.

### Nietzsche and His Impact (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. David Groiser

Though largely ignored during his lifetime, Nietzsche was soon recognised as the philosopher of modernity. More radically, honestly and intelligently than anyone else, he explored the consequences that must follow if traditional religious belief and moral constraints are jettisoned to make way for a view of the universe based on scientific knowledge and the individual will. While his ideas about how to fill the resulting moral vacuum have been controversial, he is widely recognised as one of the most interesting – and entertaining – philosophers and 'cultural critics'. He is also among the most brilliant of German stylists.

When Nietzsche began to be widely read in the 1890s, his ideas were found stimulating and liberating in the most varied quarters. There were Nietzscheans on the radical right and the revolutionary left, in the women's movement and among Zionists. He was read avidly, but also

critically, by writers as varied as Thomas Mann, Kafka, Rilke, Musil, Gottfried Benn, Alfred Döblin, Hermann Broch and Hermann Hesse, within cinema, as well as by theorists in many fields, from philosophy to political and critical theory, sociology, legal theory, psychoanalysis, literary and cultural theory, classical studies, anthropology, semiotics and even theology. Outside Germany, he was engaged with seriously by Yeats, Lawrence, Joyce, Stevens, Gide, Malraux, Camus, Belyi, Solvyov, D'Annunzio, and many others.

Students will be expected to know the following books by Nietzsche in particular detail: *Die Geburt der Tragödie* (1872), *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), and *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887), and to have read more widely in Nietzsche's works. They will also study his reception, looking closely at a text or texts by one or more subsequent writers in relation to Nietzsche.

### Literature and Culture of the Berlin Republic (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Dr Alex Lloyd

Candidates will be expected to acquire a general knowledge of writing and culture in German since 1990 and to study a selection of texts and films from the same period. Candidates may expect to address a range of issues, including topics such as: adjustments in the German book market post-1990; approaches to the legacies of the Nazi past; the legacy of the GDR; writing in a multicultural society; literature and globalisation; changing notions of authorship, especially in the light of the digital media; the development of the various genres; gender and writing. There is also the opportunity to focus on selected authors and issues of students' own choosing.

### Hölderlin in the World (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. Charlie Louth

Hölderlin's work is both rooted in his native Swabia and unusually receptive to the way the local is bound up in the distant, the removed and the foreign. This goes beyond his deep interest in Ancient Greece and his attempts to see German and Germany in Greek terms. The world of his poems is permeable and full of references to places remote in time and space, including London, Tahiti and the Americas. Hölderlin was fascinated by journeys and the way they connect distant points and allow one to think of them in relation to one another. As well as the many actual journeys made and reflected on in his poems, there are the courses of rivers and mountain ranges, crossing and making borders and readable as signs of how history might develop. He pays particular attention to bird-flight. All these things reveal the world to be deeply interconnected, so that every landscape, real or cultural, is a hybrid landscape, both of its place and elsewhere.

Hölderlin is primarily a poet, and his poetry will form the main focus, but – partly via his friendships with Schelling and Hegel – he was closely involved in the development of post-Kantian philosophy, and his fragmentary philosophical and theoretical writings have also been returned to by many later philosophers. His poetry has drawn a large number of key 20th and 21st century thinkers, from Heidegger onwards, as well as poets from around the world. So this special subject offers an opportunity to read and write about Hölderlin's work from a variety of perspectives, including comparative ones, noting the multiple relations that traverse it, run out into contemporary preoccupations and continue to make their way in the world today.

Initial reading list:

Theodor Adorno, 'Parataxis: Zur späten Lyrik Hölderlins', in *Noten zur Literatur III* (Frankfurt, 1965) and elsewhere

David Constantine, Hölderlin (Oxford, 1988)

Winfried Menninghaus, Hälfte des Lebens: Versuch über Hölderlins Poetik (Frankfurt, 2005)

Hölderlin's Philosophy of Nature, ed. by Rochelle Tobias (Edinburgh, 2020)

## Special Subjects – Greek

Greek Literature and Culture in/after the 19th century: Themes, texts and contexts

Convenor: Prof. Dimitris Papanikolaou

This is the core postgraduate seminar in Modern Greek, running in Michaelmas term. The aim of the seminar is to discuss and analyse Greek literary and cultural texts of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. To do so, each year's seminar starts from a series of keywords (in the recent past keywords included: "adaptation/adoption", "circulation, transfer, (dis)placement", "family", "the weird", "performance/performativity", "genealogy/ archaeology/ archive"). This year's organizing keyword/concept is "The making of..."

