

ENGL 3220: British Literature since 1798  
“The Idea of the Author in Modern British Literature”  
Dr. Carey Mickalites

## Course Description

In their 1802 “Preface” to *Lyrical Ballads*, poets Wordsworth and Coleridge set out both to revolutionize the language of poetry, emphasizing the idiom of common folk, while also instructing their readers in how to evaluate poems. Over a century later, American-born T.S. Eliot would publish numerous critical essays that also sought to cultivate a small and select audience for the difficult and experimental poems he and his fellow modernists were writing. Eliot’s contemporary and friend, Virginia Woolf, would make a revolutionary contribution to early feminism by insisting on a cultural space for women writers. And just after the turn of the twenty-first century, celebrity author Zadie Smith would write a book about, well, celebrities, with a character obsessed by collecting autographs even as his creator was often engaged in signing her books for fans. Literature, that is, is not only produced by an author, but is also about the very idea of the author as a public figure.

English 3220 is meant to survey major British authors, texts, and movements—including historical contexts—from the late eighteenth century to the present. Rather than the standard march through major periods and representative authors (which often uses an anthology), this section will develop its study around the notion of the author and authorship. We will still attend to the usual suspects making up the Romantics, Victorians, modernists, and contemporary periods, but will do so by focusing on how the very idea of what an author is, or what constitutes authorship, changes over time and shifts according to changing social, political, and economic structures in British history.

## Likely Texts for the Course

Coleridge and Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads* (including 1802 “Preface”)  
Shelley, *Frankenstein*  
Austen, *Northanger Abbey*  
Gissing, *New Grub Street*  
Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*  
Eliot, select poetry and criticism  
Lewis, ed. *Blast I*  
Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*  
Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*  
McEwan, *Atonement* or Amis, *The Information*  
Smith, *The Autograph Man*

**\*Please contact the professor, Carey Mickalites, for questions about the course.**  
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