

# Modernist Representations

## English 1XX

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Fall/Spring 2019-2020  
Tu/Th 0:00-0:00  
Course location  
TF information



### COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the twentieth century, novelists and dramatists, calling themselves the “moderns,” pressed away from realistic depictions of life, and exploded literature into a prismatic, multi-sided understanding and representation of the world. Modernism is a term under which scholars nest many of these attempts to represent human experience—with its kaleidoscope of ideas, people, places, and things—with a fresh eye.

This course serves as an introduction to Modernist novels and drama from Britain and America. We will survey antecedent literary styles (late Victorian and Naturalist), consider definitions and formulations of “modern” drama and the twentieth-century novel, and extend our study into high Modernist and early Postmodern literatures.

During our period of study, developments in technology and industry, changing social mores, the recognition and inclusion of new voices for publication, and two World Wars radically pushed novels and plays into new frontiers. We will consider the following issues, reading criticism in which Modernist literary forms were formulated and defined:

- empire and colonialism;

- narrative style, including stream of consciousness and new social understandings of psychology and inward life;
- gender, early queer writing, sexual liberation, and indecency;
- race, blackness, and “ethnic modernism”;
- paranoia and anti-establishmentarianism;
- theater of the absurd and existentialism.

Together, these readings introduce several important “-isms” within and adjacent to Modernism: Symbolism, Expressionism, Imagism, Cubism, Futurism, Absurdism, and Anarchism.

#### REQUIRED TEXTS

The below texts are available at the COOP, but may also be purchased inexpensively online. When selecting your copy, please take note of the publisher and edition so that we will all be (literally) on the same page. Most of our short readings are available in the excellent anthology *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*, edited by Kolocotroni, Goldman, Taxidou. This is an especially great book to buy if you are considering further study in Romance Languages, History and Literature, Comparative Literature, etc., as it contains many theories from non-English speaking authors. That said, all additional readings will be available as searchable PDFs on Canvas, so you do not need to buy the anthology.

Samuel Beckett	<i>Waiting for Godot</i> (1952)	Grove 2011: 080214442X
Joseph Conrad	<i>Heart of Darkness</i> (1902)	Penguin 2007: 9780141441672
William Faulkner	<i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> (1936)	Vintage 1990: 0679732187
D.H. Lawrence	<i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> (1928)	Penguin 2006: 9780141441498
Eugene O'Neill	<i>The Hairy Ape</i> (1922)	<i>Three Great Plays</i> , Dover Thrift 2007: 0486112500
George Orwell	<i>1984</i> (1949)	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2017: 9781328869333
Dorothy Richardson	<i>Pointed Roofs</i> (1915)	Broadview 2014: 9781551117997
Gertrude Stein	<i>Tender Buttons</i> (1914)	Dover 1997: 9780486298979
Jean Toomer	<i>Cane</i> (1923)	Liveright 2011: 9780871402103
Sophie Treadwell	<i>Machinal</i> (1928)	TCG 1995: 9781854592118
Virginia Woolf	<i>The Waves</i> (1935)	Houghton Mifflin Harcourt 2006: 9780156031578
Richard Wright	<i>Native Son</i> (1940)	Harper Perennial 2008: 9780061148507
Ed. Kolocotroni, Goldman, Taxidou	<i>Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents</i>	University of Chicago Press 1999: 9780226450742

#### ASSIGNMENTS

You will write three short papers, all of which will involve your original ideas about the novels and plays we read, and two of which will invoke Modernist theories of representation. Twice during the semester, you will also take two brief (half-hour) exams of equal weight, each testing on only half of the course material. These exams serve as quick ways to monitor your completion and synthesis of course readings, rather than occasions to display original thinking. Your course grade will be weighted as follows:

Paper 1 (3-5pp.)	15%
Paper 2 (6-8pp.)	20%
Paper 3 (7-10pp.)	25%

Mini-exams (30 minutes each)	15%
Participation (including attendance, timely submission of assignments, and completion of homework)	25%

## COURSE POLICIES

*Formatting your assignments.* Please tailor your paper to length requirements *before* you finish it, and use a sensible 12-point font (such as Times New Roman or Garamond), an editable file format (.docx), and 1" margins. Editing your paper so that you can meet the required formatting will ultimately lessen the frustration of marking and grading your paper... and isn't that something you want?

