

## **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 did they give innovative expression to subjectivity, loss, trepidation, disenfranchisement and desire? How was narrative form itself reshaped to evoke the social, cultural, and psychic changes of an era ravaged by two world wars? How did the 'modernist' novel both transmit and contest the experience of 'modernity'? And what have been modernism's legacies for writers in the postwar era and beyond?

### **Course Objectives**

The aim of the course is to develop students' understanding of the principal dynamics (political, philosophical, psychological, and cultural) affecting the development of Anglophone narrative fiction across 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 fiction, in literature's responsiveness to social environments, and in the history of modernity. There are no prerequisites, and no previous knowledge of modernist culture 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 representation, as well as outline the broader transnational and transtemporal contexts in which modernisms have emerged and developed. Subsequent lectures will be thematized in ways that afford critical optics through which to address the work of specific writers and their own theories of literature, alongside a sample of pertinent secondary-critical material that provides avenues for seminar discussion and frameworks for analysing particular forms, genres, or issues. Students will be expected to have read the texts, including the supplementary essays, before the relevant lecture.

Seminars and Tutorials 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**

Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life,' in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010)

Virginia Woolf, 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923), *Collected Essays*, Vol. 3 (London: Hogarth Press, 1966)

Jesse Matz, *The Modern Novel* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), Introduction and Chapter 1.

Pericles Lewis, 'Introduction,' *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

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

George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life' and Review of John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3, in *Selected Essays of George Eliot*, ed. A.S. Byatt (London: Penguin, 1990)

Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction' (1884), *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1948)

Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction', in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

Jeff Wallace, 'Modernists on the Art of Fiction', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel*, ed. Morag Shiach (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

### **Lecture 3: Modernism and Imperialism**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Richard Begam and Michael Valdez Moses, 'Introduction', in *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

Urmila Seshagiri, *Race and the Modernist Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), Introduction and Chapter 1.

### **Lecture 4: Narrative and Knowledge**

Henry James, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898)

Paul Armstrong, *The Challenge of Bewilderment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 'Introduction: Bewilderment, Understanding, and Representation'.

### **Lecture 5: Literary Impressionism (I)**

Ford Madox Ford, 'On Impressionism' (1914)

Ford Madox Ford, *The Good Soldier* (1915)

Jesse Matz, *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Chapter 1: 'Impressions of Modernity'.

### **Lecture 6: Literary Impressionism (II)**

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)

Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 'Writing the City: "Street Haunting" and *Mrs Dalloway*'.

### **Lecture 7: The Short Story and the Urban Imagination**

James Joyce, *Dubliners* (1914)

Elizabeth Bowen, *Selected Stories of Elizabeth Bowen*, ed. Tessa Hadley (London: Vintage, 2023)

Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

### **Lecture 8: The Novel as Elegy**

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (1927)

Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), Chapter 2: 'Hume, Stephen, and Elegy in *To the Lighthouse*'.

### **Lecture 9: African American Modernisms (I)**

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937)

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Their Eyes Were Watching God: Hurston and the Speakerly Text', in *Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, ed. Henry Louis Gates and Anthony Appiah (New York: Amistad, 1993)

### **Lecture 10: African American Modernisms (II)**

James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)

Cyraina Johnson-Roullier, '(An)Other Modernism: James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, and the Rhetoric of Flight', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 45.4 (1999): 932-56.

### **Lecture 11: Modernism's Legacies**

Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (2001)

Brian Finney, 'Briony's Stand Against Oblivion: The Making of Fiction in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 27.2 (2004): 68-82.

Richard Robinson, 'The Modernism of Ian McEwan's *Atonement*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 56.3 (2010): 473-495.

### **Lecture 12: Modernism's Futures**

Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 'Introduction: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Modernist Narrative'.

Urmila Seshagiri and David James, 'Metamodernism: Narratives of Revolution and Continuity', *PMLA* 129.1 (2014): 87-100.

Kevin Brazil, 'An Embarrassment of Lateness', *Modernism/Modernity*, Print-Plus, Vol. 3, Cycle 4: *Modernism's Contemporary Affects* (2018):

<https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/embarrassment-lateness>