

Report on Study Abroad Experience During the Academic Year of 2014 to 2015

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The Department of English Language and Literature has always encouraged its students to go for a student exchange or study abroad program. The purpose is to expose students to a variety of cultures and different surroundings so needed for students studying language and literature and hope that these experiences can broaden one's horizon. With that in mind, I successfully applied to study English Literature at the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom and depart on the 21st of September 2014 to begin my study abroad year there. The report will focus on my experience studying in a different environment and working with people from various backgrounds.

An Introduction to the City of Bristol and to the University of Bristol

The University of Bristol received its royal charter in 1909, but its predecessor institution, University College, Bristol, had been in existence since 1876. The University of Bristol is one of Britain's oldest learning institutions, and it is divided into six academic faculties with multiple schools and departments running over two hundred undergraduate courses. Bristol is ranked 11th in the UK for its research and is a member of the Russell Group of research-intensive British universities. It has also been highly ranked by QS World University Ranking, The Times Higher Education, and Academic Ranking of World Universities. Highly competitive and highly selective, Bristol has maintained its record to be ranked among the top 40 institutions in the world, making its graduates one of the highly sought-after ones in the UK.

1. Wills Memorial Building



The Wills Memorial Building on Park Street, Bristol, has become an iconic landmark of both the city and the university. Situated on top of Park Street, it is eye-catching for its towering presence and can be viewed from the Cabot Tower. The building is named after the Wills Family who had contributed generously to the city and the university. It now houses the lecture halls, study rooms, and a law library for law students. The building also serves as a graduation hall every June for Bristol students.

2. Victoria Rooms



The Victoria Rooms is situated near the Clifton Triangle close to the University Precinct. Its structure is built like a Greek temple and in front of the building is a waterfall. The building is one of the earliest ones acquired by the university to accommodate its vast growing number of students. Today, it has lecture halls and practice rooms for students studying music.

Courses in Bristol and How it was Conducted

Teaching methods vary depending on the type of the courses chosen. The system stays the same for the whole undergraduate student body. Undergraduates are required to complete a three-year degree program and every year they have to take a minimum total of 120 credits to move on to the next year. Course credits range from 10 to 40 credits each, and it is the students' responsibility to make sure that they take 60 credits per teaching block (semester) to graduate in time. Study Abroad students can have a wider range of flexibility but will still have to achieve the minimum required amount of credits every teaching block. For example, students on a study

abroad or exchange program can choose the core units that are worth 20 credits whereas full-time students can only choose the 40 credit core unit. The difference between them is that one has less work but is required to take more subjects to fill up the remaining credits to graduate. For core units, students need to attend lectures three times a week, and each lecture lasts for an hour. Furthermore, students are divided into smaller groups and attend a one-hour tutorial every week to discuss and prepare work with their tutors. Each tutorial has about 5 to 7 students in every group. The tutorials are designed to follow the lectures and prepare students for the final exam at the end of each teaching block with the tutors emphasizing on main points and themes. For optional units, things are done a little differently. Optional units can be chosen as long as it does not clash with a students' timetable, and it is based on a student's interest and preference on subjects. Optional units are conducted on a two-hour seminar every week, and it is somewhat similar to a larger group of tutorial where students come into class well prepared beforehand and discuss the week's reading material. Professors are only there to assist students in their discussions and try to link everyone to a common idea but will not intervene much and let students explore the discussions on their own. Marks are given based on two academic essays that students have to submit every teaching block.

1 Literature 1 (1200-1500)

One of the core units for second years that I have chosen, lectures are attended three times a week and a tutorial with a professor. The course is based on medieval literature focusing on a few renowned authors at the time and studying Middle English. Texts are given in Middle English and we are required to translate them into modern English to show a deeper understanding of the text. Other themes such as Christianity and Symbolism are also explored.

2 Revenge Tragedy

An optional unit, Revenge Tragedy is taught in the professor's office where she tries to create a more relaxing atmosphere. Reading lists are given at the very beginning of the teaching block and students are then expected to read the materials prior to coming into class. Subjects discussed varied widely from Ancient Greek and Roman tragedy plays to modern day revenge novels.

