Course Description:

As the basic signifying unit of alphabetic written language, letters make up literature in the most elementary way. They also constitute literature in very complex and ambiguous—but no less fundamental—ways: in its narrowest sense the English word letter denotes a missive communication in writing, addressed to a person or body of persons; an epistle. Sometimes, these letters take the form of an article, report, or the like. In a wider sense, the word denotes any written document, text, or record; Literature in general, or even learning, study and erudition itself.

This course will investigate the intricate art of letter writing as a discrete genre of writing in English, and explore the ways in which letters constitute other genres, like the novel or the verse epistle, and other hybrid forms. We will consider the purposes of literary correspondence with a special interest in the functions of self-interrogation, audience and muse, posterity and literary myth-making. In addition to considering letters as a genre in their own right, we will think about their importance as secondary material in biographical, critical and contextual ways, and from other theoretical perspectives (these readings will be announced in the first week of class). The course will constrain itself to British authors, although its scope and methodologies will suggest broad application to each individual student’s own literary studies.

Primary Texts:

Pope, Alexander. ‘Epistle to a Lady,’ ‘Eloisa to Abelard,’ ‘Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot’.

Secondary Texts:

Altman, Janet Gurkin. Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1982. Available at: https://ohiostatepress.org/books/Complete%20PDFs/Altman%20Epistolarity/Altman%20Epistolarity.htm

Other material will be provided via Mitt UiB

Schedule:
ENGMAU meets in Seminar Room 213 during weeks 35, 39, and 43. The principal readings are allocated as follows:

Week 35:
Benn, Aphra. *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*. Parts 1 & 2 only.
Pope, Alexander. ‘Epistle to a Lady,’ ‘Eloisa to Abelard,’ ‘Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot’.
Wilde, Oscar. *De Profundis*. [@Literature Kiosk]

Altman, Janet Gurkin. *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, pp. 3-46; 87-116

Week 39:

Altman, Janet Gurkin. *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, pp. 47-86; 167-84.

Week 43:

Altman, Janet Gurkin. *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form*, pp. 185-216.
*Reading To Be Determined