Career opportunities

Reader development is a fast-expanding field – in libraries, in social regeneration and educational projects, and in health provision. Innovative non-traditional interventions, such as encouraging personal development through shared group reading, are increasingly sought by many agencies: while this M.A. is not a professional qualification, it will enhance the career prospects of those working or wishing to work in the fields outlined above, as well as offering opportunities for personal growth and the acquiring of transferable skills. Students may simply want to take this M.A. for its own sake and for theirs, but it also offers training opportunities for those involved professionally in library, educational and health work.

Applications

You should normally have an undergraduate degree - though not necessarily in English Literature. We wish to attract a wide range of lively and committed readers from diverse educational backgrounds and will consider candidates on an individual basis.

There are three ways in which you may make an application:

• By completing an online application which can be found at: www.liv.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/how_to_apply.htm

• By downloading a copy of the Postgraduate Application Form from the University’s website at: www.liv.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/how_to_apply.htm

• By completing a hard copy of the Postgraduate Application Form, available from:
  CEARS Team, UK Student Recruitment Office
  The Foundation Building, 765 Brownlow Hill L69 7ZX
  Telephone: 0151 794 5927
  Email: pgrecruitment@liv.ac.uk

When you have completed the application form you should sent it, together with any supporting documentation to the above address.

* In all forms of application you will need to know the Programme and Major codes in order to complete section 2: Programme Code: MA/RP; Major Code: ELRP;
Part time Code: MA/RP/P
Programme Outline

If literature takes life as its subject-matter, what practical relation do books have to the lives of those who read them? What help does reading really offer to people?

These are the questions raised by what is now often called ‘Bibliotherapy’: the attempt to use books in the effort towards personal development and discovery. The M.A. in Reading in Practice is not a programme which concentrates upon narrowly targeted self-help books—how to overcome depression; how to survive divorce or bereavement or redundancy. It is concerned, instead, with the wider and deeper ways in which creative literature ‘finds’ people, emotionally and imaginatively, by offering living models and visions of human troubles and human possibilities. The first M.A. of its kind in the country, it invites open-minded investigation into the role of reading in relation to health—in the broadest sense of that word.

Books of all kinds—novels, poetry, drama, essays in philosophy and theology: books from all periods, from Shakespeare to the present—you will be helped to develop the ability, the confidence and the enthusiasm to use all literature as a form of personal time-travel and meditation. You will also learn how, in turn, you may re-create this process for others, through the formation of equivalent reading-groups based on the innovative and successful ‘Get into Reading’ model—a reader-development project run in various locations across Merseyside (schools, hostels for homeless people, community libraries, day centres for the elderly) by The Reader, an outreach unit in the School of English (www.getintoreading.org).

Reading in Practice thus offers the following applied and practical opportunities:

- Reading expertise in terms of ‘practical criticism’ – the ability to look closely, patiently and attentively at literature of all kinds from all ages, where the power of analysis serves to increase, not diminish, the power of excitement
- Development of personal reading programmes in pursuit of individual journeys, with opportunities for informal and exploratory writing
- Investigation into case-studies in the history of reading
- Introduction to the use of the spectrograph in tracing the vocal patterns of reading aloud, and of brain-imaging in relation to the movements of mind in Shakespeare
- Introduction to outreach work, reader development, and working with reading-groups, through the University of Liverpool’s unique Reader Outreach programme

Programme Structure

This new part-time M.A. is a two-year programme, made up of five modules. There will be one literature module in each of the first and second semesters of the first year, and a third literature module in the first semester of the second year (each comprising 30 credits). Thereafter there will be two shorter 15 credit modules on research methods, including the preparation for and planning of your dissertation.

Sessions will consist of one two-hour early evening seminar per week in an informal and supportive setting.

You will begin work on your individually chosen dissertation (60 credits) around February of the second year, for completion by the end of September. You will have an individual supervisor to help you throughout.

The first literature module, ‘Therapies’ will look at novels and poems in the context of therapeutic and redemptive purposes. Authors will include Dickens, Wordsworth, Byron, Doris Lessing and John Berger, with a selection of Elizabethan poetry. There will be opportunities to examine manuscript reproductions to see how authors make their choices and changes.

The second literature module, ‘Case Histories’, will examine particular historical examples of individual dilemmas—existential, philosophical and religious. Authors will include Bunyan, George Eliot, Blake and Tennson. We will range from the ancient question ‘What must I do to be saved?’ to modern psychological theories on the relation of pressing thoughts and receptive thinking.

The third literature module, ‘Practices’, will include practical work on Shakespeare in performance and workshop experiments in reading aloud. You do not have to be a skilled actor or accomplished orator—just a willing experimenter unafraid of involvement in a friendly and collaborative group environment. This module will also include a critical examination of the practice and theory of reading as potential therapy and in terms of social health.

Assessment

The literature modules will be assessed by means of long essays (4,000 words per module). The dissertation will consist of 15,000 words. You will be given opportunities to practise your writing, prior to assessment, and will be encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and be personally adventurous. Individual feedback sessions will be available to provide support.

Director: Professor Philip Davis, School of English, University of Liverpool, Liverpool L69 7ZM