Course Description

Requirements
In recent literary history, in the movement known as “postmodernism,” the claim was often made that contemporary literary narrative (and contemporary culture more generally) “breaks up” linear storytelling, introducing digression, collage, fragmentation. However, these features were already apparent at the beginning of the novel as a genre in the eighteenth century. One of the most influential of earlier novels, Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1770-1767) is still a storehouse of techniques and references for present-day writers, who have raided its stylistic strategies to create their own radical experiments in form. We will look at why this text stands at the origins of the history of the novel: what were its influences and purposes, and its relationship to competing models of the genre? Secondly, what was its relationship to contemporary philosophy—to epistemology and to theories of sentiment and sociability? Lastly, our task will be to trace the line from Sterne to the contemporary, and look at how he reappears in our own moment. Above all, the course gets to grips with the question of what a novel is: the form that is perhaps the best known and most important in modern literature, and yet remains notoriously difficult to define.

Week 1

**Wednesday 1 September**
Introduction to the themes of the course and literature;
Readings for this session: vol. I

**Friday 3 September**
Comparison between *Tristram Shandy* and some of its contemporary novels
Week 2

Wednesday 8 September
Readings for the session:

Friday 10 September
Readings for the session: vol. II

Week 3

Wednesday 15 September
Readings for the session: vol. III

Friday 17 September
Readings for the session:
Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (ch. 8)

Week 4

Wednesday 22 September
Readings for the session: vol. IV

Friday 24 September
Readings for the session: Marthe Robert, *Origins of the Novel* (excerpts)
And Vol. V

Week 5

Wednesday 30 September
Readings for the session: vol. VI

Friday 2 October
Readings for the session: vol. VII

Week 6

Wednesday 7 October
Reading for the session: vol. VIII

Friday 9 October
Readings for this week: vol. IX

*Written exam*
Week 7

Wednesday 14 October
Reading for the session:
Thomas Pavel, “The Novel in Search of Itself”

Friday 16 October
Reading for the session:
Mikhail Bachtin, The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays (excerpts)

Week 8 – MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASSES

Week 9

Wednesday 28 October and Friday 30 October
Readings for the week:
Georg Lukács, Theory of the Novel (excerpts)

Week 10

Wednesday 4 November
Reading for this session:
Viktor Shklovsky, “The Novel as Parody: Sterne’s Tristram Shandy”

Friday 6 November
Frederic Jameson, The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (excerpts)

Week 11

Wednesday 11 November and Friday 13 November
Readings for the week:
Laurence Sterne, A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy (1768)

Week 12

Wednesday 18 November
Readings for the session: Virginia Woolf, “The 'Sentimental Journey' ” and “The Mark on the Wall”; E. M. Forster, Aspects of the Novel (excerpts)

Friday 20 November
Written exam

Week 13 – Feelings, Sociability and Emotions

Wednesday 25 November
Adam Smith, Theory of Moral Sentiments (excerpts)
Friday 27 November
David Hume, “Dissertation on the Passions” and *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (excerpts)

Week 14 – Filming Shandy

*Wednesday 2 December* and *Friday 4 December*
Film screening: Michael Winterbottom “A Cock and Bull Story” and comparative discussion of film and novel

Week 15 – A Brief Comparison: Postmodern Novels

*Wednesday 9 December* and *Friday 11 December*
Readings for the week:
Thomas Pyncheon, *The Crying of Lot 49*
Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (excerpts)

Attendance
Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness influences the class performance grade. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please consult the absence policy in the Student Handbook.

Assessment

**Writing Assignments**
Students will be assessed on the basis of two written exams to be held in class, two response papers, one oral presentation (details below), and participation during class.

**Response papers** are short pieces of writing in response to a reading assignment. At the beginning of the course each student will choose one text to respond to. Response papers should be sent to Laura Scuriatti per email before class starts on the day in which the chosen text is discussed.
Length: approx. 1000 words

**Written exams**
To be held on: 9 October and 20 November
Students will be asked to answer one or two questions in an essay-like format.
Oral presentation
Each student will be in charge of an oral presentation. For the oral presentation, students will bring to class one or more pages of written notes with questions and bullet-points intended to introduce the assigned reading and to facilitate the discussion. These notes will be handed to Laura Scuriatti at the end of the class and will be part of the presentation grade.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers
All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. The network administrator will create a file for course essay submissions ahead of each deadline, and all essays are submitted electronically. The deadline for final essays needs cannot be after the end of completion week.

Grade Breakdown
Class performance: 20 %
Oral presentation: 20 %
Response papers: 10 %
Written exams: 25 % each

Classes start on Monday, August 31 and run until Friday, December 11, with fall break planned for October 19-15. Completion week is from December 14-18. Attendance is mandatory during completion week.

Scheduled class times are available online under the relevant course heading: http://www.berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses-new/fall-2015/

Library and Book Purchase Policies
If you have not yet contacted Catherine Laplante (c.laplante@berlin.bard.edu) regarding the preparation of your course reader or the ordering of reserve course texts for the library, please do so as soon as possible. For your information: the college book policy for 2015-2016 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Books not yet owned by the college will be purchased only to create a small library reserve collection, and for students receiving more than 70% financial aid. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.