

Department of English & Writing Studies

The Modernist Moment

English 4050F (001)

Fall 2015 - Spring 2016

Wednesday 1:30-4:30 pm, LWH 2210

Instructor: Prof. Kate Stanley

Office: AHB 3G04

Office Hours: Wed 12:30-1:30 pm, 4:30-5:30 pm & by appt.

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This course explores literary, photographic, and cinematic approaches to the representation of time in the context of rapid urban and industrial change. In particular, we will focus on the work of writers, artists, and filmmakers who exemplify a modernist preoccupation with the moments of epiphany or stretches of banality that punctuate city life at the turn of the twentieth century. Our investigations of modernist literature and visual culture will be guided by the following questions: under what conditions does the modern experience of boredom or *ennui* give way to revelation? What motivates modernism's abiding commitment to capturing the evanescent past and the fleeting present? How do ethical and aesthetic imperatives inflect each other in various hallmarks of modernist experimentation, such as Baudelaire's *correspondances*, Proust's *mémoire involontaire*, and Woolf's moments of being? How do the poles of attention and distraction structure modern experiences of time? How do visual and linguistic forms compare in their representations of temporal rupture and continuity, change and stasis?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this class we will develop four skills essential to literary scholarship:

- *Close Reading*: relating form to content; noticing how a given writer evokes a particular feeling, tone, and achieves other literary effects; examining how a work is structured and how the narrative voice positions itself in relation to its subject and its audience.
- *Engaged Discussion*: remaining attentive and responsive to the work we are reading and the conversation it sparks; expressing ideas and questions to classmates (even when our thoughts or questions might still be in process).
- *Clear and Persuasive Writing*: composing ideas into lucid prose that makes a cogent argument supported by textual evidence.
- *Scholarly Research*: engaging with critical scholarship and exploring strategies for entering into ongoing critical discussions and debates around Modernist literature.

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. describe major movements in the development of modernist art and literature;
2. discuss and contextualize the key concerns, themes, and formal features of an array representative works of modernist art and literature;
3. develop adept close readings into persuasive arguments in oral and written form;
4. write a well-researched essay, which engages with literary critical sources in the service of an original thesis.

REQUIRED TEXTS

English 4050 Course Reader

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Vintage)

Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* (Harcourt)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

Participation	15%	
In-Class Writing	10%	
Primary Text Presentation	15%	
Criticism Presentation	10%	
Annotated Bibliography	10%	
Research Paper (3000 words)	40%	[DRAFT: Nov 18; FINAL: Dec 2]

Participation

Attentive reading and reflective discussion are at the heart of this seminar. Your attendance, preparation, and participation are essential. Being prepared means you have completed the reading, reflected on it, and have come to class with readings in hand, ready to discuss your thoughts and questions. Each unexcused absence will result in a 1% deduction from your participation grade. A pattern of lateness will likewise affect your participation grade. An absence will be excused if you supply legitimate documentation to the Academic Counseling office.

The use of computers is not permitted in class. For special dispensation, please talk to me.

In-Class Writing

Each week, for the first 10-15 minutes of class, students will complete an in-class response to one of the day's study questions. The questions will be assigned the previous week and are designed to guide your reading and orient discussion. The goal is to demonstrate that you have engaged with the week's readings. In writing your responses, you are free to consult your books or course reader and are encouraged to mark up your readings in any way you find helpful. You may be asked to hand in your response in class and you will be required to submit the full collection of responses on the last day of class at the end of the semester.

Prospectus & Annotated Bibliography - DUE: Nov 4

Compile a list of the sources you are using for your essay in a Works Cited formatted in MLA style, as well as three 200-word summaries of three of your sources. Each summary needs to address the author's argument and its theoretical outlook and/or research orientation. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument? How has it shaped the thesis governing your essay?

Your task is to intervene on a critical conversation about a given novel, film, or artwork—agreeing, disagreeing, or changing the terms of the debate. Your research might also engage with sources that provide a critical framework for you analysis.

For your prospectus you will draft a provisional statement of your thesis and outline your intended argument, making clear how you are engaging in scholarly debates.

Please note: Your essay must not only reflect that you have read relevant primary and secondary material, it must also engage with that material in a meaningful way. Your choice of topic is crucial. If the topic is too narrow, you will not be able to find sufficient material to complete the bibliographic requirements for this essay. If it is too broad, you will find yourself swamped.

