

HL4020: Advanced Studies in Modernist Literature
Thursdays, 2:30pm – 5:20pm

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Description

Modernism, modernity, the modern—these are primary terms in the characterisation of the literature, art, and culture of the twentieth century. We are familiar with their various articulations in previous courses, and will extend our understanding of their aims, achievements, and failures in re-envisioning the world after the turn of the century, in light of numerous breakthroughs in the sociocultural landscape—from technological developments in photography and engineering, to the irruptions of war, violence, and revolutionary politics, various new architectural fantasies of the city, the stimulus of drugs, fashion and self-fashioning, and the persistence and transformations of faith.

In this course, we will pay particular attention to the comparative dimension of the arts of the period. The impact of the new cultures of visibility, embodiment, sex, city life, transgression, trauma, and hope will be examined with an intermedial attention to literature's relationship with photography, collage, architecture, sculpture, painting, design, fashion, and faith. As we navigate our way through the upheavals of the twentieth century, we will develop our awareness of the persistence, disappearance, and/or transformations of the modernist project in our contemporary world after the close of the twentieth century.

Books you may wish to purchase

Most of the texts on your reading list are available online; others will be made available to you in/before class. You should, however, try to get your hands on a copy of the following:

André Breton, *Nadja*. Trans. Richard Howard. Penguin Classics.

Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*. Trans. Simon Watson-Taylor. Exact Change.

Aldous Huxley. *The Doors of Perception*. Vintage.

Assessment

Participation and Preparation	15%
Manifesto Presentation	10%
Image Essay	25%
Comparative Essay	35%
Summative Reflection Exercise	15%

Participation and Preparation (15%)

Over the semester, students are evaluated on their commitment to the course.

Manifesto Presentation (10%)

Prepare a manifesto in the style and spirit of the modernist manifesto. Students are evaluated based on their practical demonstration of the form, content, and performative dimension of the manifesto.

Image Essay (25%)

Select and respond to an essay prompt on the role of the image in modernist literature.

Comparative Essay (35%)

For your final essay, define your own topic in consultation with me. You are required to work with at least two objects from different media traditions. At least one object of analysis has to be based on content covered in this course.

Summative Reflection Exercise (15%)

Offer a summary of the elements of this course that you have found most significant, or which have contributed most to your understanding of modernism. You may adopt one of two approaches: either i. offer a good overview of several/all our classes; ii. take on a more in-depth summary of one class in particular. In brief, go either for *breadth* or for *depth*.

Penalties for Late Work

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 an A will receive a A-).

Academic Integrity

Generative AI is not permitted for this course. This includes (but is not limited to) Chat GPT, Google Bard, and editing software such as Grammarly and Quillbot. The use of any AI tools will result in a significant grade deduction (including a potential fail grade or zero for the assignment). A fail grade will be given in the case of plagiarised work.

Seminar Schedule

Wk 1 *Introduction*

14/8 Pericles Lewis. "Introduction." In *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (2007).

Wk 2 *Blast to the Future: Dynamo and Dynamite*

21/8 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. *Manifesto of Futurism* (1909). In *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey et al.

Mina Loy. "Aphorisms on Futurism" (1914). In *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (1996).

Wk 3 *Blasting and Bombadiering: More Dynamite*

28/8 Wyndham Lewis, ed. "Manifesto—I," "Manifesto—II." *Blast I* (1914).

Mina Loy. "Feminist Manifesto" (1914). In *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (1996).

Mina Loy. "International Psycho-Democracy" (1918/1921). In *The Last Lunar Baedeker* (1982).

Wk 4 *After the Blast: Remaking the City*

4/9 F. T. Marinetti, Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo. "Against Passet Venice" (1910). In *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey et al.

Wyndham Lewis. *The Caliph's Design* (1919).

Hope Mirrlees. *Paris: A Poem* (1920).

Wk 5 **BYOM: Bring Your Own Manifesto**

11/9 Groups of 3–4. 15-min. presentation.

Wk 6 *Image and Trace*

18/9 André Breton. *Nadja* (1928).

Wk 7 *Fashion: Beauties and Beasts*

25/9 Charles Baudelaire. “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863).

Djuna Barnes. *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915).

Mina Loy. “Nancy Cunard.” In *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (1996).

Recess week

Wk 8 *Sculpted Bodies*

9/10 Umberto Boccioni. “The Plastic Foundations of Futurist Sculpture and Painting” (1913).

Umberto Boccioni. “Absolute Motion + Relative Motion = Dynamism” (1914). In

Futurism: An Anthology, ed. Lawrence Rainey et al.

Mina Loy. “Brancusi’s Golden Bird.” In *The Lost Lunar Baedeker* (1996).

Image Essay Due [750–1000 words]

Wk 9 *Secrets of the City*

16/10 Louis Aragon. “The Passage de l’Opéra.” *Paris Peasant* (1926).

Wk 10 *Serenity in the City*

23/10 Louis Aragon. “Parc des Buttes-Chaumont.” *Paris Peasant* (1926).

Wk 11 *Hashish and Mescaline*

30/10 Walter Benjamin. *On Hashish* (2006 [1927–34]).

Aldous Huxley. *The Doors of Perception* (1954).

Wk 12 *War and Hope*

6/11 T. S. Eliot. “Little Gidding” (1942).

Wk 13 *Theater of Cruelty*

13/11 Antonin Artaud. “Theatre and Cruelty”; “The Theatre of Cruelty”; “Letters on Cruelty”; “No More Masterpieces.” In *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938).

Antonin Artaud. “The Spurt of Blood” (1925 written).

Samuel Beckett. “Not I” (1972).

Summative Reflection Exercise Due [500 words]

27/11 **Comparative Essay Due [1500–2000 words]**