

The Essay

The genre of the essay is an institution in British public and intellectual life. This course sets out to explore its origins in the 16th century and the unfolding essayistic tradition up to the present. We will be reading essays by Michel de Montaigne, Francis Bacon, Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, David Hume, Samuel Johnson, William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Harriet Martineau, John Ruskin, Amy Levy, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence, Hilary Mantel, Michael Foot, Clive James, and Zadie Smith, among others. Because of the essay's characteristic attempt to submit learning, experience, and opinion to public discourse through aesthetic means, we will be paying particular attention to the literary styles of these writers.

There are two sides to this course. The first, in the original sense of Montaigne's genre-founding *Essai* (1580), is experimental. You are hence required to write a 'creative' essay on any topic of your choice, which will then be published, either under your real name or a pseudonym, on our course website (<https://theessayhamburguniversity.wordpress.com/>). The other side is scholarly, which means that you will need to submit a British-style academic essay on any of the above-mentioned author(s) and/or related topics. Tutorials in this will be provided. All compulsory reading materials will be made available on Agora.

Requirements for successful completion:

Studienleistung: regular attendance and in-class participation, detailed knowledge of assigned texts, and a 2000-word experimental essay on a topic of your choice (to be submitted by the end of week 12 and published on the above-mentioned website)

Prüfungsleistung: in addition to the above, a 3000-word scholarly essay on at least one of the above essayists (deadline tbc)

Recommended reading: Carl H. Klaus and Ned Stuckey-French, *Essayists on the Essay*:

Montaigne to Our Time (University of Iowa Press, 2012)