



Universidad
de Alcalá

GUÍA DOCENTE

Revisiones literarias del discurso histórico: la historia alternativa / Literary Revisions of the Historical Discourse: Uchronias in Fiction

**Máster Universitario en Investigación en
Literaturas Anglófonas e
Hispánicas Contemporáneas**

Universidad de Alcalá

Curso Académico 2019/20

GUÍA DOCENTE

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| Nombre de la asignatura: | Revisiones literarias del discurso histórico: la historia alternativa (Literary Revisions of the Historical Discourse: Uchronias in Fiction) |
| Código: | |
| Titulación en la que se imparte: | Máster Univ. en Investigación en Literaturas Anglófonas e Hispánicas Contemporáneas |
| Departamento y Área de Conocimiento: | Filología Moderna / Filología Inglesa |
| Carácter: | Optativa |
| Créditos ECTS: | 6 |
| Curso y cuatrimestre: | Primer curso, primer cuatrimestre |
| Profesorado: | Juan F. Elices Agudo |
| Horario de Tutoría: | |
| Idioma en el que se imparte: | Inglés |

1. MODULE DESCRIPTION

Dealing with two disciplines as close and at the same time divergent as history and fiction has originated an intense theoretical debate, especially among poststructuralist scholars. The proliferation of the historical novel, now considered a commercial and editorial stronghold, the emergence of the so-called historiographic metafiction, under the auspices of postmodernist critical theorists, and the re-flourishing of history in intellectual and academic circles has reactivated the already significant presence of historical references in the works of most contemporary authors. Nonetheless, with the *entrée* of postmodernism, the approaches towards history have been dominated by the deconstruction of the epistemological pillars that sustain it, mainly, the empirical basis of fact or the linearity and causality of historical development. History, in this sense, has been shielded behind the façade of being an immutable entity and, more importantly, of being the only capable of studying the past from impartial and objective standpoints. In a period of apparent scepticism and rupture, these premises, often associated to a more realist framework, have been unable to maintain the fixedness of history to give way to a more unstable and challenging vision of the past. To this change of perspective have contributed not only the abovementioned genres, but also other –some might say “minor”– literary modes such as science fiction and fantasy, whose coming to terms with history has widened the once limited scope of the discipline. Thus, the goal of this module will be to explore long unquestioned historical assumptions to delve into more speculative, alternative scenarios, which come to challenge our own approaches to history

2. AIMS

Basic competences

To encourage students to apply the acquired theoretical and contextual knowledge to the reading of literary texts

To urge students to deliver their own conclusions and the critical foundations on which they are sustained to specialized and non-specialized audiences

To help students acquire the necessary learning skills for the development of autonomous research skills.

General Competences

To avail of conceptual, analytical and methodological tools with which to accurately approach a literary work from a wide-ranging array of different critical perspectives.

To carry out cogent literary research projects.

Specific Competences

To be able to identify, select and apply critical tools to the analysis of contemporary literary texts.

To be capable of identifying genuine interconnections among texts, authors, movements and themes that stem from previously acquired methodological tools.

To be able to interpret contemporary literary texts in a coherent, original and accurate way, bearing in mind the literary and extra-literary socio-historical context that surrounds their production and dissemination.

3. CONTENTS

| Content units | Overall ECTS credits |
|---|----------------------|
| Understanding history: definition and conventions | 2 ECTS |
| Conceptualising uchronian fiction | 1 ECTS |
| Alternative history and feminism | 1 ECTS |
| Alternative history and dystopia | 1 ECTS |
| Alternative history and the postcolonial world | 1 ECTS |

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Student workload

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|---------------------|-----|
| Class contact hours | 27 |
| Independent study | 63 |
| Readings | 30 |
| Assignments | 30 |
| Total | 150 |

4.2. Learning activities

Course time is devoted to seminars, class discussions, critical reading, critical writing and oral presentations. All seminars will presuppose completion of the reading assigned for their particular date.

