Jesus College, Oxford

Subject Notes
ENGLISH

Academic Staff

Fellows


**Professor Marion Turner** teaches the Old and Middle English papers (roughly the 7th to the 16th centuries), and has particular interests in late-medieval secular literature, especially Chaucer, the Gawain-poet, and political texts. Her first book – *Chaucerian Conflict: Languages of Antagonism in Late Fourteenth Century London* – was published by Oxford University Press in 2007. In 2013, she published an edited collection about the relationship between critical theory and medieval literature: *A Handbook of Middle English Studies* (Blackwell), and she is currently working on a biography of Chaucer for Princeton University Press. She has also published numerous articles in journals such as *New Medieval Literatures*, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* and the *Chaucer Review*, and in edited collections, including *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide* (OUP, 2004), *Chaucer and the City* (Boydell and Brewer, 2005), *Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature: Middle English* (OUP, 2007), and *A Concise Companion to Chaucer* (Blackwell, 2006). In 2006, Marion was awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship and in 2011 she was awarded research funding by the Wellcome Trust. She is interested in literature and medicine, and is contributing an article to and editing a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* about medical discourse in pre-modern Europe. Marion has appeared on several television programmes on Channel 4 and the BBC, talking about Chaucer and other aspects of late-medieval literature and history, and has also been interviewed on Radio 4’s *Front Row* about adaptations of the *Canterbury Tales*. In 2015-2016 she held a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship.

Lecturers

**Dr Owen Holland** is a Career Development Lecturer in English. He teaches for Prelims Paper 1b, Paper 3 and Paper 4. He is currently working on two main projects: a monograph on William Morris’s utopianism and a study of the cultural reception of the Paris Commune in Britain between 1871 and 1914. More widely, he is interested in critical theory – particularly cultural materialism – and interdisciplinary approaches to literary criticism.

**Dr Steven Kaye** is a Lecturer in English. He teaches the Introduction to English Language, and his research interests include Indo-European linguistics; morphological theory; documentation and the description of endangered languages.
About the Course

English at Jesus College

Jesus College currently has 28 undergraduates reading English, including 5 in the joint schools with Classics, History, and Modern Languages. There are also 8 graduates studying for Masters and doctoral degrees (please see below for further information on Postgraduate Studies and Careers).

The College has an excellent record of academic achievement in English and the Joint Schools - in 2012, for example, all six of our English finalists gained Firsts and in 2014 five of our first years won distinctions in Prelims- with a tradition of fostering a love of literature and independent thought. Theatre trips, poetry readings, and English society events (detailed below) all contribute to a densely textured intellectual life at Jesus. Jesus College is located a two-minute walk from the Bodleian Library, an eight-minute walk from the English Faculty Library and itself offers excellent library and computer facilities.

The Undergraduate Course

All degree courses should help students to learn how to think, and the English course at Oxford is particularly well equipped to do so. Each student will study different texts, pursue personal interests, and shape his or her degree in exciting and challenging ways. The study of English starts from a love of literature and language, and branches out to encounter or encompass other subjects and fields of enquiry. English is a subject which lends itself to diverse approaches and theories of interpretation, from Aristotle’s Poetics to Derridean deconstruction. Here at Jesus we encourage students to work in interdisciplinary ways, and to explore a range of approaches to literature, while never forgetting the centrality of the text. Studying English involves the development of analytical skills and the accumulation of a great deal of knowledge: you need to be able to read widely but also in close detail; to understand the sweep of historical change while also being able to meditate on the nuances of a single word.

The English course is extremely demanding, and you must be ready to work hard. Our students think in original and imaginative ways, and are willing to pursue ideas, themes, and approaches to texts independently. Much of our teaching is conducted in tutorials (one or two students with the Tutor) and small groups, and you must be prepared to discuss your ideas and reading with tutors and other students, and to respond spontaneously to criticism or new ideas introduced by them. You must be excited by the challenges of literary study, and dedicated to developing the skills of reading, writing, interpretation, and research.

Your tutors will be experts in their particular field of research and committed to providing you with an excellent educational experience. You will read widely across authors, periods, and genres. For example, in the first year you will study Early Medieval and Victorian, modern and contemporary writers. You will also learn basic critical approaches to literature and language which will prepare you for good close reading of the texts. In your second and third years, you will study towards four period papers covering the years 1350 to 1832, and will also take a special option, and a paper on Shakespeare, as well as writing a dissertation on a subject of your choice. We want our students to cover all periods of English literature and then to be able to choose their own particular areas of interest.

The tutors are always available to help students develop their individual research plans and discuss any problems they might encounter during their course. We all share a concern and enthusiasm for our students’ work, their aspirations, and their general welfare. We hope that the study of literature will continue to be an important part of their life. Our graduates go on to a great variety of careers, including academia, writing, acting, broadcasting, publishing, journalism, teaching, advertising, administration, librarianship, management and law.
Cultural and Intellectual Life

Students at Jesus find themselves welcomed into a serious, lively, and good-humoured academic community with every opportunity to discuss their thoughts in tutorials, seminars, and College English events.

