

Western University
Department of English and Writing Studies
ENGL 3554E
Twentieth-Century British and Irish Literature
SUMMER DAY 2014
Andrew Wenaus

Lecture: Monday-Friday 11:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. (or by appointment)

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Course Description:

This course asks the question “What does it mean to be modern?” Modernism is the name given to a movement that dominated the arts and culture of the first half of the 20th century. We may be best to consider Modernism as a critical construct rather than a historically concrete moment. That is, Modernism is an area of study that comes into being retrospectively as a result of critical discussion. A major influence on many art forms, this course will focus on the novel as one of the key sites of Modernism. Modernist novels often reject 19th century realist conventions such as chronological plots, continuous narrative, omniscient narrators, stable characters and singular points of view, and closed endings. These experimental Modernist novels offer an emphasis on impressionism and subjectivity (on *how* we experience rather than *what* we experience); they examine the ambiguity of experience rather than fixed narrative points of view, stable characterization, and clear-cut morality; and they have a tendency towards self-reflexivity in the sense that the novel is about writing and writing itself examines its own nature, status, and cultural role.

In this lecture style course, we will examine five experimental facets of the Modernist Novel: Space, Character, Time, Plot/Anti-Plot, and Narration. We will also consider some works of Modernist poetry and theatre as a way of contextualizing this intrepid period in literary history more fully. We will interrogate the relationship between geographical space and the impressions of mental space in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) and the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Thomas Hardy; looking at James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) and the poetry of W.B. Yeats, we will consider the changing, unstable, and nuanced representation of character and history in Modernist literature. In our examination of Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and the poems of Ezra Pound and H. D., we will consider the way the passing of time is expressed at various rates—both slow and rapid—and why this kind of experimentation is a significant artistic development. We will examine E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924), Samuel Beckett’s play *Endgame* (1957), and poems by T. S. Eliot and the significance of the anti-plot and anti-climax in narrative technique. We will take a look at the radical legacy of Modernism in Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) and the poetry of Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney; finally, we will consider B. S. Johnson’s infamous experiments with chronology in his “book in a box,” *The Unfortunates* (1969). Whatever texts mean to the individual, all readers should find some texts that will engage their curiosity and inspire them to think about this exciting—sometimes mind-boggling—period in new and creative ways.

Course Learning Objectives

Successful students who complete the course will be able to:

- Achieve an understanding of Modernism and the Modernist Novel
- Achieve a sense of the historical significance of the Modernist Novel
- Develop skills for effective critical analysis, close reading, and textual interpretation
- Develop skills for writing logical, organized, and clear essays on literary topics
- Develop skills for presenting academic material orally and moderating discussion amongst colleagues and peers in a seminar context.
- Expand skills for engaging in secondary sources as a means of informing, interrogating, and engaging in literary debate

Description of Class Method

Courses will be lecture and seminar style. Please be prepared to engage in discussion at each class.

Course Materials

M.H. Abrams, Stephen Greenblatt, et al, eds. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Twentieth Century*. 9th Ed.

Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame*. Beckett, Samuel. *Endgame, A Play in One Act, Followed by Act Without Words, a Mime for One Player*. Trans. Samuel Beckett. New York, Grove P., 2009. Print.

Johnson, B. S. *The Unfortunates*. Ed. Jonathan Coe. New York: New Directions, 2009. Print.

Forster, E. M., *A Passage to India*. New York: Penguin, 2005. Print.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: Penguin, 2003. Print.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Sexing the Cherry*. Toronto: Vintage, 2000. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. New York: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.

Method of Evaluation and Marks Distribution

Assignment	Due Date	(%)
Short essay (4-5 pages)	Week 3 in class	15
Mid-Term Test	Friday 1 August in class	15
Research paper (10-12 pages)	Week 6 in class	30
Attendance and Participation		10
Final exam	TBA	30

Short Essay

Value: 15% Due: Week 3 in class Length: 4-5 pages

In consultation with me, you will develop a topic that engages with the idea of Modernism. The purpose of this exercise is to guide your thinking toward the experience and interrogation of the Modernist Novel. You may, for example, ask questions like: Is the Modernist Novel really “New”?; How does the Modernist Novel frustrate conventions of narrative, space, character, etc.?; Is the Modernist Novel a frustrating experience?; What is the purpose of poetic language in the Modernist

Novel?; and so on. While this short essay will not be a research paper, it must be a formal academic treatment of a specific concern. More details to follow.

Mid-Term Test **Value: 15%** **Length: In Class**

This will be held during lecture on **FRIDAY 1 AUGUST**, and will be 1 hour in length. It will consist of a series of identifications followed by a section of terms/definitions.

Research Paper **Value: 30%** **Due: Week 6 in class** **Length: 10-12 pages**

You will engage with secondary source material as a means of intervening and offering insight into an established literary debate. Be eccentric and daring! Just be sure that your writing is clear and lucid, your flow of ideas is logical, and you stress the significance of your argument through close reading and critical analysis. More details to follow.

Participation

Regular attendance and involvement in class and seminar discussion is essential. The intensity and thoughtfulness with which you pursue the seminar topic and research paper in consultation with me will also have a bearing on your participation grade.

Late Submissions

Essays are due on the specified date. They are to be handed in at the beginning of class. Late essays will be penalized **3% per day** including weekends. Essays submitted more than a week (7 days) late will receive a grade of 0/F. If you cannot submit your essay on time due to illness or on compassionate grounds, you will need a letter from a physician or academic councilor of your home faculty indicating that you were ill or unable to attend to your work during the time in question.

NOTE: Students must pass both the term work and the final examination in order to pass the course.

Schedule of Readings and Lectures

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| Week 1 | Introduction.
Space, Mental Space, Impressionism: Thomas Hardy selected poems. <i>Heart of Darkness</i>

<i>Heart of Darkness</i> Continued.

Character, Absence, Stability, Nation: W. B. Yeats selected poems. Seamus Heaney selected poems. <i>Bildungsroman</i> to <i>Künstlerroman: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> |
| Week 2 | <i>A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man</i> Continued

Time, Orientation, Pace: <i>To the Lighthouse</i>

<i>To the Lighthouse</i> Continued |
| Week 3 | Plot, Anti-Plot, Climactic Voids. T. S. Eliot selected poems. |

A Passage to India

A Passage to India Continued. H.D. and Ezra Pound selected poems.

SHORT ESSAY DUE (by end of Week 3)

Week 4 *Endgame*.

Sexing the Cherry

FRIDAY 1 AUGUST: MID-TERM TEST.

Week 5 *Sexing the Cherry* Continued. Ted Hughes and Geoffrey Hill selected poems.

Chronology, Uncertainty, Chaos: *The Unfortunates*

Week 6 **Research Paper Due.** *The Unfortunates* Continued. Final Thoughts. Review.

Appendix to Course Outline:

Academic Accommodation:

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components 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 at

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. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Academic Calendar).

Prerequisites:

Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded and that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any antirequisite course(s) that they have taken. If the student does not have the requisites for a course, the University reserves the right to remove the student from the course and to delete it from the student's record. This decision may not be appealed. A student will receive no adjustment to his or her fees in the event that he or she is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Information for students:

Departmental and university policies related to course work, grades, plagiarism, appeals, etc. are available on the English Department website. Please see: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrd/info.html>