

**ENGL 7/8460: Popular Literary Traditions**  
**Booker Prize Winners: A Sociological Study of Popular Novels**  
Wednesdays, 5:30 – 8:30  
Carey Mickalites

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Booker Prize (now the Man Booker) has come to be seen as one of the most prestigious, financially rewarding, and reviled of cultural prizes in the English-speaking world. There's little doubt that winning a Booker increases sales and an author's reputation, even though a number of commentators have criticized the prize as an institution implicated in colonialism, elitism, and even plain old questionable taste.

This seminar will attempt to do two things simultaneously: to cover a range of Booker Prize-winning novels across the prize's history, and to study the prize itself as a social institution with a role in shaping what gets counted as "serious" and popular fiction from the 1970s to the present. We will read novels by the likes of Salman Rushdie, Pat Barker, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Anna Burns; and we will supplement that reading with a range of postcolonial and sociological criticism. We will even get to judge some books by the cover as an approach to understanding the marketing of contemporary literature.

The course will satisfy the PhD course requirement for post-1800 Literature, but it should also interest students working in Creative Writing, Rhetoric, and Literary and Cultural Theory.