

HL 4020 – Advanced Studies in Modernist Literature: Other Modernisms

Meets: Tuesdays 14:30-17:30
Location: LHS-TR+44
Professor: Dr. Kevin Riordan

Office: HSS 03-72
Consultation hours: TBD
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In their foundational 1978 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 course reckons with a range of 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 characterization, whether in geographical, historical, or generic terms. 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%
Poetry Mini Essay	10%
Image Essay	25%
Comparative Essay	35%
Summative Reflection Exercise	15%

Prospective Itinerary

Week 1 – Modern Overtures: Untimely Beginnings

August 15 – Benjamin, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire”

Week 2 – Brooding in Anticipation

August 22 – Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

Week 3 – Modernity without the Modernism

August 29 – Verne, *Around the World in Eighty Days*

Week 4 – Falling into Modernism

September 5 – Strindberg, Preface to *Miss Julie* and *A Dream Play*

Week 5 – Looking Around

September 12 – Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction;” Sontag, “In Plato’s Cave”

Image Draft Due

Week 6 – Writing What We See

September 19 – Barthes, *Camera Lucida*

Week 7 – Screen Memories

September 26 – Gunning, “The Cinema of Attractions;” selected films

Image Essay Due (~750 words)

Recess

Week 8 – Speed and Stillness

October 10 – Marinetti, “The Futurist Manifesto;” Maeterlinck, “Modern Drama” and “The Tragical in Everyday Life;” Pessoa, “The Mariner”

Week 9 – The Times of Narrative

October 17 – Woolf, “The Window”

Poetry Mini-Essay Due (>500 words)

Week 10 – Time Passing

October 24 – Woolf, “Time Passes” and “The Lighthouse”

Week 11 – Stage Time

October 31 – Artaud, “No More Masterpieces” and “Spurt of Blood”; Cocteau, *The Wedding on the Eiffel Tower*

Week 12 – Taking Stock – No Class (Online)

November 7 – Kern, from *The Culture of Time and Space*; Friedman, “Planetarity”

Summative Reflection Exercise Due

Week 13 – Late Arrivals or Alternative Routes

November 14 – Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

November 21 – Comparative Essay Due (~1500 words)