

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND WRITING STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

ENGLISH 3370G
SPRING 2021

MODERNISM AND BIRTH OF THE AVANT-GARDE

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Course Structure

The course will combine asynchronous and synchronous activities. English translation: there will be content that you can access yourself, at times you choose. This will include, eg., recorded lectures, additional written lecture material, perhaps some PowerPoint slides, and so forth. Then, once a week for one hour, I will meet with you over Zoom. Depending upon the size of the class, I might divide you into groups and meet with each group every other week, for example. These meetings will give us the chance to discuss the course content, for you to ask questions directly, etc.

And I'll offer lots and lots of opportunities for virtual office hours, probably including drop-in sessions where you can stop by and talk about the course.

Course Description

One of the guiding questions for this course will be what makes Modernism modern. To what extent, then, does Modernism mark a break from the past and attempt to forge something new—especially new literary forms, but literary forms that also allow the Modernists to rethink literature's relation to history and politics, and to itself, its own forms. If Modernism does this, if it invents new forms, and even rethinks newness, does it also anticipate its own extension—or perhaps overcoming—in an avant-garde that makes perhaps even greater cause with innovation, both formal and political?

What—this will be perhaps our overriding concern—is the relation between literary forms, on the one hand, and historical and political forms and deformations, on the other?

This course will not stay within the historical movements and figures usually associated with Modernism or the Avant-Garde, nor will it remain within any national boundaries. Rather, it might follow explorations in form and politics from the Modernism into contemporary literature and from England, Ireland, and beyond ...

Possible Texts (very tentative, with more to come):

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
Yeats, selected poetry
Eliot, selected poetry
Heaney, selected poetry
Stein, selected poetry
Philip, *Zong!*
Hamid, *Exit West*
Winterson, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*