



SCHOOL OF
English

Postgraduate degrees in
American Literature and Culture

Why American Literature and Culture at Queen's?

The American Literature and Culture pathway at Queen's offers students the chance to explore an exciting and diverse range of cultural texts from the modern to the contemporary period. The pathway invites students to engage critically with various cultural, theoretical, historical and thematic approaches to American novels, poems, criticism, films, graphic novels, art, photography, and television shows, and to cultivate an informed sense of the complexity of issues relating America to our understanding of modernity.

In association with Vanderbilt University (Nashville, Tennessee), from 2015 students will have the opportunity to take modules offered by Vanderbilt staff, either here in Belfast or in Nashville. This US aspect to postgraduate studies will run over two weeks in May of each academic year.

Staff working this pathway are internationally known scholars, widely published, and specialising in modern and contemporary poetry and poetics, fiction, crime writing, political literature, visual-verbal relations, critical theory and aesthetics. The dedicated modules on this pathway reflect these wide-ranging and intersecting interests, as well as complementing other modules in modern literary studies in the School.



Alongside and in conjunction with the curriculum, a wide range of readings, seminars, lectures, workshops, symposia and public engagement events offers students on this pathway several opportunities to participate not only in a thriving intellectual community, but in a wider and stimulating cultural environment.

MA in English Literary Studies (American Literature and Culture)

Convenor: Dr Catherine Gander

Core module: Contemporary American Literature and Culture

This core graduate module introduces students to key approaches and perspectives in the study of the United States. Considering the roles played by discourse and ideology in social change, the module makes a critical exploration of work that has been done in

theorising America from historical, literary, political and cultural perspectives. Whilst providing an overview and analysis of the various approaches to studying American literature and culture in the twentieth century, it is modelled on more recent developments in the discipline, paying particular attention to important thematic interests in the areas of race and ethnicity, globalisation, security and finance, transnationalism, border studies, terrorism and technology.

Selected elective modules (subject to change):

American Poetry: from Dickinson to Olds

Working with poetry collections, this module examines some of the main currents of American poetry from the middle of the nineteenth century until the present day: starting with Emily Dickinson you will read some of the principal US poets of the last one

hundred and fifty years and cover a selection of the main movements of the period (Modernism, Imagism, Harlem Renaissance, the New York School, the Black Mountain poets, the Middle Generation, the Postmoderns).

The Thriller in an Age of Global Uncertainty

This module considers how well the thriller is able to interrogate the nature of global uncertainties prior to and in the aftermath of 9/11. Focusing predominantly but not exclusively on the US, it brings to bear contemporary theoretical accounts of state sovereignty, borders, global capitalism, terrorism and biopolitics to unsettle straightforward accounts of modern political subjectivity (them vs. us, domestic vs. international, inside vs. outside). In doing so, the module assesses the capacities of the thriller not merely to reflect current security arrangements (and shore up neoliberal rhetoric about the West as the guarantor of rights, freedom, and democracy); rather, it also questions whether the capacious reach and variety of this popular genre can offer critical reflections on the 'problems' of power in an era of global uncertainty.

Literature in Crisis: American Writing in the 21st Century

Examining a diverse range of new American writing, this module has two main objectives: students will consider whether American literature is undergoing its own crisis of

creativity and meaning by exploring recent literary innovations that take advantage of developments in art and aesthetics, online and interactive media, and computational information technologies; they will also interrogate the various charges levelled against post-9/11 American literature's cultural, philosophical, and political integrity and direction by examining writing that responds specifically to issues surrounding terrorism and war, ecology and biopolitics, capitalism and the digital age.

Students also have the choice of taking options on other pathways, including those focusing specifically on modern literature.

Students who have completed the core module and 3 three elective modules proceed to the dissertation. This is an extended essay (c.15,000 words) on a topic of their own choice, completed in final months of the MA (June – September).

Staff in American Literature and Culture

Dr Catherine Gander is lecturer in American literature in the School of English. Her research interests are in modern and contemporary American poetry and fiction, and in the conceptual, formal and philosophical cross-currents between literature and the visual arts. Her monograph, *Muriel Rukeyser and Documentary: the Poetics of Connection* was published by EUP in January 2013, and won



the inaugural Peggy O'Brien book prize of the Irish Association for American Studies.

Dr Philip McGowan is senior lecturer in American Literature with research and teaching interests in twentieth-century American poetry, contemporary American fiction, as well as in film, most recently the American movies of Alfred Hitchcock. He also has wider interests in Puritan and revolutionary America, the American nineteenth century, westerns, and crime fiction and how these connect with contemporary manifestations of American identity. In the field of poetry, how it operates in the wake of Modernism and the

philosophical possibilities of poetic language in the work of post-World War Two American poets is an area of developing importance in his work.

