

THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

ENGL-(6)-4285

Topics in Modernism: Reading the 1930s

Term: Fall/Winter 2012-13  
Time: Fridays 2:30-5:15pm  
Room: C329

Professor: Candida Rifkind  
Office: 2A38  
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Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 1:00-2:00pm or by appointment

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course focuses on the dynamic and diverse modernisms produced between the stock market crash of 1929 and the outbreak of World War II. We will take a cultural studies approach to explore a range of texts, from the avant-garde to the popular, and an array of media, from fiction and non-fiction, poems, and plays to magazines and comic strips as well as visual culture (photography, painting, fashion) and the performing arts (film, dance, spectacles). Our main focus will be works from Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, but we will also study some texts in translation. Throughout the course, we will ask the questions: "what was modernism?" and "what are the consequences of periodizing the 1930s?"

The 1930s offer a fascinating cross-section of modernist projects that negotiate the lived experiences of modernity. The socio-political events of the decade galvanized many writers and artists to produce political work and, indeed, to theorize new relationships between art and politics. Often misunderstood as purely escapist, 1930s popular culture likewise engaged with everyday life and sought new forms to represent modern experiences. Just as political writers wanted to speak to and for "the people," so did many popular culture producers innovate ways to register the major events of the decade in often surprising ways. So, while they share similar historical ground, the works in this course offer an array of aesthetic positions, audiences, communities and cultures, as writers and artists struggled to both document reality and imagine alternatives.

The course is organized chronologically, with Fall term readings beginning in 1929 and ending in 1936, and Winter term readings starting in 1936 and ending in 1940. In addition to the required texts and some critical theory, students should expect to work with electronic archives and databases and to watch and listen to some required texts online.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (in order of reading)**

NB: all texts have been ordered through Mondragon bookstore (91 Albert St.)

Larsen, Nella. *Passing*. New York: Dover, 2004. Print.

Hammett, Dashiell. *The Maltese Falcon*. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves*. London: Penguin Modern Classic, 1989. Print.

Baldwin, Faith. *Skyscraper*. New York: Feminist Press, 2003. Print.

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2007. Print.

Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. London: Penguin Modern Classic, 1990. Print.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006. Print.

Ward, Lynd. *Vertigo: A Novel in Woodcuts*. New York: Dover, 2009. Print.

Césaire, Aimé. *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*. New York: Wesleyan UP, 2001. Print.

Brecht, Bertolt. *Mother Courage and Her Children*. Trans. Tony Kushner. Toronto: Methuen Canadian, 2009. Print.

**Additional required texts have been placed on reserve in the UW Library. See attached reading schedule for details.**

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTS**

Students should have access to a good English dictionary and an MLA style writing guide.

Since this is an Honours English course students should be familiar with basic literary terms and should acquire new ones over the course of the year through class discussion and independent study. There are many dictionaries of literary terms available (including the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* available on-line through the UW library website) but some are better than others. The one I most recommend is:

Cuddon, J.A. (rev. C.E. Preston). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. New York: Penguin, 1999. Print.

### **ASSIGNMENTS (more info on each assignment will be provided in class)**

<b>Critical Responses (1 x 500 words each, 1 each term)</b>	<b>2x5% = 10%</b>
See below.	

<b>Presentation (max. 20 mins., Fall term)</b>	<b>15%</b>
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<b>Fall Term Essay (2000-2500 words, due on November 23<sup>rd</sup>)</b>	<b>15%</b>
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<b>Winter Term Research Essay</b>	
<b>Essay Proposal and Tentative Bibliography (due February 1<sup>st</sup>)</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Research Essay (3250-3500 words, due March 22<sup>nd</sup>)</b>	<b>25%</b>

<b>Winter Term Workshops</b>	<b>4x2.5% each = 10%</b>
See below.	

<b>Final Assignment (1000 words, due April 11<sup>th</sup>)</b>	<b>15%</b>
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**Note on attendance:** If anything defines the complex world of modernism, it is dialogue, exchange, collaboration, and invention. As students of modernism we are like its creators in that these interactions can only happen between parties who are present and engaged. Since this is a discussion-based class attendance is crucial. Any absence could impact on your performance since regular oral participation is expected and all sorts of ideas can emerge unexpectedly. As students in an Honours course, you should come prepared each week with either comments or questions to make about the assigned reading. We will often begin the discussion with a roundtable to develop key terms for the class.

Please note that speaking a lot is not the same as making productive contributions to the discussion: listening to each other, synthesizing and building on prior comments, and keeping the discussion on track by focusing on course material and topics are all productive ways to participate. Try not to miss more than one class a term. Please let me know in advance about any session you can't attend.

### **Critical Responses**

Once each term, you must submit in writing or email a reading response to me the day before class (i.e. emails must be in my inbox by 8am on Friday morning in order to receive a grade. If you do not get a "received" email response from me by 10am I did not receive it). You may select the weeks yourself but note that the responses must be based on readings not films.

