MA in Literature of the Romantic Period, 2016-17
Core Course: Romantic Texts and Contexts
Convenor: Dr Mary Fairclough

‘Few Engines can be more powerful, and at the same time more salutary in their
tendency, than literature’, observed the philosopher William Godwin in 1793; and
his Tory opponent, T.J. Mathias, agreed with him on this point, arguing in 1797 that
‘LITERATURE, well or ill conducted, IS THE GREAT ENGINE by which, I am fully
persuaded, ALL CIVILIZED STATES must ultimately be supported or overthrown.’
In the period 1776-1832 literature was seen as the site for these new imagined world
orders; it was the realm in which imagination, politics, and philosophy could
converge.

This module aims to introduce you to some key voices and themes from the
Romantic period. It is team-taught by scholars who specialise in the period: through
our seminars we will explore some of the literary conversations, debates, hopes and
disappointments which were produced by this age of revolution and innovation.
Key critical reading is recommended each week to help you gain a sense of current
critical thinking on core writers and themes. Students will be encouraged to read
closely and think reflectively, developing their own critique of individual texts and
gaining an awareness of the politics of language and genre. The module will provide
an essential methodological background to the MA in Literature of the Romantic
Period, enabling students to interrogate terms such as ‘Romantic’, but also offer an
intellectually exciting and diverse encounter with a range of writers across many
genres.

Week 1: various introductory meetings and events for all postgraduates
Week 2: Nature, Liberty, Slavery (Mary Fairclough)
Week 3: Politics in the 1790s (Mary Fairclough)
Week 4: Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility (Alison O’Byrne)
Week 5: Wordsworth’s Wanderers (Jim Watt)
Week 6: Reading week (no seminar)
Week 7: Romantic London (Alison O’Byrne)
Week 8: John Keats (Chloe Wigson Smith)
Week 9: Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley (Jim Watt)
Week 10: Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus (Mary Fairclough)