As always, the aim is to also cover, from this fresh perspective, key larger themes and debates in Modern Greek studies (such as, for instance, storytelling and community, orality/textuality, the influence of Classics, the making and remaking of a Neohellenic identity, the difference between generations, ethnicity and difference, acts of citizenship and identity, and the appearance of new forms and movements). However, our approach will be more theoretical and, as much as we can, more geared towards creative discussions of literary and cultural texts and their contexts.

Students who want to work independently in their second term and devise their own focus of research, will be able to take this option for a second term, adding a subtitle with the specific theme that they will approach in Hilary and list it as: **Greek Literature and Culture in/after the 19th century II** [followed by a specific subtitle].

## Special Subjects – Italian

Problems in Dante Interpretation (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. Elena Lombardi

All of Dante's works pose challenges to the reader and have led to diverse, often conflicting critical and scholarly interpretations. This course offers the student the opportunity to concentrate on central issues in the *Divina commedia*, but also to look at other works if desired. Problems that will be given particular attention include allegory, imagery, dating, and Dante's sources.

Tradition and Innovation in Medieval Lyric Poetry (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Prof. Francesca Southerden

Italian lyric poetry of the 13th and 14th century displays a remarkable talent for innovation which is carried out through constantly assimilating and reassessing ideas and techniques of preceding generations. Students will have the opportunity to examine the work of major figures from the Sicilians to Petrarch, including Dante and the *stilnovisti*, and also, if they wish, to explore lesser-

known names, such as the 13th-century Guittoniani or contemporaries of Petrarch such as Antonio da Ferrara.

### **Literature and Cinema in Italian Culture (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Guido Bonsaver

This option intends to explore the issue of the interrelation between literature and cinema from two viewpoints. First there will be a historical and chronological overview of the development of cinema as a narrative form in constant dialogue with literary texts and with the involvement of literary figures. Secondly, students will be introduced to the main concepts of film adaptation and will be asked to close-study a selection of examples related to contemporary Italian literature and cinema.

### **Contemporary Archival Imaginings in Italy (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Emma Bond

This course will introduce students to new creative ways of engaging with archival materials that shed light on transnational histories of Italian travel, migration, race, empire and colonialism on various scales, ranging from family archives, community archives, historical and state archives to digital archives and archives of transient spaces. Students will be asked to critically reflect on new and traditional theories of archival experiences and archiving practices, and to engage with related creative outputs including literature, film and visual arts. We will interrogate the relationship between archives and systems of individual and collective memory, explore the experience of visiting archives and encountering the materiality of archival things, and analyse the intersections between fiction and history writing in archives.

## **Special Subjects – Portuguese**

### **The Colonial and Postcolonial Literature of Portuguese-Speaking Africa (Michaelmas Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Phillip Rothwell

This course will engage with representative texts from Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde. It will examine a selection of authors from different geographical settings for their portrayal of colonial experiences and post-colonial legacies. A first aim of the course will be to investigate the ongoing reflection about issues surrounding national identity, over a period of several decades. A second aim will be to consider how and why African authors incorporate distinctive African dimensions into their work, while simultaneously strategically engaging with and appropriating European literary traditions, be it at the level of themes, form or language.

### **Lusophone Women Writers (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Claudia Pazos Alonso

This course takes as its starting-point the well-documented isolation and marginality of women writers in both Portugal and Brazil in the first half of the 20th century, before moving on to consider the growing impact of new generations of female writers, from the 1950s onwards and more especially after the return to democracy in both countries. It examines the differing strategies deployed by female-authored texts as they negotiate the minefield of genre and gender, and issues surrounding critical reception. Students will have the opportunity to study

major canonical writers from a selection which ranges from Florbela Espanca through to Lídia Jorge, taking in the writings of Clarice Lispector, but also, if they so wish, some of the lesser-known writers.

