

School of English, Film, Theatre & Media Studies

ENGL 439: Journalism and Literature 2006-7

Course co-ordinator: Emeritus Professor Roger Robinson (VZ ; ext. . Email: Roger.Robinson@vuw.ac.nz
Co-lecturer: Dr Stephen Harris: sharris9@pobox.une.edu.au
Guest lecturer: Dr Nikki Hessell

Dates: Nov 17, 24; Jan 19; 24, 25, 26. For full details, see "ENGL 439 Programme" (last page).

Venue: Honours Room, VZ 808; Level 8, Von Zedlitz Bld.

Prerequisites:

The prerequisite for enrolment in ENGL 439 is a BA degree with an English Literature major. Exemptions may be granted to students with special interest and/or equivalent qualification or experience, or who are completing other Honours degrees .

Applications for exemption from prerequisites should be referred to Roger Robinson.

Course Aims and Objectives:

ENGL 439 is a paper in the programme of BA (Hons) in English Literature, one of four papers required for that degree. It will be of particular relevance to students with interests in professional writing, creative writing, contemporary literature or cultural studies, American literature, media studies, the English and American novel, life narrative, travel writing, or "issue-related" literature, or to those considering a higher postgraduate course of study, in New Zealand or overseas. Students from disciplines such as History, Media Studies and Politics have found it of relevance. While not a vocational skills course, this paper will provide study relevant to the role and practice of the journalist, particularly in terms of introducing the wider philosophical, cultural, ethical, and political issues that arise through practice in, and discussion of, contemporary media.

The paper is internationally unique, offering a new approach to the study of literature, by exploring the relation between "journalism" and "literature" as they have been conventionally defined. As is standard at Honours, classes will discuss a number of literary, cultural, intellectual, philosophical and political issues, e.g. the problems surrounding representation, the politics of genre, the role of narrative, and the epistemological concerns arising from New Journalism. Major texts of fictional and non-fictional narrative are discussed, as well as poetry and several other forms of journalism. *All are required reading.* Texts range from the early 18th century, when both journalism and prose fiction were in the early stages of development, to the 21st century, with the main focus on texts from contemporary culture, c. 1960-2006.

The aims of the paper are to:

- a) develop skills of attentive and critical reading at an appropriately advanced level through the study of the language, form, techniques, and ideas of the selected texts;
- b) develop an advanced level of understanding of the literary, cultural, philosophical, and theoretical issues raised through a discussion of the relationship between literature and journalism;
- c) explore questions of genre, representation, and literary conventions pertaining to realism, naturalism and journalism;
- d) provide an extended consideration of many of the theoretical and critical issues relevant to the study of contemporary literature and media.

Course Content:

Five main books plus a range of shorter texts will be discussed and are required study. The main books should be bought. Other texts will be supplied. The principal texts and topics, in order of teaching, are:

Daniel Defoe, Selected journalism

Defoe, *Moll Flanders*

S.T. Coleridge, Selected journalism and poetry

Charles Dickens, Selected journalism and fiction

George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*

Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and related texts

Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and other texts relating to the New Journalism

Don DeLillo, *Libra* and related texts

Assessment:

Assessment is by the presentation of two in-term written assignments (details will be provided separately). Due dates are Friday 15 December and Friday 9 February. As appropriate to a course dealing with the nature of journalism, these are deadlines. Note that the 3/3 schedule is tight, so that no extensions are possible in any circumstances beyond February 9th.

Additionally, it is a **requirement** that students make oral presentations, one short one (2-4 minutes) on a piece in the selection from Dickens's journalism, and one of about 15 minutes on one of the major texts. Topics are allocated early in the course.

Mandatory Course Requirements

- Fully read and carefully study all the required texts;
- Attend at least 80% of class meetings
- Contribute fully to class discussion, including making formal oral presentations as required;
- Complete two written assignments (5000 words total), at Honours standard;
- Meet deadlines.

Academic concerns and problems

Consult the convenor (Roger Robinson) or the Honours Co-ordinator (Brian Opie). See also *Calendar*, “Mandatory Course Requirements,” “Student Contract,” and “Academic Grievance Policy.”

Plagiarism:

Students are reminded of the School’s and the University’s policy on plagiarism. Assignments in English, especially at this advanced level, are designed to develop and assess your own ability to think about literary text and express your response. *Material downloaded from the Internet is not acceptable within assignments unless fully acknowledged in the same way as published source and reference materials.* Plagiarism from whatever source, including the Internet, may lead to your failing the course without further notice, or receiving a lower grade if replacement work is permitted.

Students with disabilities:

Victoria makes every effort to enable students with disabilities to study without disadvantage, including the policy that reasonable accommodation will be made with respect to assessment procedures. For further assistance, students should contact Student Disability Services, 1st Floor, Robert Stout Building, ph 4636070, email disabilities@vuw.ac.nz

General University Requirements:

It is students’ responsibility to be familiar with the University’s requirements regarding course of study requirements, assessment, academic grievance procedures, etc. These are contained in the statutes in the *Calendar*, and on the University website. The University also requires that all members of its community are able to work, learn, study, and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University’s life in an atmosphere of safety and respect.

Student input:

Students’ responses and suggestions are welcomed, and those from students in previous years have been incorporated.