

“

I left school at 16...

It **never** would have occurred to me to go to university...

...**I loved** the course...

It opens your **mind** to what you can get

**out of a book...**

The degree has been **hard work**

but I *put my all* into it

... It could open your eyes

to what studying can do

”

**Reading English Literature:**  
A Pathway to Further Study

**Application Pack 2014-15**

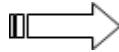


The quotations above are from a student's account of the course.

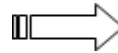
# HOW TO APPLY

## What Happens (and When)

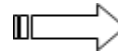
Send in your application form by **Mon 24th November 2014**



You will be invited for an interview in **November/December**



**either** You will be offered a place to start the course in January 2015.



**or** we may encourage you to enrol for one of our other short courses.

## More information and advice

You are advised to read the information in this pack carefully before completing your application form. We are very happy to help or to answer any questions you may have, so don't hesitate to get in touch.

The course director for Reading English Literature is GARETH GRIFFITH. He has taught courses for mature students since 2010. You can contact Gareth for an informal chat on 0117 928 8629 or e-mail [gareth.griffith@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:gareth.griffith@bristol.ac.uk)

The University also has a Mature Student Advisor, MARIA TOTTLE. You can contact her by e-mail on [maria.tottle@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:maria.tottle@bristol.ac.uk)

## How and when to apply

Admission to the course is based upon your application form and an informal interview. The deadline for applications for the course is **Monday 20th October 2014**. Interviews will be held in early November 2014.

## Who can apply?

This course is designed primarily for mature students (over the age of 21) from the local area, who wish to return to further study. You do not need to have any previous qualifications to apply and applications from those returning to study after a gap are encouraged. The most important thing is to explain in your personal statement (on the application form) why you would like to study on the course.

# ABOUT THE COURSE

## Dates for the course

The course will meet on 15 Wednesday evenings (6pm to 9pm), starting in January 2015, with breaks for half-terms and Easter.

Dates for subsequent meetings will be available in the autumn.

The classes will all be held at the Department of English, 3/5 Woodland Road in Clifton.

## What does the course aim to achieve?

Most of all, we want you to have an enjoyable experience of returning to study. It's important to realise that this won't be like school: we want you to have your own thoughts and opinions (and disagree with the tutor sometimes!) and there will be an emphasis on work completed in your own time, with support and advice provided during the class meetings. We hope you will go away from the course feeling excited about books and reading. You should also gain confidence for continuing your studies and a sense of the options that are open to you.

The course will encourage you to develop skills in:

**READING:** a range of prose, poetry and drama. The key texts will include a Shakespeare play, a novel and an anthology of poems.

**DISCUSSION:** There will be an emphasis on class discussion and debate as well as on reading texts aloud. This is a great way to improve confidence and to start thinking about what you are reading. This leads towards...

**ESSAY WRITING:** There will be an emphasis in the opening weeks of the course on planning and writing essays: so don't panic if you haven't written one before or if you are out of practice!

## How is the course marked?

You will be awarded a mark for the course as a whole, based on the total of the marks for two assessed essays. There are **NO EXAMS!** You need 40% overall to pass the course.

## What happens next?

The REL course is worth 40 credits at Level C (equivalent to first-year undergraduate level). Where students progress to a part-time degree or a higher education certificate, it may be possible to put these credits towards that later award, or to exempt those students from an equivalent number of credits on the degree. The first year of a full-time degree is worth 120 credits.

There are two BA courses at Bristol to which you can progress: the BA English, which runs during the day and is available part-time, or the BA English Literature and Community Engagement, which runs part-time only one evening per week. 17 students have progressed to these courses from REL in recent years and 3 have gone on to study at Bath Spa, Exeter and at the Open University.

## Course fee

The course fee for Reading English Literature is **£360**.

The University has an **Access to Learning Fund**, to provide support for students to help them access and remain in higher education. This includes monies to support taster modules such as the Reading English Literature unit, and it may be possible for students on the course to apply for assistance from this fund to help pay some or all the course fee.

For more information on this support, or to find out about how to finance a degree, you are advised to speak to Gareth Griffith (contact details on page 2 of this pack).

Please note that students on the REL course must arrange payment before beginning the course.

## Frequently asked questions

We have put the answers to some frequently asked questions below. If you have a question that is not covered here, then please get in touch. We will be happy to help, or to discuss any concerns you have.

