

Programme Specification

Award and title: MA Publishing and Contemporary Literature

<i>School:</i>	Humanities
<i>Subject area:</i>	Creative Writing
<i>Entry from academic year:</i>	2024-25
<i>in the month(s) of</i>	September
<i>Awarding institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Teaching institution:</i>	York St John University
<i>Delivery location:</i>	York St John University
<i>Programme/s accredited by:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Exit awards:</i>	Postgraduate Certificate in Publishing and Contemporary Literature Postgraduate Diploma in Publishing and Contemporary Literature
<i>UCAS code / GTTR / other:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Joint Honours combinations:</i>	N/A
<i>QAA subject benchmark statement(s):</i>	Not applicable
<i>Mode/s of study:</i>	Postgraduate periods of study ¹ for full time / part time
<i>Language of study:</i>	English
<i>Paired with Foundation Year</i>	No
<i>Study abroad opportunities:</i>	No
<i>Opt-in YSJU Placement Year opportunity:</i>	No

Introduction and special features

The MA in Publishing and Contemporary Literature is part of a thriving postgraduate writing and creative industries community housed within the York Centre for Writing. MA Publishing and Contemporary Literature allows you to combine core skills and knowledge in Publishing with the study of the latest literary texts, issues in literary studies and literary cultures. We offer modules which allow you to develop key skills in publishing, literary analysis, critical reflection and creative practice. Class sizes are kept to small, intimate groups to enable collaborative practice so that you can share and debate ideas. You are provided with the opportunity to understand, analyse and engage with the world of publishing with a focus on the independent sector and to extend your knowledge and understanding of contemporary literature. You will also have the opportunity to deepen your professional skills through a range of exciting opportunities, including meeting with industry professionals and a publisher as part of your course. You will also have the opportunity to engage with literary festivals to further develop your skills and to engage with an external literary partner.

With a focus on theoretical, political, social and cultural currents in contemporary literature, our programme will encourage you to pursue your research interests through a range of innovative assessments. Our diverse and inclusive syllabi champion the voices of writers who have been culturally marginalised. For the purposes of the programme, 'contemporary' is broadly defined as the twenty-first century. The programme is specifically designed so that you are supported and encouraged to develop as a literary critic throughout your postgraduate experience. The introductory module 'Theorising the Contemporary: Critical Perspectives' works to introduce you to a range of advanced theoretical concepts as well as helping you to transition to the new demands of a postgraduate degree. The following five week module 'Form and Genre Now' develops

the themes of the introductory module and works to ensure that you have a sufficiently informed understanding of genre theory while introducing you to some established and emerging genres of the current moment. These modules are undertaken alongside 'The Journey of the Book', examining the publishing process in detail. This is followed by 'Publishing Then and Now' which examines the historical foundation of publishing and how this has led to current practice. Alongside this you will study 'Speculative Bodies' and 'Reflecting on the Contemporary' to complete your analysis of contemporary literature.

As well as the taught modules, you will research and write a final Publishing portfolio under one-to-one supervision, allowing you to produce a sustained, independent project as part of what will become an extensive portfolio of original work. You will also undertake a sustained independent publishing project in term 3 of the MA. Depending on your career aspirations this project can take the form of a work placement with you producing a final report on your experience. You will have the opportunity to work alongside students who are taking the MA in Publishing, the MA in Creative Writing, MA in Publishing and Creative Writing and the MA in Contemporary Literature.

In addition, York is a fantastic place to be if you love books and reading. There is a rich literary history in the city, and each year, the city celebrates its literary heritage with the York Literature Festival, for which our department organises several events. We are also instrumental in the annual York Big City Read with our partner institution York Explore, and academics from the programme have led a number of events associated with this yearly celebration of reading. In recent years, our students have had the chance to attend talks and readings by Margaret Atwood, Germaine Greer, Will Self, Carol Ann Duffy, Mark Gatiss, Polly Toynbee, Roger McGough, Ian McMillan, and Michel Faber. As part of the York Centre for Writing, you will have the chance to get involved in a wide range of similar activities, as well as the opportunity to attend free workshops, writing sessions, and readings as part of your postgraduate degree experience.

You will gain:

- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice in publishing;
- Enhanced and developed strategies for creative practice in creative writing;
- An introduction to a number of contemporary creative and critical texts in a range of forms to enhance your knowledge of texts suitable for a market;
- Critical skills in relation to both the reading, generation, selection, development and publication of new creative texts;
- Critical awareness of the contexts for the production and reception of creative texts and creative writing;
- A sense of belonging to a community through the York Centre for Writing;
- Opportunity to meet agents, publishers, editors and published authors;
- Opportunity to engage in writing retreats in regional settings (these are heavily subsidised and are at a small cost to students).