Dr Andrew Pepper is senior lecturer in American literature. His research interests are in crime, spy and thriller fiction and contemporary American fiction, and in the complex relationship between state power and capitalism. He is the author of *The Contemporary American Crime Novel* (EUP, 2000) and is currently working on *Unwilling Executioner: Crime Fiction and the State* for OUP and, as a co-edited book, *Globalization and the State in Contemporary Crime Fiction* for Palgrave.

For detailed information on our publications, research interests and areas of postgraduate supervision, please look at the School of English staff pages.

PhD in English: American Literature and Culture

There is a strong and dynamic PhD programme in American literature at Queen's, with previous students researching modern and contemporary poetry, twentieth and twenty first century fiction, vigilante fiction, crime fiction, graphic fiction, transnational literatures, trauma fiction, and issues of state and global



politics in contemporary American writing. We welcome research proposals in American literary and cultural studies, especially from the modern period onwards.

Academic Environment

The School of English has around 100 postgraduate students working in all areas of literary, cultural and language studies. It offers students the chance to develop their interests in a dynamic and supportive environment, and to work with our collaborative partner institutions both in the UK (Durham and Newcastle) and in the United States (Georgetown University in Washington DC and Vanderbilt University in Nashville). In addition, the School encourages students to explore the relationship between creative and critical practice and to benefit from the expertise of the internationally renowned creative writers

who belong to the School's Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry.

Postgraduates in the School of English have many opportunities to develop their academic skills and to enhance their employability, career management, and personal effectiveness through a variety of well-designed training and professionalising courses.

Resources and Facilities

The stunning McClay Library at Queen's was inaugurated in July 2010 by Seamus Heaney and represents a state-of-the-art research environment. Scenically overlooking the Botanic Gardens of the University, its literary and historical holdings include the Thomas Percy Collection, the Andrew Gibson/Thomas Moore collection, the Robert Hart Collection, and many other bibliographical and archival treasures. Other University facilities include the

Humanities Postgraduate Centre, the International and Postgraduate Student Centre, and the Seamus Heaney Centre situated in the School of English. Generous work and computing facilities are available in the School as well as in the University library. Other major archives within Belfast include the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland which has recently shifted to a brand-new site in the Titanic Quarter (2011), and the Linen Hall Library founded in 1788. MA dissertations and doctoral projects have profited enormously from these exceptional local resources.

How to Apply and Funding

Applicants should apply for a place on the relevant programme via the University's online application system at - <https://dap.qub.ac.uk/portal/> - and may do so until 1 August 2014 for September 2014 entry. Applications submitted after 20 June 2014 will not be eligible to be considered for funding. The application requires a record of undergraduate academic results, a sample of written work, and two academic references.

The School of English commits a proportion of its annual budget to fund postgraduate taught and research students. Home and EU students are eligible for awards from the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and

Department for Employment & Learning (DEL). International students can avail of awards from the University, amongst other sources.

General information about postgraduate study at Queen's is available at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/home/ProspectiveStudents/PostgraduateStudents/>.

Funding for September 2014 Entry

A total of ten home/EU fee scholarships for MA study (fee-only award) are available to the highest achieving applicants. Bursaries must be applied for by 20 June 2014.

PhD Studentships in English 2014-15

The School of English has a number of AHRC awards, and DEL open, themed, and international awards available. The application deadline for all awards is 17th February 2014. Application involves a 750-word description of the project. Applicants are advised to contact relevant staff in advance of the deadline. Please visit the [School of English website](#) for more details.

Deepthi Sebastian, a former PhD student in English at Queen's, reflects on her time here

"I first came to Queen's on an exchange programme during my MA at Hyderabad Central University, India. I had the opportunity to sit in on lectures, utilise the library facilities and participate in a vibrant academic environment. A few years later, I was fortunate enough to be able to propose my own topic and have it accepted for a PhD scholarship, in which I examined the role of the vigilante in contemporary American fiction. Over the last three years of research – I recently passed my viva – I have had the opportunity to fruitfully discuss my work with academics through collaborative networks with universities across the UK and abroad. We have been encouraged to present our work in student-friendly environments that provide excellent feedback and encouragement from both the faculty and other students. The PhD programme has not only made me confident about my work and my ability to contribute to knowledge but the collegial atmosphere fostered at Queen's has helped me develop a variety of skill sets that can be applied to work in the world of academia and beyond."



For further information, contact:

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[http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofEnglish/
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