### **What happens after I apply?**

We will send you an acknowledgement of your application form within 21 days of receiving it. All application forms will be passed to the Course Director, Gareth Griffith. After the deadline for applications (20<sup>th</sup> October 2014), we will write to invite you for a short informal interview in November 2014.

### **What will I be asked at interview?**

One aim of the interview is to give you a detailed picture of the course, and of the routes to further study that it provides. So, the interview is partly an opportunity for you to ask questions about the course and about returning to study. We will ask you about: your reasons for wanting to study on the course; what you enjoy reading; how the course would fit in with your other commitments; your aims and ambitions after you finish the course.

### **I don't have A-Levels (or) I don't have GCSE English (or) I didn't do well at school... can I apply?**

**Yes!** You do not need to have any previous qualifications to apply for the course, as long as you can demonstrate that you are motivated and enthusiastic, that you enjoy reading, and that you are committed to the idea of studying at a higher level.

### **How do you decide who gets a place on the course?**

Admission to the course is not based on previous achievements or qualifications. We are looking for students who are motivated, enthusiastic and committed; who have strong reasons for wanting to return to studying; and who can demonstrate that they will be able to manage the demands of study at this level. We hope to accommodate as many students as we can on the course, though it may not be possible to give a place to everyone who applies.

### **What if I am not offered a place?**

Anyone who is not offered a place will be encouraged to talk through other options with the Course Director. We run a large programme of part-time courses at Level C (equivalent to first-year undergraduate level), and many of these also provide a good route back into studying.

**Will I automatically be offered a place on a degree afterwards?**

No, you will need to apply for a place. You will be encouraged to fill in an application form for a part-time degree towards the end of the Reading English Literature course, and will be asked for interview and will also be given information on a variety of other options for continuing your studies.

**How long does it take to complete a part-time degree?**

After completing the Reading English Literature unit, the main route to continue your studies at Bristol is on the BA English Literature and Community Engagement, which runs part-time one evening per week. This course takes six years to complete part-time. However, you can request to switch to full-time study, so the degree may take four or five years in total.

**What if I'm not sure I want to continue at the end?**

The Reading English Literature course should be useful and enjoyable in itself. If you decide not to apply for a degree at the end, we hope you will have gained important skills and confidence, and often evidence of further study at this level can be useful in career progression or in taking on work in the community.

**How can I fit my studies around work and/or family?**

The Reading English Literature course is part of the Department of English's commitment to offering more flexible learning opportunities. The course itself is taught one evening per week, on fifteen evenings over six months. This format is designed to make it accessible to a wide range of students. On top of this, we would normally expect you to complete 7-10 hours of work in your own time per week. There will be advice during the course on managing your studies, and you will be with a group of mature students who are faced with similar pressures on their time – the group atmosphere can be useful in adjusting to the academic demands of the course.

**How many past students have gone on to a degree?**

The course has run every year but one since 2007. In total, 25 students have gone on to degree-level study; 22 at Bristol, and 3 at Bath Spa, Exeter or the Open University.

# STORIES FROM THE COURSE

## Judith's Story



**I grew up in Knowle West. I wasn't encouraged to do well at school. I used to write really badly, I couldn't even read my own writing. I only had one teacher who realised I was having difficulties and tried to help me make my writing legible.**

I wanted to be a nurse but was told by a careers advisor that I couldn't because of my qualifications – so why didn't I do catering? I left school at 16 and went to college and I was put on a Certificate of PreVocational Education for young people who hadn't done well at school. That was the first time I found out that I hadn't done well and that everything I had worked so hard for didn't amount to much.

I didn't have lots of confidence. One of the tasters we did was childcare. I really liked it and they put me on to the second year to study family and community care. But it didn't qualify me as a nursery nurse and I didn't know that until it finished. I left college a little bit disillusioned My mum was a single parent, so I got a job full time in catering and planned to stay there. Only later did I train as a nursery nurse, which was hard work. But I got a job and then I fell into youth work, which I love. I work with young people aged 9 to 16. I work and live in St Pauls. I love the people and the community spirit. Only people living here know what it's like. There's nowhere as wonderful and diverse as this area.

Last year I found out, through my work, that I am dyslexic. I always avoided paperwork because I found it hard. It didn't make sense. When I did ask for help in college and school I was treated as if I was stupid. So only this year, at nearly 40, did I get help – but that's partly about undoing the last 30-odd years. I'm a slow burner.

