American Modernism (HL2029) Lecturer: Dr. Sima Aghazadeh Semester 2, Jan 2024 / Tuesdays 2:30-5:30 Venue: TBC

This course expands students' knowledge of American literature and culture from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries until the 1940s. While many important figures of "high modernism" were Americans living abroad, this course primarily focuses on the literary developments within the American landscape itself. American Modernism developed in conversation with several phenomena: new forms of social and economic integration; new modes of perspective and experience emerging from psychology, philosophy, and the visual arts; urbanization and industrialization; ambivalence towards a technologically and economically innovative mass culture; and new sexual and political discourses that altered understandings of sex, race and gender. We will pay close attention to how individuals can be included and excluded in a national literature, and we will examine how American social realities are represented and contested, using new literary strategies. Across the term, students will address how modernist aesthetics and world historical events find unique expressions in the American literary tradition.

The main reference book will be Norton Anthology of American Literature, Vol 2. Any edition of the assigned novels is acceptable for close-reading and class discussion.

Course Schedule

Week 1 (16 Jan): Introduction: From Realism & Naturalism to Modernism

Week 2 (23 Jan): What is an American?

- Douglass: "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?" <u>Microsoft Word - Douglass (wheelersburg.net)</u>
- Du Bois: "The Souls of Black Folk" Souls of Black Folk-Du Bois- text.pdf

Week 3 (30 Jan): American individualism/Modernism in poetry:

- Robert Frost
- Wallace Stevens
- William Carlos Williams

Week 4 (6 Feb): American modern poetry to be continued:

- Ezra Pound
- T.S. Eliot

(Selected poems are available in Norton Anthology of American Literature as well as in printouts that will be provided in the class.)

Week 5 (13 Feb): Post-war nostalgia: Willa Cather's My Ántonia

Week 6 (20 Feb): Lost Generation:

- Gertrude Stein (selected writings)
- Ernest Hemingway's *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* <u>The Snows of Kilimanjaro. text.pdf</u>

Week 7 (27 Feb): American Dream & Great Depression:

• Fitzgerald's Great Gatsby

Recess Week

Week 8 (12 March): Black identity:

• Elison's *Invisible Man* (the free e-book is available to read and download but it is encouraged to have the paper book.)

Week 9 (19 March): Harlem Renaissance (Invisible Man to be continued)

Week 10 (26 March): Death of American Dream in Drama:

• Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesmen

Week 11 (2 April): Making of a modernist:

• William Faulkner's Sound & Fury

Week 12 (9 April): Willilam Faulkner to be continued

Week 13 (16 April): The personal, the public, the political: Citizen Kane

Week 14 (6 May): Final Exam

Student Assessment:

Class participation & presentation 15%

 Students are advised to read all the selected works in advance and discuss and present their understanding/opinions during the class. The participation grade will reflect the commitment to the class as evidenced by attendance, preparation of readings, contribution to discussions, and productive and respectful responses to others' ideas. Students should note their questions and be ready to share them in class.

Essay 1: Character analysis essay 10%

- The essay should be well-structured and coherent (max. 1000 words), engage critically with the texts and include at least 3 references with the citation at the end. Points should be fully developed and supported with specific evidences.
- The character for analysis to be selected from the following list:

- a. Alfred Prufrock in T. S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
- b. Any character from Willa Cather's My Ántonia
- c. Any character from Ernest Hemingway's works
- Due date: end of Week 7

Essay 2: Comparative analysis 25%

- Any two poems/authors/stories of your choice from Modern American Literature should be compared and analysed in a well-developed and coherent essay (in 2500-3000 words). After confirming your topics, please consult with me on your thesis and how to develop your essay.
- Due date: latest 16th April

Final exam 50%

Course Policies:

Attendance and Participation: The success of any seminar depends on the active participation of all its members. Barring illness or emergencies, you must attend every seminar. You must arrive on time, having done the assigned readings and works, and be ready to participate in the class discussion. Failure to do so will reduce your participation grade significantly. If you need to miss a class you must inform me before that week's meeting.

Late Work and Extensions: if your essay is late, it will be marked down by one third of a letter grade for each day that it is overdue (i.e. a paper that would have received a B will receive a B-). No work will be accepted more than three days late without prior permission. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances, including documented illness or genuine emergency.

Seeking Help Outside Class: you are allowed to use any form of legitimate assistance/support to help you write papers and research topics that interest you. Please consult with me on this. Feel free to come to me for any relevant questions and most importantly, if you feel that you're falling behind in the course for any reason. The sooner we discuss any obstacles to your success in this class, the more likely it is that we will be able to fix them.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: If I find that you have misrepresented someone else's work as your own, you will fail the assignment and possibly the course. If you are unsure of how or when to cite a source, please ask me or refer to the university's academic integrity resources online. You must cite sources and references (even online sources) when writing your essays. Failure to do so, even accidentally, is plagiarism.