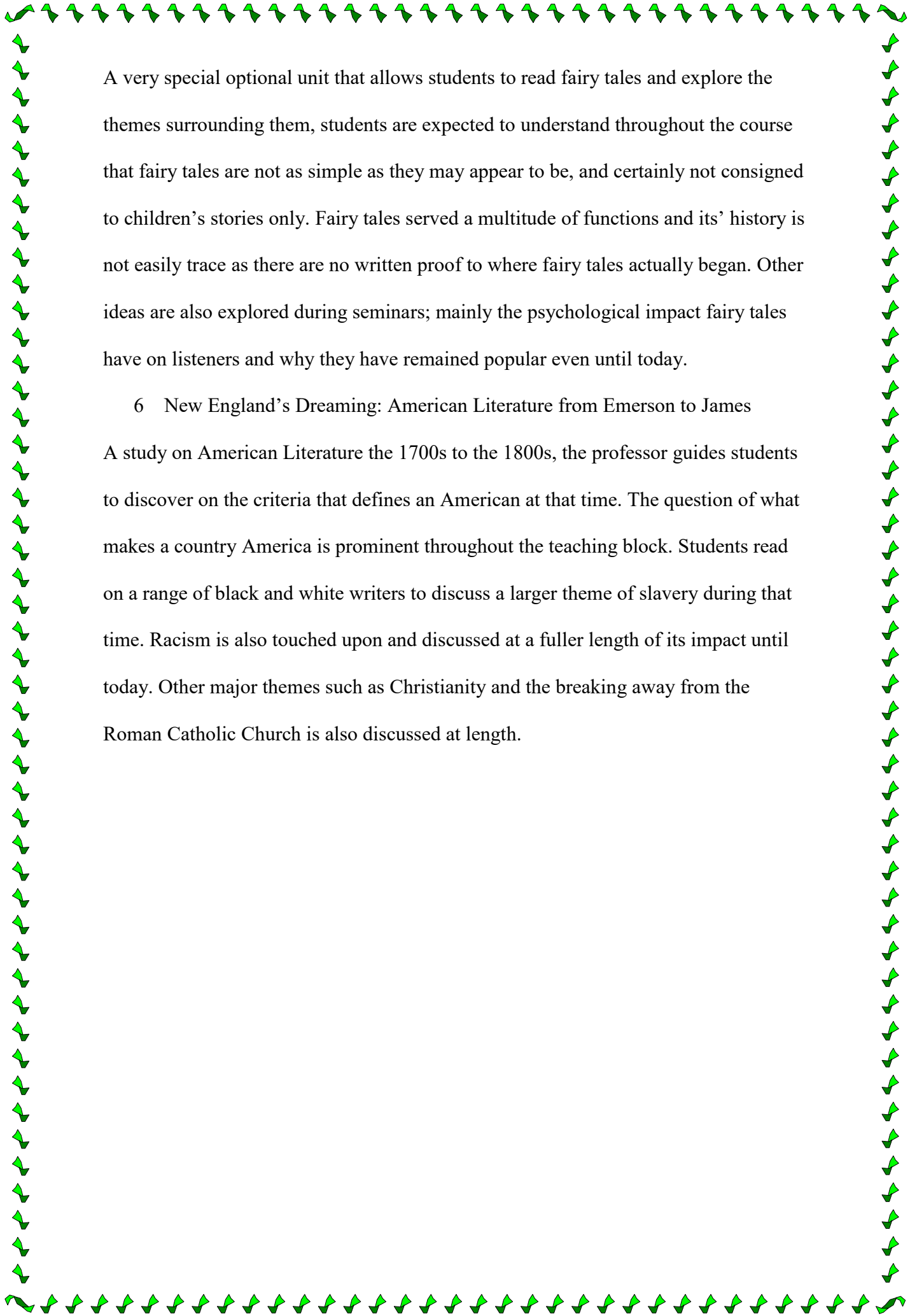
3 Dangerous Books

Dangerous Books is taught in one of the Victorian houses that is the main study space for Arts and Social Sciences students. The books read includes pamphlets and agendas that have provoked the public or the government into censoring them and preventing them from being published. Themes explored include racism, humanity, war, slavery, history, etc. Movies such as the Autobiography of Malcolm X were also included to aid in discussion.

4 Approaches to Shakespeare

This is a core unit for first-year students that I took in the second teaching block. As the name suggests, students are encouraged to explore Shakespeare on many different levels. Reading materials ranges from Shakespeare's famous tragedy plays to their less widely known comedy plays and history plays. Shakespeare's sonnets are also included into the discussion. Students are prompted to discuss Shakespeare's literary style, political views on Europe and London, and his wit and humor in including racism and politics into his plays.

5 The Fairy Tale in English



A very special optional unit that allows students to read fairy tales and explore the themes surrounding them, students are expected to understand throughout the course that fairy tales are not as simple as they may appear to be, and certainly not consigned to children's stories only. Fairy tales served a multitude of functions and its' history is not easily trace as there are no written proof to where fairy tales actually began. Other ideas are also explored during seminars; mainly the psychological impact fairy tales have on listeners and why they have remained popular even until today.

6 New England's Dreaming: American Literature from Emerson to James

A study on American Literature the 1700s to the 1800s, the professor guides students to discover on the criteria that defines an American at that time. The question of what makes a country America is prominent throughout the teaching block. Students read on a range of black and white writers to discuss a larger theme of slavery during that time. Racism is also touched upon and discussed at a fuller length of its impact until today. Other major themes such as Christianity and the breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church is also discussed at length.