I found out about a Bristol University course called 'Second Skins' in the Black Development Agency newsletter. It was free to people without a degree, which appealed to me as it wasn't too much of a risk. I thought: I'd love to find out more about myself, read with other people and open my mind. I wanted to learn more about who I am as an individual and as part of a community. I felt I could take a chance on it, and try to find out about something new.

I liked that somebody black was teaching it and that she'd done well in the educational system. I didn't know anybody could be passionate about literature or why they would be, but she was. I didn't always understand the words but you could ask questions, it didn't matter how silly they were.

I loved a book we read called *Black Teacher* by Beryl Gilroy, who was Britain's first black head teacher. I empathised with what she had suffered but also how she used it to empower her and others.

Our tutor told us about the Reading English Literature course and I saw it as a stepping stone. I was nervous about applying for it and spending £250 on it when I wasn't sure whether I'd like it. But that became a motivating factor too, because I didn't want to waste my money. We were in a beautiful room at the University, full of books and the smell of books! We had another tutor, with even more of a passion for literature.

I loved the short stories we read and *Frankenstein*. It was very hard to read Shakespeare, just trying to get into the mindset and language. I would say *King Lear* and I are friends now, but I wouldn't say we were best friends! But his creativity is amazing, I don't know if any other writer compares to him. There

are so many hidden meanings in it. He attacks society without drawing blood, which in that time was a dangerous thing to do. I never thought I'd be inspired by Shakespeare partly because he's a white writer. So that was a pleasant surprise. He was a man beyond his time. He wrote 400 years ago but he's still being read. There were times when I thought I had nothing to say about it, because everyone has said what I think. He was kind of a rebel. He wasn't rich, but he did very well. He didn't go to university like other writers, he did it in his own way. That gave me something to empathise with.

I found it hard to write essays while working full-time and having been out of education. I had to get used to the different standards that were expected, in getting up to university level. It was hard, but it was brilliant watching myself improve with each essay. The tutor showed you what you needed to do. When you'd made a good point, he'd let you know; and when you hadn't, he'd say 'What about this?'

I'm thinking of doing the English Literature and Community Engagement degree or maybe studying youth work. I'd like to do more taster courses too and learn more about other writers. I've got a long list of books to read now, recommended by the tutor and other students. I want to read *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, D.H. Lawrence, Dickens, Toni Morrison...

I took a chance with the Second Skins course and it took me to a better place...

## Damien's Story



**I went to school in rural Ireland and was taught by the Marist Brothers. I left when I was 12 with no qualifications and was living in London by the time I was 15.**

I didn't become immersed in reading until I was 22. I spent a lot of time in and out of jail between the ages of 16 and 25 down to a heroin and alcohol addiction. While I was there I came across a magazine called *rebel inc*, which had modern writers like Irvine Welsh and extracts from publications that had been banned in earlier periods, like *Hunger* and *Lolita*. I found about ten copies and it spoke to me, I could identify with the literature because it

was quite rebellious.

I started reading a lot of Yeats, Burroughs, Faulkner and Hermann Hesse. There is a certain amount of shame when you're outside of society. These books said that I was OK, that everyone has a good and bad side and their own struggles, that I was a part of society.

I got into reading initially out of boredom and escapism. Then I found myself reading stuff I wouldn't have expected to enjoy, like Jeanette Winterson: I love her stuff. The novels I read often contained information that I would have previously known nothing about, this spurred me on to find out more about a variety of subjects. Initially I read people I could identify with, then I started to develop empathy for others, for different cultures and experiences, to ask: 'What's it like for you?' I particularly have a fondness for Latin American literature.

I worked for about 15 years on building sites and labouring, as a sort of jack of all trades.

I did a BTEC in dance movement and the therapeutic process. All of the students and tutors were women. I was interested in what life is like for other people. Through that I came into contact with people with learning difficulties and those with brain damage from accidents. I was moved deeply by this course. I've learnt that so much communication isn't verbal, that there's so much else going on. I now work in mental health services for an organization called Supported Independence Ltd. I got the opportunity to do a N.V.Q 3 in health and social care while there.