Students are greatly encouraged towards independent and autonomous study. As part of their individual learning time, students should work on their written and oral assignments.

Students are expected to read the set texts before they are discussed in the seminars. There can be no substitute for reading the original work and it is the students' response to and knowledge of those works that mainly matter.

Students will also be requested to attend individual tutorials or group workshops. In these sessions, the teacher will try to solve doubts about their written/oral

assignments and to guide students in the elaboration of their final essays and Master's Dissertations.

5. ASSESSMENT

Students should have acquired the desirable level in each of the competences specified in the assessment criteria:

- A thorough knowledge and understanding both of the themes and of the individual works studied.
- An ability to respond to literary texts critically, sensitively and in detail, using appropriate terminology and textual evidence, and coherent, accurate written expression.
- An appreciation of the similarities and differences between literary works from different ages, genres and cultures.
- Detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts, considering different approaches to texts and alternative interpretations.
- Understanding of the significance and influence of the social, cultural and historical contexts in which literary texts are written and received.
- A considerable level of class participation, which will be assessed in all the learning activities.

Students are warned that plagiarism will not be tolerated. The ideas from other sources, regardless of whether they are quoted, summarized or paraphrased, must be documented adequately. Any form of plagiarism found in the written assignments will be penalised and could result in the failure of the course.

a) Continuous assessment

This course will base its assessment and grading criteria on the following assignments, which should be completed throughout the term:

- An oral presentation on a topic of their students' choice, which will be worth 30% of the final grade
- A final essay of approximately 2,500-3,000 words, which will be worth 40% of the final grade.
- Class participation (30% of the final grade)

b) Final evaluation

Those students who do not follow or fail the continuous assessment scheme must complete the following activities to pass the subject:

- Delivering an oral presentation. The content and approach of the speech should be agreed upon with the lecturer beforehand.
- Handing in a long essay following the guidelines discussed in the previous section. The topic and approach of the paper should be agreed upon with the lecturer beforehand.

GRADING CRITERIA

Outstanding (MH): Students display an outstanding understanding of the aims and contents of the course. All assessment criteria have been achieved at an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows that students have read and thought at a level well beyond what is expected in the module. Students attend lectures and are always well prepared for discussion in seminars.

- **Excellent (SB):** Students display an excellent understanding of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at a very high standard. Performance in all the tasks is excellent and includes all the characteristics expected for this type of work. Students attend lectures and are practically always well prepared for discussion in seminars, with almost no absences.

- **Very Good (N):** Students display a very good understanding of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met fully and many have been achieved at a good or very good standard. Performance in all the tasks shows a good knowledge of the syllabus contents. Students attend lectures and seminars, with few absences, and have done most of the preparation for them. They have a good foundation in the prescribed readings and provide interesting insights to class discussions.

- **Satisfactory (A):** Students show a satisfactory understanding of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met, but some barely exceed the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows some of the appropriate characteristics in relation to content, organization, and expression. Students are present in lectures and seminars, with few absences, and occasionally contribute to discussions.

- **Fail (S):** Students show an unsatisfactory understanding of the aims and contents of the module. Some assessment criteria do not reach the minimum standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows limited grasp of essential concepts and/or minimal research. Students have multiple absences and when they come, they are often not prepared or they barely participate in the dynamics of the lesson.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Fergusson, Niall, ed. *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals*. London: Pan Books, 2003.
- Hadesty, William H. "Toward a Theory of Alternate History: Some Versions of Alternate Nazis." *Classic and iconoclastic alternate history science fiction*. Lewiston, NY; Lampeter: Mellen P, 2003. 71-92.
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- Ransom, Amy J. "Alternate History and Uchronia: Some Questions of Terminology and Genre." *Foundation. The International Review of Science Fiction* 32.87 (2003): 58-72
- Rosenfeld, Gavriel. "Why do we Ask 'What If?' Reflections on the Function of Alternate History." *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 90-103.
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