*Submitting assignments.* Assignments must be submitted to your instructor via email, attached as .docx files, by 11:59pm the day that they are due. Late assignments will be docked one third of a letter grade per day, beginning the next day (so at 12:00AM after the deadline, an A- paper will become a B+ paper). Files that cannot be opened or are corrupted do not count as "on time," so consider pasting the text of your paper into your email.

*Absences and extensions.* You are required to prepare for each class meeting by completing the readings, and required to attend and participate in each section. Reading is not a substitute for discussing, and discussing is not a substitute for reading. Things happen: you will be allowed one excused absence throughout the semester, given 24 hours notice by email. Further absences or late assignments will require a note from your dean, proctor, or HUHS. Unexcused, undeclared, undocumented absences, late assignments, or poor preparation will be reflected in your grade.

*Attention and behavior.* I allow the use of laptops in class—live research and looking things up can be useful and exciting! But I strongly encourage longhand note-taking for the purposes of memory and synthesis (you learn more when you take selective notes! It's science!). Dilly-dallying on laptops and phones (social media, shopping) is sad and psychically expensive for everyone involved, and if you're doing it, you will be asked to leave, and this will be reflected in your participation grade.

*Disability accommodation.* Students with disabilities are encouraged to request accommodation, as soon as is convenient, through Harvard's Accessible Education Office: "Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term."

*Citations.* Preferred citation styles are MLA (8th ed.) and Chicago (17th ed.). Guides for these styles are available at <https://style.mla.org/>—and [chicagomanualofstyle.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/home.html](http://chicagomanualofstyle.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/home.html). Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) has a quick guide to both: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html). Patterns of errors in citation will be marked; continued poor citation practices over the semester will be penalized.

*Academic honesty and collaboration.* Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failing grades on assignments to dismissal from the course or even more serious actions. Here's The Harvard College Honor Code:

Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity—that is, work that adheres to the scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of sources, appropriate collection and use of data, and transparent acknowledgement of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one’s own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs.

If you have questions about what constitutes proper collaboration, or about how to cite lectures, sections, conversations with peers, and other fleeting inspiration, ask me.

## SCHEDULE OF COURSE MEETINGS

### Week 1

Victorianism and Naturalism. Comedy of errors, decorum, propriety in self-representation. Modernism as initial unmooring from these points. Duty and freedom of the Modernist to represent others outside the self. “Tyrannical” realism vs. “authentic” representation of reality.

Tuesday: Introduction: Two Parties

Oscar Wilde, scene from *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) [Canvas]  
Harold Pinter, scene from *The Birthday Party* (1957) [Canvas]

Thursday: Henry James, from “The Art of Fiction” (1894) [Canvas]

Eric Auerbach, from “Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature” “The Brown Stocking” (1946) [Canvas]

### Week 2

What is Symbolism? Symbolic representation. “Kernels” of meaning. Exploratory style as radical political (or anti-bureaucratic) act; race and imperialism. Enforced Reality and colonialism; parodying Victorianism, horror of Victorianism.

Tuesday: Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1902)

Thursday: *Heart of Darkness* continued

Caryl Churchill, Act One of *Cloud 9* [Canvas]

### Week 3

“Overture” to Modernism proper. New methods of representing self and thought. New narrative styles: origins in free indirect discourse and transition into stream of consciousness.

Representations of sleep, dream, and waking; involuntary memory in fiction and sense memory in theater. New skepticism of Materialism, Realism, Victorianism, religion; new fictional selfhood and autobiographical endeavors. Dilation of clock time.

