

HL 4020 – Advanced Studies in Modernist Literature: Some Other Modernisms

Meets: Wednesdays 9:30-12:30
Location: TBD
Professor: Dr. Kevin Riordan

Office: HSS 03-71
Consultation hours: TBD
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In their foundational study, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane provide provisional shape for the subsequent study of Modernism. They suggest that Modernism “responds to the scenario of our chaos. It is the art consequent on Heisenberg’s ‘Uncertainty principle,’ of the destruction of civilization and reason in the First World War, of the world changed and reinterpreted by Marx, Freud, and Darwin, of capitalism and constant industrial acceleration, of existential exposure to meaninglessness or absurdity.” This seminar reckons with modernist texts in order to confirm, supplement, and disrupt this proposed characterization of “the scenario of our chaos.”

Bradbury and McFarlane’s *Modernism* is subtitled “*A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930*,” and much of the field’s more recent scholarship has been devoted to challenging and expanding that implicit definition, whether geographically, historically, or generically. In this seminar, our task will be to learn from and contribute to the field’s consistently shifting ground. We will re-familiarize ourselves with significant works from the literary tradition of the period, but we will also look to objects from the edges of such a modernism in order to grapple with the character and the utility of the category itself.

Core Texts:

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground* (0140455124)
Jules Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (0199552517)
August Strindberg, *Miss Julie and Other Plays* (9780199538041)
Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (0374521344)
Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (9780141183411)
Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North* (9781590173022)
Course Reader (available B1 of HSS)

Course Assignments and Assessment:

Participation, Preparation, and Presentations	15%
Written Assignments (TBD)	35%
Final Exam	50%

Prospective Itinerary

Week 1 – Modern Overtures: Untimely Beginnings

January 13 – Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”

Week 2 – Brooding in Anticipation

January 20 – Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*; Bakhtin, selection from “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”

Week 3 – Modernity without the Modernism

January 27 – Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days*

Week 4 – Falling into Modernism

February 3 – Strindberg, Preface to *Miss Julie* and *A Dream Play*

Week 5 – Looking Around

February 10 – Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction;” Sontag, “In Plato’s Cave”

Week 6 – Writing What We See

February 17 – Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

Week 7 – Speed and Stillness

February 24 – Duffy, “Speed Theory;” Marinetti, “The Futurist Manifesto;” Maeterlinck, “The Tragical in Everyday Life;” Pessoa, “The Mariner”

Recess

Week 8 – The Times of Narrative

March 9 – Woolf, “The Window”

Week 9 – Time Passing

March 16 – Woolf, “Time Passes” and “The Lighthouse”

Week 10 – Stage Time

March 23 – Artaud, “No More Masterpieces;” Cocteau, *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*; Stein, *Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights*; Yeats, *At the Hawk’s Well* and *Purgatory*

Week 11 – Taking Stock

March 30 – Kern, from *The Culture of Time and Space*; Friedman, “Planetarity”

Week 12 – Screen Memories

April 6 – Selected Cinema (TBD)

Week 13 –Late Arrivals or Alternative Routes

April 13 – Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Final Exam: TBD