## Special Subjects – Russian and Slavonic

### Russian Lyric Poetry, Themes and Forms (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. Andrew Kahn

The modern Russian poetic canon is exceptionally rich and diverse. It is full of formal experimentation, original voices, and has proven to be historically and political alert at all times (sometimes underground, sometimes from abroad) and in complex dialogue with the nation's history, European art forms, and larger artistic movements. The course will consist of four sets of primary texts organized under a thematic rubric. Rubrics include Identity/Consciousness, Nature, Art and Objects, Cycles. Given the time available, the approach to texts will be more synchronic than historical with an emphasis more on lines than lives (to use a distinction G.S. Smith articulated). There is an ample and methodologically diverse scholarly tradition that in itself repays study, especially at the postgraduate level, as an education in different schools, including Formalism, Structuralism, semiotics, intertextuality, visual poetry, and, of course, New Criticism. One aim of the MSt. option is to encourage the taker to consider (and apply) major approaches in the study of lyric poetry, Western and Russian. The anthology per topic will contain approximately 20 poems, drawn chronologically from various periods and movements. The selection of texts will aim to help the graduate student form a rounded view of the depth of the tradition and to become acquainted with major, second-tier and even minor poets who have written interesting poems. The list of proposed works of poetry will favour poets from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries but may also reach back to the nineteenth century. Topics, authors and readings are adjusted to reflect contemporary trends and individual interest.

### The Gulag and the Russian Literary Process (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. Polly Jones

This course examines 20th and 21st century Russian and Russophone literature about the Soviet labour camps (Gulag), placing this century-long engagement with the theme within the traditions of older Russian prison narratives, and comparing it with Holocaust fiction where appropriate. It considers the shifting artistic, political and ethical stakes of representing the Gulag, and these texts' role in Soviet and post-Soviet memory politics. Some background reading on the history of the Gulag and on dissidence and samizdat will be helpful, and theoretical readings on memory, post-memory and trauma will be a core part of the paper. Students will also be encouraged to engage with the numerous film and TV adaptations of Gulag literature from the 1990s to the present.

Texts and authors that can be covered, after consultation with students, include: foundational 19th-century texts about incarceration (Dostoevskii, Chekhov); early Stalin-era depictions before the theme became taboo (the Belomorkanal project; Pogodin); published and samizdat/tamizdat Gulag prose by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (Ivan Denisovich, V krughe pervom, Arkhipelag Gulag); the samizdat and tamizdat prison narratives of Vasilii Grossman (Vse techet; Zhizn' i sud'ba), Varlam Shalamov (Kolymkierasskazy); perpetrator fiction by Giorgii Vladimov (Vernyi Ruslan) and Sergei Dovlatov (Zona); post-memory fiction by relatives of prisoners (Okudzhava, Aksenov); and the

21st-century reinvention of Gulag prose by authors including Guzel' Yakhina, Evgenii Vodolazkin, Zakhar Prilepin and Sergei Lebedev.

### **Rise of the Russian Novel (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Andrei Zorin

The nineteenth century Russian novel constitutes the canon and the core of Russian literature. Many people study Russian to be able to read Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in original, many more follow their works through translation. The course studies the novelistic tradition as it unfolded throughout the century. We'll study the early history of the novel when writers such as Gogol' and Lermontov began to explore the possibilities of 'folk' tales, 'society' tales, the prose cycle, framed narratives, historical fiction, the epic and the psychological case-study, the establishment of Russian Realist tradition with the early novels of Goncharov and Turgenev and the full blossoming of the genre under the pen of the giants. The students will read major Russian novels, analyse the emerging genre in European perspective allowing to see the novel as the formative element of Russian literature, Russian culture and in many ways, Russian social life as the generations of Russian readers were brought up on the models and behavioural patterns provided by the novels. The course may also be tailored according to the interests of the students allowing them the choice of the novels to read.

### **Gender and Representation in Russian Culture from 1800 (Hilary Term)**

Convenor: Prof. Philip Bullock

Since the 1980s, study of gender and identity has been one of the liveliest areas of Russian cultural history. Among particular issues of concern have been the rediscovery of work by forgotten women writers, and discussion of the particular characteristics of this; analysis of 'the feminine' as a construct, and of its connections with the representation of national identity (especially in the governing myth of 'Mother Russia'); study of the representation of sexuality and the development of 'queer theory' and LGBTQ+ studies; and examination of the link between normative concepts of gender identity and self-expression in literature and other forms of writing, and also in the visual arts (painting, film, etc.)