Final Research Essay - DRAFT: Nov 18; FINAL: Dec 2 (3000 words)

For your final research paper you are responsible for formulating a focused and compelling research question on a topic of your choice, which incorporates primary and theoretical texts we have studied, and which intervenes in a scholarly debate.

Seminar Presentations

Primary Text Presentation:

Introduce a central critical problem, paradox, question, argument, or aspect of the assigned primary reading in a cohesive presentation designed to engage attention and provoke discussion.

Criticism Presentation:

Summarize the argument of a selected piece of criticism (the starred reading*) for the class in a clear and engaging way. Underline the particular contribution this critic makes to our understanding of the way time works in a particular text or medium. Suggest how this reading connects to primary texts and to larger questions guiding the class. Conclude with questions for your classmates that aim to spark thoughtful discussion.

Both seminars will be presented in pairs. Please limit your presentations to 15 minutes. Send an email outlining your plan for the presentation at least three days in advance. Provide a handout that outlines major points, arguments, and questions for the class. Turn in a written draft of the seminar at the end of class.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES & READINGS

TERM 1		Lectures/Readings	Due
1	16 Sep	<i>Introduction</i> Baudelaire, selected poems, “The Painter of Modern Life”	
2	23 Sep	<i>Time and the City</i> Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Modern Life” Benjamin, “On Some Motifs on Baudelaire” Proust, from <i>The Way By Swann’s</i>	
3	30 Sep	Proust cont. Library Session	
4	7 Oct	<i>Modernist Novel and Time</i> Woolf, <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> , from “A Sketch of the Past”	
5	14 Oct	Woolf cont. *J. Hillis Miller, from <i>Fiction and Repetition (S)</i>	Woolf Presentation
6	21 Oct	<i>Photography and Time</i> Photographs by Eadweard Muybridge; Alfred Stieglitz; Paul Strand; Man Ray Benjamin, “A Short History of Photography,” “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” *Roland Barthes, from <i>Camera Lucida</i>	Photography Presentation

7	28 Oct	<i>Film and Time</i> Charlie Chaplin, <i>Modern Times</i> Man Ray and Fernand Léger, <i>Ballet Mécanique</i> Woolf, “Cinema” Sergei Eisenstein, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form” (S), from <i>Battleship Potemkin</i> Henri Bergson, from <i>Laughter</i> (S) Walter Benjamin, “Chaplin” (S), “Chaplin in Retrospect” (S) *Michael Wood, “Modernism and Film”	Film Presentation
8	4 Nov	<i>Repetition and Attention</i> Gertrude Stein, “Composition as Explanation” (S), “If I Told Him” (S), “Portraits and Repetitions” (S), “Melanctha” (S) William James, “Stream of Consciousness” (S), “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings” (S), “Attention” (S) * Steven Meyer, “Gertrude Stein” (S)	Stein Presentation PROSPECTUS & ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
9	11 Nov	Stein/James cont. John Cage, 4’33,” “Lecture on Nothing” *Joan Retallack, from <i>The Poethical Wager</i>	Music Presentation
10	18 Nov	Peer Editing Session	PAPER DRAFT
11	25 Nov	<i>Addiction and Time</i> Nabokov, <i>Lolita</i>	
12	2 Dec	Nabokov cont.	FINAL PAPER
13	9 Dec	<i>Wrap Up</i> Christian Marclay, from “The Clock” (2012); Joshua Clover, “How I Quit Spin”	

POLICIES

Late Assignments:

Assignments due at the beginning of class in hard copy and posted on OWL. Late assignments will be deducted by 2% per day. Submit late papers in the drop-box outside of AHB 2G02.

Academic Accommodation:

University policy states: Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. *Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.* Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

The full policy is set out here:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Borrowed ideas, not just quotations, must be appropriately acknowledged. The documentation of your sources is an essential part of university writing. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask me.

Plagiarism is a major academic offense. If plagiarism is proven the student may fail the course or receive zero on the assignment (see Academic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Western uses software for plagiarism checking.

Further Information:

Departmental and university policies related to course work, grades, plagiarism, appeals, etc. are available on the English Department website:

<http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>

RESOURCES

Disabilities:

I am happy to make academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities who have registered with Student Development Services. For more information regarding services for students with disabilities see: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>

The Student Development Centre offers resources and support for students, including one-on-one tutoring sessions to help with writing: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/>