Tuesday: *Heart of Darkness* continued

Virginia Woolf, “Modern Fiction” (1919) [Canvas]

Thursday: Dorothy Richardson, *Pointed Roofs* (1915)

May Sinclair’s review of *Pilgrimage* in *The Egoist* (1918)

### Week 4

New representations of the everyday and of time; glorification of banality, of the “new” body. Painterly ways of seeing the day, glorification of “achieving nothing,” diminution of “Work Ethic.”

Tuesday: *Pointed Roofs* continued

H.D., from “Notes on Thought and Vision” (1919) [Canvas]

- Thursday: *Pointed Roofs* continued  
T.S. Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919) [Canvas]

### Paper I Due

## Week 5

Polyvocal narration; shifting and unstable structure for the novel. The death of the author and suppressed historiography. New considerations of class based around increased urbanization and industrialization. Androgyny and what happens to masculinity under Modernism?

- Tuesday: William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936)

- Thursday: *Absalom, Absalom!* continued

## Week 6

Edwardian nostalgia, the “economic project of modernity,” flat and round characters, repetition and variation, influence of music on the novel.

- Tuesday: *Absalom, Absalom!* continued

- Thursday: E.M. Forster, “Aspects of the Novel:” “Plot,” “Pattern and Rhythm” (1927)

## Week 7

Freud and the primacy of the Unconscious. Synesthetics, the new lyric. Unsolid things, flowing consciousness. Difficulty of expression and insufficiency and surfeit of language. Discovery of meaning during or by the act of writing. “Fundamental divisions” central to author biography. Gender expressions and ambiguity.

- Tuesday: Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (1935)  
William Empson, “Seven Types of Ambiguity” (1930) [Canvas]

- Thursday: *The Waves* continued

### Section: Mini-exam I

## Week 8

Sexuality and gender: lack of resolution of consummation (ending of *Sons and Lovers*)—last sentence of *Finnegan’s Wake* hooks to the first, so that the reading begins over again; automatic writing. Indecency and censorship. What is the Lost Generation?

- Tuesday: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914)  
Gertrude Stein, from “Composition as Explanation” (1926) [Canvas]

from Mina Loy, “Feminist Manifesto” (1914) [Canvas]

Thursday: D.H. Lawrence, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928)

### Week 9

Newly naming homosexuality. Expressionism. Industrialism and industriousness, new attention to female experience in the workplace. Overturning Protestant and bourgeois values. Authenticity through detachment, detachment as a mode of authentic representation. Technology and the body as technique; biomechanics. Sexuality as instrumental, as commodity.

Tuesday: *Lady Chatterley's Lover* continued

Thursday: Sophie Treadwell, *Machinal* (1928)  
Walter Benjamin, from “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (1936) [Canvas]

### Paper II Due

### Week 10

Artist as spectator. Role of allegory in American racial history. Ethnic Modernism, Imagism; defiance of genre boundaries. New practices of treating African Americans as capital. Representing new social visions within art, and the related dialectic of expression and repression of authentic black experience. The new American chorus.

Tuesday: Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)

Thursday: Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (1922)

### Week 11

Prejudice, xenophobia, racial bias, and conservatism in defining “Modernism.” Representing the psychological auto-analytic, the fragmented self. The “project(ion) of blackness,” and of representing justice and equality, representing and canonizing subalterity, otherness, marginalization.

Tuesday: Richard Wright, *Native Son* (1940)

Thursday: *Native Son* continued  
Langston Hughes, from “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” [Canvas]

### Week 12

Absurdity, Existentialism, Dread, Apocalypse and post-apocalyptic modernity; Anarchism; Literary creation as anti-establishment. Representing timelessness, eternity, and the future.

Tuesday: Albert Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942) [Canvas]

Jean Paul Sartre, passage from *Nausea* (1938) [Canvas]  
George Orwell, 1984 (1949)

Thursday: 1984 continued

**Section: Mini-exam II**

**Week 13**

Theater of the Absurd; When does Postmodernism begin and what does it mean? Minimalism, destitution, representations of placelessness and obscurity, of states of mind.

Tuesday: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1952)

Thursday: *Waiting for Godot* continued

**(Reading Week) Paper III Due**