



**The Exeter College Summer Programme
at Exeter College in the University of Oxford**

Literatures of Modernism: The Modernist Novel in English

Course Description

The course examines the relationship between modernity and narrative as explored in the works of ten 'modernist' writers from 1896 to 1940. How did these texts represent a world experiencing what Hardy called 'the ache of the modern'? How was narrative form reshaped to express social and psychic change of the moment? How did the 'modernist' novel both transmit and contest 'modernity' as elaborated in contemporary philosophy, psychology, and sociology?

Course Objectives

The aim of the course is to develop students' understanding of

- the principal political, philosophical, psychological dynamics affecting the development of Anglophone narrative fiction in the period;
- the literary strategies developed by these novelists in the context of 'modernity';
- the extent to which 'modernist' narratives extend and/or contest earlier ideas of 'realism' in literature;
- the strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical claims to a distinctively 'modernist' novel and of 'modernism' more generally as a distinctive literary phenomenon.

The course is designed to be multidisciplinary and is suitable for students of all disciplines who have a strong interest in the novel, narrative methods, and the history of modernity. There are no prerequisites and no previous knowledge of modernism or literary analysis is required, but would be an advantage.

Teaching Methodology and Assessment

12 x 1.25hr Lectures (15hrs)
6 x 1.25hr Seminars (7.5hrs)
4 x 1.25hr Tutorials (5hrs)

Introductory lectures will suggest possible relationships that might exist between fiction and modernity, politics and narrative production, subjectivity and its 'others,' as well as outline the broader contexts of 'modernism(s).'

Subsequent lectures will address the work of specific writers and their own theories of fiction and narrative. Students will be expected to have read the texts, including the supplementary essays, before the relevant lecture. Mid-term and Final lectures will reconsider the questions raised by the introductory lectures in light of the narratives read.

Seminars and Tutorials (8 in total) will allow for further discussion of the novels, of the theories of modernity, and of narrative addressed in the lectures. In addition, students will be expected to

give a short oral presentation on one of the novels in the context of the broader questions of modernity raised in the lectures.

Assessment: A final essay of no more than 3,000 words (40%), a final three-hour written examination (40%), an oral presentation (10%), and participation in seminar discussion (10%).

Note: When seeking copies of texts, especially the primary texts, look first for the recommended edition (if any). In every case, be sure to obtain a scholarly, reliable edition of the text (e.g. Oxford University Press, Vintage, etc.). Internet sources can be dubious, and the introductions and notes of scholarly editions will be useful. Norton Critical Editions, where available, are excellent in this regard.

Lecture 1: Modernism, Modernity, and Narrative Fiction

Required reading:

- Pericles Lewis, 'Introduction,' *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-35.
Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life,' in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

Suggested further reading:

- Sigmund Freud, excerpts from *Civilization and its Discontents* (tr. James Strachey, 1930);
- Franco Moretti, introductory chapter of *Signs Taken for Wonders* (tr. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, David Miller; London: Verso, 1983).

Lecture 2: Reality and 'Realism' in the Modernist Novel

Required reading:

- George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life' and Review of John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3 (both in *Selected Essays of George Eliot*, ed. A.S. Byatt)
- Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' (in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008);
- Pericles Lewis, 'The Avant-Garde and High Modernism' in *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*.

Lecture 3: Joseph Conrad

Required reading:

- *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Lecture 4: Narrative and Knowledge

Required reading:

- Sigmund Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (1905 [1901]) (either in *The Psychology of Love*, ed. Jeri Johnson, London: Penguin, 2007 or in *Standard Edition*, ed. James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001 [1953])
- Henry James, 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1896)

Lecture 5: Ford Madox Ford

Required reading:

- 'On Impressionism' (1914)
- *The Good Soldier* (1915)

Lecture 6: James Joyce

Required reading:

- *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
- 'The Dead' (1914, in *Dubliners*)

Lecture 7: Modernism's Modes: What Happens to History?**Lecture 8: Popular Fiction, Modernism, and Modernity**

Required reading:

- John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915)
- Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* (1915)

Lecture 9: Virginia Woolf

Required reading:

- 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923)
- *To the Lighthouse* (1927)
- 'The Leaning Tower' (1940)

Lecture 10: Nella Larsen

Required reading:

- *Quicksand* (1928)
- *Passing* (1929)

Lecture 11: Djuna Barnes

Required reading:

- 'James Joyce' (1922)
- *Nightwood* (1936)

Lecture 12: Final Reckoning