

The British Country House and Stately Home in Literature

English Literature course

Offered during Septembers for students studying for the fall term or extended academic year

Course Overview

Moving from a seventeenth-century woman's eager praise of her aristocratic patron's country house, through Agatha Christie's mysteries, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, this course surveys the ways in which writers have imagined the stately home in Britain. We examine stately homes as they have inflected a range of literary genres and hosted varying, often highly stereotypical, views of social class in Britain.

The closed community of the stately home has often served as a lens for writers to scrutinise human psychology and human interactions, and to explore class, race, sexuality, and gender. Imagined ideas of aristocratic life continue to fascinate a wide audience (*Bridgerton*, *Downton Abbey*, but also *Glass Onion*); in this course, we will think critically about how we might have arrived at this point.

Teaching methods and assessment

This course will be taught through a seminar, guest lecture, and small-group tutorials. Assessment will comprise of essays and a personal reflection on a visit to a stately home.

Supplementary activities

In addition to the course, students will visit a stately home in Oxfordshire, and travel to London to watch Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap*, known as the longest-running play in the world. Students are welcome to pursue related social events, like a Cluedo and film night.

The course will be led by Dr Laura Seymour, Stipendiary Lecturer in English at St Anne's College



Sara Lessore as Mollie Ralston in the current run of *The Mousetrap*.
Photograph by Matt Crockett <https://uk.the-mousetrap.co.uk/gallery/>