The Herbert English Society provides a forum for exchange of ideas and discussion of literature, criticism, and the arts. The Society invites poets, playwrights, novelists, academics, journalists, and cultural historians. Our recent speakers have included Marina Warner, Philip Pullman, Bernard O'Donoghue, Craig Raine, Hermione Lee, Sally Shuttleworth, William St Clair, Blair Worden, and the Oxford Professor of Poetry Geoffrey Hill.

There is an active tradition in student drama at Jesus. Many of our undergraduates produce, direct, and act in plays and musicals as well as participating in the Turl Street Arts Festival each Hilary Term.

We make sure that our students have opportunities to make the most of the books and artefacts available in Oxford. For instance, we have arranged for our students to visit the Ashmolean Museum to look at Anglo-Saxon artefacts as part of their work on material culture and Old English literature, and held classes on early modern book history and print culture in the Jesus College Fellows' Library where they viewed, inter alia, the folios of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and a range of historical chronicles and travel accounts.

Joint Schools

- English and Modern Languages
- Classics and English
- History and English

Admissions

We are looking for students who combine academic excellence and ambition with intellectual curiosity and the determination to read as widely as possible. Our successful applicants usually read extensively beyond the school syllabus while maintaining strong analytical skills in close reading. Enthusiasm and a love of the subject are vital.

In a total College entry of about 100 undergraduates, 6-8 are offered places in a typical year to read English and joint schools with English. Offers made to pre-A level candidates will be conditional upon A level results (normally AAA, with an A in each subject the candidate is applying to study to degree level, or equivalent). Offers made to post-A level candidates will usually be unconditional. It is essential to study A2 Level English Literature (or English Language and Literature), or equivalent in other qualification systems.

Written test: all candidates (including applicants for Joint Schools with Classics or Modern Languages) must take the English Literature Admissions Test (ELAT) in school on Thursday 2 November 2017. The ELAT is administered by Cambridge Assessment Admissions Testing, and the registration deadline is 15 October 2017.

For further details, see: http://www.admissionstestingservice.org/our-services/subject-specific/elat/about-elat/

Written work: Candidates are required to submit one recent example of writing. This should be a marked essay produced in the normal course of your school or college work. It should not be rewritten and it should not be a short timed essay, piece of creative writing, or critical commentary. The essay should be on an English literature topic.
Interviews: There will be two interviews of approximately 20 minutes. In one interview, candidates will be asked to discuss a poem which will be supplied about half an hour earlier. In the other interview, candidates may be asked about their reading interests, the written work they have submitted, and the authors and texts they have studied at A-level.

Prospective students are warmly invited to attend one of the College’s Open Days at which the English tutors will be very glad to answer any questions. More information can be found on the Jesus College website at: http://www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here/visiting-open-days/open-days

Deferred Entry: Applications for deferred entry to Jesus College are welcomed. You must apply for deferred entry at the time of application to Oxford: you cannot change your mind after an offer has been made. Please refer to departmental web sites for subject-specific advice. You should be aware that applicants who are offered places for deferred entry will generally be among the strongest of the cohort for their subject. We would not usually offer more than one or two deferred places per subject in order not to disadvantage the following year’s candidates. In some cases, an applicant for deferred entry may be offered a place for non-deferred entry instead. If you require any further advice, please contact the Admissions Officer via admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk

Postgraduate Studies

Jesus has a thriving community of graduate students in English, and we are actively expanding our postgraduate intake. We welcome applicants for the following postgraduate courses in English:

- MLitt or DPhil in English Language and Literature
- MSt English Language and Literature (650 -1550)
- MSt English Language and Literature (1550-1700)
- MSt English Language and Literature (1660-1830)
- MSt English Language and Literature (1800-1914)
- MSt English Language and Literature (1900- Present)
- MSt English Language and Literature (1660-1830)
- MSt English and American Studies
- MPhil Medieval Studies

Prospective graduate students are welcome to contact the English fellows for an informal discussion about the College.

Why choose Jesus College for graduate study?

The College is unique in its financial provision for postgraduates: it provides generous allowances for research trips and book purchase, and its housing and food are heavily subsidised and among the best-value in Oxford. There are also other funding opportunities available – for example, an English postgraduate was recently awarded a generous Old Members’ bursary. English postgraduates are allocated one of the English tutors as a College advisor, who will serve as a pastoral and intellectual point of contact within Jesus College.

Our graduate students take an active part in the intellectual life of the College and participate in the English Society meetings and poetry readings. These involve dinner for students, tutors and guests, a talk or reading, questions, and then informal drinks. Thus they offer an opportunity to socialise with tutors and students, while also engaging with speakers of the highest calibre (including novelists, cultural historians, poets, and literary critics). There are also numerous other social and intellectual events based in College such as joint speaker evenings with members of the Senior Common Room or annual Graduate dinners to which students invite their supervisors.
**Preliminary Reading and Further Information**

Further information about English at Oxford can be found on the Faculty website: [www.english.ox.ac.uk](http://www.english.ox.ac.uk)

Information about Admissions is available at: [http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/english-language-and-literature](http://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/courses-listing/english-language-and-literature)

**Contact details**

If you have any questions about our entrance requirements, or about applying to study at Jesus College, please contact the Admissions Officer:

Tel: 01865 279721  
Email: admissions.officer@jesus.ox.ac.uk  
Web: [www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here](http://www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/study-here)

*Last updated: May 2017*