

Paper Du. 4

The literature, history and culture of Belgium and the Netherlands, from 1830 to the present day.

*to provide students with an understanding of the impulses which created first a United Kingdom of all the Netherlands, then two separate kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands. These two countries, which stood at the cradle of European unity, have grown increasingly and decisively apart from each other and in Belgium the internal divisions, linguistic, cultural, are steadily growing. This has had, and still has, an impact on the literature written in Dutch, a literature no longer united by their shared language. The paper aims to show, amongst other things, that the anglicization of the two countries has not yet succeeded in hampering their literary vigour and creativity.

*to encourage students to explore the literature of Belgium and the Netherlands from the early nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, with special reference to the following topics:

The revival of Flemish Culture
The renewal of Dutch Literature
Modernism
Post-1945 Literature

*to encourage students to explore these topics in the context of the history and culture of Belgium and the Netherlands from the early nineteenth to the early twenty-first century, with special reference to the following topics:

Patriotism, regionalism and nationalism.
Colonial and post-colonial experiences and influences
The Great War, the Second War and their aftermaths

*to provide an option for students to explore the full range of topics or to engage closely with some in particular. Combinations of literary and historical topics are encouraged.

Description of topics

The literary and historical topics are closely intertwined and the primary reading is chosen to reflect all the aspects mentioned in the topics. In the nineteenth century the Dutch-speaking provinces of Belgium were culturally at a very low ebb and had to create a new literature, a standard language, and in effect a new identity. The history and politics of the Flemish Movement and the literature it engendered, and the subsequent developments in Flanders in the twentieth and the twenty-first century are therefore part of this paper.

The nineteenth-century Netherlands did not have to start from a cultural *tabula rasa* but had lost the vigour, economically and culturally, which had characterised the Republic. This awareness created the impulses for renewal in several areas and this resulted, amongst others, in a vibrant new poetry and a renewed prose literature. Modernism and Avant Garde in Belgium and the Netherlands and the different speed and manifestations of these international movements in the two countries can only be studied in conjunction with the history of the early twentieth century, in particular the Great War.

Both Belgium and the Netherlands were colonial powers and attention will be given to the very different reflections of this in their respective literature and national consciousness.

The same is true of the Second World War and its aftermath, and the social and literary renewal in both countries will therefore form an important part of the paper.

Preliminary reading

Paul Arblaster, *A History of the Low Countries* (New York: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2006)

Norman Davies, *Europe* (London: Harper/Collins, 1998) (selected chapters tbd)

E.H.Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978)

M.A.Schenkeveld-van der Dussen et al. (eds.), *Nederlandse Literatuur, een geschiedenis* (Groningen: Martinus Nijhoff, 1993) (Chs: 75-150)

Primary reading

Hendrik Conscience, *De Leeuw van Vlaanderen*

Stijn Streuvels, *Het Leven en de Dood in den Ast*

Multatuli, *Max Havelaar*

Herman Gorter, *Mei*

Louis Couperus, *De Stille Kracht*

Paul van Ostayen, *Bezette Stad/Feesten van Angst en Pijn*

Willem Elsschot, *Kaas/ Het Dwaallicht*

Herman Teirlinck, *De vertraagde film*

Simon Vestdijk, *Pastorale*

Hugo Claus, *Vrijdag/Suiker*

S. Reve, *De Avonden*

W. Hermans, *Het behouden huis*

H. Haasse, *Heren van de Thee*

Kader Abdolah, *Het huis van de moskee*

Secondary reading

A readinglist will be provided separately

Teaching

This course will consist of eight lectures in the Michaelmas and Lent Term respectively, and two seminars in the Easter Term. Fortnightly supervisions will be given throughout the three Terms.

Michaelmas Term

Week 1-2 The Flemish Movement

Week 3 The revival of Flemish Literature

Week 4 The revival of Dutch Literature

Week 5 The Netherlands and Empire

Week 6 Modernism in Belgium and the Netherlands

Week 7-8 The Great War and the Interbellum

Lent Term

Week 1-2 The Second World War and its aftermath in Belgium

Week 3-4 The Second World War and its aftermath in the Netherlands

Week 5-8 Post-1960 Literature and Society

Easter Term

Week 1 and 2 Seminars (2hours. each): students offer brief talks on topics which they found most interesting and/or difficult which will then be discussed.

Examination

There will be a three-hour written examination in which candidates will be asked to answer any three questions. These will be **either** questions which focus on one or more specific texts, **or** provide an opportunity to address a wider literary or historical issue **or** elicit answers in which a knowledge of historical and literary aspects of the period can be displayed.