

Coming Fall 2021
ENGL 262, SECTION 1—BRITISH LITERATURE 2
Prof. Adam Komisaruk
MWF 1:30-2:20 PM

**What do you
mean by
“British,”
anyway?**

The question at left will be our guiding question, because it was a guiding question of the literature we will be reading (roughly from 1789 to the present). As the British Empire extended its reach to the Americas, Africa and southern Asia, it not only transformed but was transformed by the peoples it colonized, complicating the definition of national borders and cultural identity. Nor were these concerns unknown within “Britain” itself. “Great Britain” was a fairly recent invention (Scotland had only been formally incorporated with England and Wales in 1707), the “United Kingdom” more recent still (Ireland was annexed in 1801) and none of these dates marked either the beginning or the end of long-standing political conflicts. Other internal divisions of geography, class, sex, race, religion and language persisted. Sometimes it seems that the harder a nation tries to achieve unity, the more insistently it is reminded of how heterogeneous it really is. The prospect can be both exciting and scary.



Under this broad heading, however, we will explore other questions that focus on method:

How do literary texts relate to their historical contexts?

Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* on communities of women • Thomas Carlyle’s *Past and Present* on industrial workers • Ian McEwan’s *The Cockroach* on Brexit

How does literary form relate to literary “content”?

Scots dialect in Sir Walter Scott’s fiction • Metrical verse in Lord Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* • The fairy tale in William Butler Yeats’ *Red Hanrahan*

How does literature grapple with the “big questions”? *History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave* on emotion • Sarah Moss’s *Ghost Wall* on violence • Mike Bartlett’s *King Charles III* on leadership

How do literary texts talk to other texts? Political philosophy in Edmund Burke’s

Reflections • Monuments in Anna Barbauld’s *1811* • Theology in T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* **More!**

ENGL 262 satisfies GEF Area 6 (The Arts & Creativity) and GEC Objectives 3 (The Past & Its Traditions) and 5 (Artistic Expression). Requirements will most likely include analytical essays, discussion-board postings, a midterm and a final exam.