

ENGMAU642
Correspondence: The Literary Lives of Letters

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:

Auden, W. H., and Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland*. London: Faber, 2002.
Beckett, Samuel. *Krapp's Last Tape and Other Shorter Plays*. London: Faber, 2009.
Benn, Aphra. *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*. Available via Project Gutenberg at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/8409/8409-h/8409-h.htm>
Keats, John. *Selected Letters*. Ed. Robert Gittings. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2009.
Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2014.
Pope, Alexander. 'Epistle to a Lady,' 'Eloisa to Abelard,' 'Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot'.
Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Horror*. Ed. Robert Mighall. London: Penguin, 2003.
Wilde, Oscar. *De Profundis* from *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, Ed. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis. London: Fourth Estate, 2000. Available at Literature Kiosk.

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

Fabricant, Carole. 'Defining Self and Others: Pope and Eighteenth-Century Gender Ideology' *Criticism* 39:4 (1997): 503-529. [@Mitt Uib]

Week 39:

Keats, John. *Selected Letters*. Ed. Robert Gittings. Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2009.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde and Other Tales of Horror*. Ed. Robert Mighall. London: Penguin, 2003.

W.H. Auden & MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland*. London: Faber, 2002.

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

Bernard, John. 'Keats's Letters: "Remembrancing and Enchaining,"' *The Cambridge Companion to Keats*, Ed Susan Wolfson. New Jersey: Princeton U.P. [@Mitt Uib].

Week 43:

Beckett, Samuel. *Krapp's Last Tape and Other Shorter Plays*. London: Faber, 2009.

Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. London: Sceptre, 2014.

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

*Reading To Be Determined