HL4030 – Scottish Literature
Course guide subject to minor changes
Please print only when necessary
This course will introduce you to the main themes and characteristics of modern Scottish literature from the eighteenth century to the present day, covering Romanticism, the Enlightenment, Modernism, Postmodernism, and the contemporary era. The course will trace the vast transformations undergone in Scotland in recent history and study how literature has both reacted to and driven these changes. We will study the historical backgrounds to the texts, discuss questions of national identity and look at Scotland’s contribution to modern philosophy. The course will include poetry and prose from the nation’s three languages, Gaelic, Scots (both alongside translations) and English.

Learning Objectives

The course will:

• Demonstrate the complex relationship between Scottish culture and history
• Establish the main trends, concerns, and characteristics of Scottish writing
• Create links between texts in the course founded upon historical and cultural context

Content

• Canonical Scottish texts
• Material on critical approaches to Scottish writing
• Historical context – detailed information on the main developments of Scottish history

Assessment

A) 35% – 3,500 word essay (due in on the 1st of March)

The essay must cover two texts and involve original research

The essay should also include a coherent argument supported by close reading of the text(s) All
paragraphs should be related to a central theme and adhere to a sound structure

Claims/readings/arguments should be properly developed and supported by relevant quotations from the text (s)

Relevant critical sources must be utilized and correctly cited

B) 50%–2 1/2 hour exam

Students will be required to sit a 2 1/2 hour closed-book exam which will consist of a text identification component and an essay component

The essay will test the students’ knowledge and understanding of the texts/themes of the course and their ability to construct arguments and critical positions relating to the course concepts

C) 15%–Class participation

Students participation in seminars – including attendance, engagement with seminar activities and discussions – will be assessed

Set texts (all other texts will be provided via Blackboard):


Course content

Week one
Introduction: G. Gregory Smith, Chapter One: ‘Two Moods’ from Scottish Literature, Its Character and Influence, Alan Riach, ‘What is Scottish Literature?’

Week two
Scottish Romanticism: Robert Burns, selected poetry

Week three
Scottish Gothic: James Hogg, Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824)

Week four
Celticism: Walter Scott, ‘The Two Drovers’ (1827), section from Macpherson’s Ossian

Week five
The Scottish Enlightenment: David Hume, selected essays

Week six
Philosophy of Clothes: Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus (1836)

Week seven
Highland Adventures: Robert Louis Stevenson, Kidnapped (1886)

Week eight
Scottish Modernism: Selected poetry by Hugh MacDiarmid, and Somhairle MacGill-Eain/Sorley MacLean

Week nine
The Scottish Landscape: Nan Shepherd, The Living Mountain (1944)

Week ten

Week eleven
Tartan Noir: William McIlvanney, Laidlaw (1977)

Week twelve

Week thirteen
Revision
Suggested further reading

History


Literature and culture (general):

Alcobia-Murphy, Shane; Archbold, Johanna; Gibney, John; Jones, Carol (eds.). *Beyond the Anchoring Grounds: More Cross-Currents in Irish and Scottish Studies*. Belfast: Cló Ollscoil na Banríona, 2005.