I had always regretted that although I am well read I am not well educated. I'd always secretly wished I could be and looked to see what was out there, not really believing I could get in to university. When I saw the Reading English Literature course I thought I could do it. It wasn't a huge commitment, and then I would know where I stand. I had doubts about whether I would fit in with the other students. Had I read the right stuff? Had I read enough? I was worried that the way I think and speak are two different things. How would I write an essay?

But the students on the course were fantastic, a wide variety of people with a common interest in literature. It wasn't how I'd imagined school being, it was very open. We were encouraged to give our opinions. I felt I was giving as well as getting from the tutor. I liked being told what to read and being given the tools to allow a closer inquiry. Now I'm getting more out of what I read.

We went to see *King Lear* in Stratford as part of the course. That was a big deal for me. It was very moving and it opened up doors, to realize that this is mine as well as belonging to other people. I'd read the play 4 or 5 times before we went and had drafted my essay. But seeing it, the language just fell into place; the tragedy and darkness, the love and hope of it. I got 67% for my essay, which was fantastic for my confidence: I didn't believe that mark, I had to re-read it.

I've read obsessively for the last 10 years but now it's gone off the radar, I have 5 books on the go at a time. I'm 39 and there's a new excitement in my life, I'm moving into the complete unknown.

When I tell people what I'm up to, they're amazed that Bristol University would have me, that it has something like the Reading English Literature course and allows so many people from different backgrounds to come into the University.

I've now been offered a place on the English Literature and Community Engagement degree. The community engagement aspect of the course relates to my experience. I wouldn't be in the position I'm in now if I hadn't read. I believe I would not have found the desire to recover from drug addiction had I not read the literature I found. A lot of people are stuck – you don't know what you don't know. You don't think there's a world outside your little world. I have an interesting healthy life, which I enjoy, and a great partner. All of that, and how I relate to people, is down to reading. Without it, I would have been stuck in self. I read to escape out of myself, into the world.



Please attach a  
passport-sized

photograph  
HERE

Reading English Literature:  
A Pathway to Further Study

Application Form

Please complete this form in **BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS** and in **black ink**.

You must attach a passport-sized photograph to the top of this form.

**Personal Details**

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ FORENAMES: \_\_\_\_\_

SURNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS (for all correspondence):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF BIRTH: \_\_\_\_\_

NATIONALITY: \_\_\_\_\_

EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (please indicate the award, the institution and the date. Please indicate clearly any University of Bristol awards):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any unspent criminal convictions? Yes  No

If 'yes' please send separate details, marked 'Strictly Confidential', to Mr. Tom Sperlinger, University of Bristol, 3/5 Woodland Road, Bristol BS8 1TB.

Are you disabled? Yes  No

If you answered yes, how would you describe your disability? (please tick one only).

- 1) Dyslexia
- 2) Sight impairment
- 3) Hearing impairment
- 4) Mobility difficulties
- 5) Personal care support
- 6) Unseen disability (eg diabetes, asthma, epilepsy)
- 7) Mobility difficulties
- 8) Multiple disabilities
- 9) Other (please specify) .....

Do you have access or support requirements (i.e. level access, induction loop, interpreter, information in large print or alternative formats)? Yes  No

If yes, please give details of any support required on a separate sheet, and we will contact you to discuss your requirements.

### Personal Statement

Please comment on the next page, **in no more than 500 words**, on your reasons for wishing to study on the Reading English Literature course. You may use the space provided, or attach an additional sheet if you prefer.

In your personal statement, you may wish to comment on: what books you enjoy reading; your experiences of study in the past (whether positive or negative); your reasons for wanting to return to study now; why you wish to study on a parttime basis; what you would like to achieve by the end of the course; whether you would like to go on to study for a degree in English; your other hobbies and interests.

## Personal Statement

## Declaration

I confirm that the information given on this form is true, complete and accurate, and that no information requested or other material information has been omitted. I consent to the processing of my data by the University of Bristol for the purpose of dealing with this application.

Applicant's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: .....

All decisions by the University are taken in good faith on the basis of statements made on your application form. If the University discovers that you have made a false statement or have omitted significant information from your application form, for example regarding examination results, it may withdraw or amend its offer, or terminate your registration, according to circumstances.

When completed, please return this form to:  
Department of English Part-time Courses  
University of Bristol  
11 Woodland Road  
3/5 Woodland Road  
Bristol BS8 1TB

N.B. We regret that we cannot accept applications by e-mail at present.

Before you send!

Have you:

...included photo?

...completed your personal statement?

...signed your form?