Those taking the course may specialise in any one area of women's writing in its relation to cultural history over a longer time-span (for example, women's memoirs, 1890-1970); or they may consider several different topics with reference to a specifically denominated historical epoch (for example, women's writing, representations of sexuality in the visual arts, and concepts of gender identity in the era of Romanticism); or they may wish to examine women's writing and feminist criticism in dialogue with masculinity studies and queer theory. They are urged to contact the Convenor well in advance of their arrival in Oxford in order to discuss possibilities, and to obtain a list of preliminary reading in gender theory and in Russian cultural history.

### **Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Russian Literature (Hilary Term)**

Convenors: Prof. Polly Jones and Dr Tamar Koplatadze

This course considers the comparisons and contrasts between late Soviet and post-Soviet culture. The late Soviet literary world was far from 'stagnant', and contained within it many of the literary currents and experimentation that would come out into the open during and after glasnost. Glasnost, perestroika, the abolition of censorship and the disintegration of the USSR brought about fundamental changes in the circumstances of Russian literature. External factors such as political and economic instability, the possibility of travel abroad, changes in the role of literary

journals, the collapse of the Union of Writers, Booker and associated prizes, the advent of the computer, have all conditioned authors' subjects and working methods. Although the legacy of the social command and the habit of writing in opposition died hard, the period has produced much experimental writing, post-modernist or avant-garde in nature, as well as more conventionally realistic works. Previously taboo subjects such as the religious revival and explicit sexuality were frequently treated; questions relating to gender were discussed; events and writing of the Soviet period were revisited, and the need to amend or amplify the historical record was keenly felt. Furthermore, Russophone and non-ethnic Russian writers both in Russia and the former Soviet republics (e.g. Tatarstan, Chechnya, Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia) have brought to the fore (post)colonial questions around national identity, race, centre-periphery, migration, language and the environment. The significantly diminished role of the creative intelligentsia in society, together with an overall lack of direction and coherence, has added to the unpredictability and excitement of the latest literature. For the late Soviet period, possible topics include: poetry and prose of the 'Thaw'; samizdat (e.g. Erofeev); Gulag prose and poetry (Shalamov, Solzhenitsyn, Grossman, Vladimov); the late Soviet historical novel (Trifonov, Okudzhava, Aitmatov); women's writing (Baranskaia, Petrushevskiaia, Tolstaya); conceptualism in poetry and art (Prigov). For the latter, possible topics include Russophone writing (Yakhina, Bibish, Bagirov); (post-)colonialism (Makanin, Sadulaev); gender; dystopia and magical historicism.

## Special Subjects – Spanish

### Haunting in Latin American Fiction (Michaelmas Term)

Convenor: Prof. María Blanco

This course will explore Latin American literature of haunting, ghosts, and revenants in the long twentieth century. Students will be asked to question the use, location, and logic of ghosts in literary fiction. They will also study the ways in which different authors (among them Machado de Assis, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez, Juan Rulfo, and the contemporary Latino writer Junot Díaz) craft these figures and the events of haunting in order to ask specific questions about the problems of history and its progress. The curriculum will be organized according to different theoretical approaches that have been used to study ghosts, thus offering students the opportunity to perform close readings of key texts, as well as methodological frameworks to debate the critical understanding of this literary phenomenon.

### Realism and Its Alternatives in Spanish American Narrative (Hilary Term)

Convenor: Dr Dominic Moran

Since the 1940s Spanish American narrative has been among the most innovative and vibrant in the world, as is witnessed by the work of such authors as Borges, Asturias, Carpentier, and Rulfo, who were established figures before the 'Boom' of the 1960s and 1970s, by internationally acclaimed 'Boom' writers like García Marquez, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar, and Fuentes, and by several generations of later authors who have been the focus of international attention. While some have been innovative realists, others have sought alternative means of depicting their sub-continent and conveying their personal vision. Students will investigate the various responses to realism seen in the works of modern Spanish American writers; they will, however, be encouraged to concentrate on those areas and issues that most interest them and to employ a range of approaches in their study of this subject.