Special Features:

- Members of staff, who are practising, published, award-winning writers in a range of forms and genres including: creative non-fiction; fiction (short stories/novels); script (radio, screen, stage), contemporary poetry. Members of staff who are internationally recognised theorists;
- Small teaching groups of students to allow for in-depth discussion and the development of collaborative practice;
- Modules which develop creative and critical skills, but also develop professional skills in terms of publication experience;
- A student-led, research-informed teaching environment with opportunities for stimulating discussions within small groups;
- A diverse and inclusive syllabus that incorporates a range of current types of writing;
- Invaluable professional experience from the range of assessments (essay, annotated bibliography, abstract, reflective writing);
- Opportunities to take an active role in the postgraduate academic community at YSJU (including attending School research events, offering a paper at the Humanities research conference, attending special events for Black History Month, LGBTQ+ History Month and International Women's Day, or writing for the Words Matter blog);

- The York Centre for Writing. The centre acts as a hub for a number of exciting writing events, projects and publications in collaboration with Valley Press, The [York Literature Festival](#), and other community partners. In the past we have welcomed authors such as Kathleen Jamie, Sarah Hall, Michel Faber, Daljit Nagra and Margaret Atwood, who have inspired students and members of the local community alike;
- The Centre curates two print publications, [Beyond the Walls](#), our student anthology, and [The York Literary Review](#), our international creative writing journal, both published by [Valley Press](#) and providing commissioning, editing and publishing experience to undergraduate and postgraduate students. We also manage the [Northern Independent Press Collection](#), supporting independent presses based in the North of England;
- Opportunity to attend a weekend residential writing retreat;
- Progression to the MFA, taught on a one-to-one supervised basis (low residency) for those wanting to continue to complete a full-length work (novel, collection, script) – only offered at a small number of UK universities;
- Progression to PhD in Creative Writing or Literature or Creative Practice if appropriate.

You will be supported by the expertise of the staff team; projects will be developed and tailored to your learning needs. The staff team of award-winning writers and recognised literary theorists have an exciting and diverse approach to creative writing, literature and publication and are able to supervise a huge range of proposed projects. Staff members are actively publishing their writing in creative and academic forms. The team have expertise in speculative fiction, historical fiction, scriptwriting, screenwriting, adaptation, poetry, experimental poetry, hybrid forms, horror fiction, literary fiction, creative non-fiction (including memoir and true-crime), and are able to support work in a number of genres. In addition, the creative writing and literature teams have a strong focus on the relationship between critical theory and creative writing and the intersection of a number of theoretical perspectives with creative practice, including eco-criticism, psychoanalysis, biopolitics and regionality and the importance of these themes to an audience. Members of the team have undertaken interdisciplinary and collaborative research exploring music, memory, medicine, uncanny landscapes and pollination.

You are encouraged to take a professional approach and attend the variety of events provided by the York Centre for Writing and the School of Humanities, which include visits from agents, publishers, editors and writers and fosters an important sense of belonging and community.

Publishing at YSJ is further distinguished by:

- The integration of publishing with creative writing and literature;
- A focus on contemporary independent publishing and emergent themes in writing;
- Regular engagement with visiting speakers, publishers and writers;
- Publications in partnership with Valley Press;
- Partnerships with local publishers and writing festivals;
- Research-led teaching;
- Diverse and inclusive syllabi;
- Opportunities for you to experience field trips as part of your learning experience. Some field trips may involve a cost to students.

Admissions criteria

You must meet the minimum entry requirements which are published on the programme specific webpage. In addition, you must have:

- MA candidates have usually already excelled at BA study; we therefore normally require a BA degree at **2:1 grade or higher** (or equivalent). We are open to considering previous degrees in the Humanities, Arts, Sciences and Social Sciences. or other related subjects.
- If you have a 2:2 undergraduate degree and knowledge of a subject related to Publishing, you may be accepted on to the course following an interview. You may also be required to submit written work to support your application.

If your first language is not English, you need to take an IELTS test or an equivalent qualification accepted by the University (see <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/international/how-to-apply/english-language-requirements/>).

If you do not have traditional qualifications, you may be eligible for entry on the basis of [Recognition of prior learning \(RPL\)](#). We also consider applications for entry with advanced standing.

Programme aim(s)

- A focus on contemporary writing and theory
- To develop advanced skills in literary analysis.
- To develop subject specific skills and knowledge in publishing.

Programme learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of the programme students will be able to:

- 7.1 Critically reflect on the nature of the literary text and its production in relation to wider political, social and cultural contexts.
- 7.2 Proactively formulate employability skills through the effective communication of original ideas to appropriate audiences.
- 7.3 Demonstrate specialist, in-depth knowledge of contemporary publishing with an emphasis on the independent publishing sector.
- 7.4 Critically analyse the worlds of contemporary publishing.
- 7.5 Recognise and define the contemporary publishing landscape in relation to its historical development.
- 7.6 Exhibit originality and independent scholarship in the development of an independent project.
- 7.7 Evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline of Literary Studies.
- 7.8 Recognise and define the 'contemporary' and be able to critically appraise current problems and new insights.

Programme structure

Code	Level	Term	Title	Credits	Module status	
					Compulsory (C) or optional (O)	non-compensatable (NC) or compensatable (X)
CRW7021M	7	1	The Journey of the Book: the Publishing Process	30	C	X
LIT7001M	7	1	Theorising the Contemporary	15	C	X
LIT7002M	7	1	Form and Genre	15	C	X
CRW7023M	7	2	The Business of Publishing	30	C	X
LIT7005M	7	2	Speculative Bodies	15	C	X
LIT7006M	7	2	Reflecting on the Contemporary	15	C	X
CRW7025M	7	3	Publishing Project	30	C	X
CRW7027M	7	3	Dissertation (Publishing and Contemporary Literature)	30	C	X

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the table above as non-compensatable. A non-compensatable module is one that must be passed at the relevant level (with a mark of 50) in order to progress.

Learning, teaching and assessment

In Publishing, you will be taught via peer workshops aimed to support collaborative practice in both creative writing and publishing. The nature of the workshops will vary by module. Publishing modules are portfolio based and involve aspects of practice and reflection on practice.

The Journey of the Book: the Publishing Process examines the practical process of publishing from conception to distribution; as part of this module you will learn about the production of a book and key roles in the process. This module is followed by Publishing Then and Now which examines the changing nature of the publishing industry, examining key moments historically that have shaped the world of publishing as it is now. This is followed by The Business of Publishing, which examines fundamental issues such as intellectual property and copyright. Writing in the World concentrates on the possible dissemination of writing, from collaboration and facilitation, to publication. The Contemporary Literature modules demand wide, critical reading and intelligent synthesis of ideas and information. You will be analysing and engaging with complex ideas in written form. Modules such as 'Theorising the Contemporary: Critical Perspectives' have been specially designed to help you adapt to the MA environment and the requirements of the subject. As you progress to your second and third terms, you will be able to study a diverse range of modules that focus on a range of contemporary issues, and you will have lots of opportunities to study types of literature that you might not have experienced previously (such as, for example, neo-narratives, contemporary memoir, and creative non-fiction). We offer an interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature, and you might find yourself studying a film or media adaptation of a text, or considering a specific performance of a play, as well as reading the original source material. We use a range of teaching styles and settings to help support you during your MA.

In the third term you will undertake a project module which can take the form of, for example, collaboration with a writer, a critical publishing project or a work placement. This project is introduced early in the programme to give you maximum time to prepare and negotiate with a supervising tutor. In Contemporary Literature the dissertation is the intellectual culmination of your MA and allows you to explore a contemporary literature topic of your choice and working closely with an academic supervisor. You will take charge of your learning and will be supported throughout the dissertation by a series of specialist writing workshops.

Assessment balances the acquisition of skills essential to the world of publishing whilst offering flexibility in the choice of (for example) publishers for analysis and the form of final project undertaken. We provide the opportunity for you to reflect in a written form and a verbal form on the progress and development of a practical project. Our reading lists are diverse and innovative, often promoting the work of authors who have been marginalised and the publishers who champion them. This is an important element of our ongoing work to decolonise the curriculum. The contemporary focus of the MA encourages this approach, given that both texts and approaches to writing and discussion ask students to situate their practice and study within wider political, environmental and cultural contexts.

The School's inclusive learning policy asks that all teaching materials are made available to you 48 hours in advance of class, and this approach is central to our teaching on the MA. Reading lists are usually available several months in advance and the programme team ensure that all assessment types and tasks are accessible to all students. The MA has a special induction event each year to welcome all new students and explain the general approach to inclusivity and diversity, and what this means in terms of contemporary literary cultures.

Progression and graduation requirements

The University's [general regulations for](#) postgraduate awards apply to this programme.

Any modules that must be passed for progression or award are indicated in the Programme Structure section as non-compensatable.

Internal and external reference points

This programme specification was formulated with reference to:

- [University mission and values](#)
- [University 2026 Strategy](#)
- [QAA subject benchmark statements](#)
- [Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications](#)

Date written / revised: 10/02/2020 Revised 06/04/2020

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