Writing about what you have read will help you to understand the readings of the course and synthesize ideas. In addition, you will come to class ready to contribute to our discussions. I may ask you to read aloud from your Critical Responses; be prepared to share your insights with the class. You should not summarize the reading, do any research, or dwell on emotional reactions (i.e., liked, didn't like). Ideally, this is an opportunity to think through your intellectual experiences

of the texts, probe your own thinking about modernism and the 1930s, and ask questions that may lead into a research paper.

The responses are worth 5% each and will be graded on the extent to which they engage with the material and course topics. This is the time for you to get really “into” something you’ve read and take the kinds of risks that you may not want to venture in a more formal essay.

### Winter Term Workshops

Information about how to prepare for each workshop will be provided in class the week before. In general, the workshops are an opportunity for you to do some research (much of it electronic) to find out about the workshop topic and identify one key text/image/object to bring to the discussion. The workshops constitute the participation grade for the Winter term. The grades for the workshops will be determined on the following scale:

0	did not attend
.5	attended but no evidence of preparation
1	minimal preparation, little contribution to discussion
1.5	some preparation, some contribution, but little engagement with topic and/or off-topic
2	good preparation, relevant contributions, engaged with topic and discussion
2.5	excellent preparation, contributions, and engagement

The workshops grades will be indicated on the Final Assignment when it is returned to students. Students who miss the workshop without a medical note will not be able to make up the marks.

### GRADING SCALE

A+	90 - 100%	GPA 4.50	C+	65 - 69%	GPA 2.5
A	85 - 89%	GPA 4.25	C	60 - 64%	GPA 2.0
A-	80 - 84%	GPA 4.0	D	50 - 59%	GPA 1.0
B+	75 - 79%	GPA 3.5	F	Below 50%	GPA 0
B	70 - 74%	GPA 3.0			

### NOTES

1. This course outline should be considered a guideline only. Time constraints and other unforeseen factors may require that some of the above topics be omitted or covered in less detail than indicated.
2. Work submitted for evaluation must be either typed or text processed.
3. Cellular phones and other electronic devices **MUST** be turned off during classes.
4. It is the student’s responsibility to retain a photocopy or digitized copy of **ALL** assignments submitted for grading; in the event of loss or theft, a duplicate copy is required.
5. Students are advised to read the pertinent pages of the current course calendar for the rules regarding Registration, Voluntary Withdrawals, Academic Misconduct including plagiarism, and Appeals. **Concerning plagiarism, please note** that as a general rule, an F in the course will be the penalty, recommended by the English Departmental Review Committee to the Senate Committee on Academic Misconduct, for plagiarism on major assignments in English Department courses.
6. Accessibility Services:  
Students with documented disabilities, temporary or chronic medical conditions, requiring academic accommodations for tests/exams (e.g., private space) or during lectures/laboratories (e.g., access to volunteer note-takers) are encouraged to contact Accessibility Services (AS) at 786-9771 or email [accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:accessibilityservices@uwinnipeg.ca) to discuss appropriate options. Specific information about AS is available on-line at <http://www.uwinnipeg.ca/accessibility>. All information about a student’s disability or medical condition remains confidential.

7. The University of Winnipeg promotes a scent-free environment. Please be respectful of the needs of fellow classmates and the instructor by avoiding the use of scented products while attending lectures. Exposures to perfumes and other scented products (such as lotion) can trigger serious health reactions in persons with asthma, allergies, migraines or chemical sensitivities.
8. Please note that registering in this course commits you to the date and time of the course final examination. If you are aware of possible conflicts with that date, please see me immediately during the first week of the course, in case you need to register in another course to accommodate the conflict. For appeals for deferred exams, please see the Calendar.
9. **Tuesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2013** is the final date to withdraw without academic penalty from courses that begin in September 2012 and end in April 2013 of the 2012-13 academic year.
10. Late Assignment Penalties: I encourage you to speak with me in advance if you anticipate handing an assignment in late due to extenuating circumstances, such as illness or a personal/family emergency. **Note that having a lot of work to do for your other courses is not a reasonable excuse for a late assignment in this course.** Unless prior arrangements have been made or you present a medical/legal note explaining why your assignment has been handed in late, the penalty for a late assignment is: **10% off immediately when it is not submitted on the due date and 2% off each extra weekday it is late. No unexplained late assignments will be accepted after they are 7 weekdays late.** All requests for extensions should be made in person or, if you are unable to attend class or office hours, by phone. Email requests for extensions will not be acknowledged. Late assignments will receive a grade only (no written comments).
11. The English Department wishes to ensure your right to privacy regarding handing in and getting back assignments is protected. Most assignments will be handed in and handed back in class or at the Instructor's office. If assignments are to be handled in another way and you are concerned about others having access to your work, you should attach to your assignment a self-addressed envelope that can be sealed. If this is not done, it is assumed that you have waived your concerns in this area.
12. Students will not be asked for identification when writing a test or examination.
13. Students are advised that the UW Bookstore may run out of textbooks early in the term. Also, the bookstore always ships textbooks back to the publisher if they are not purchased within the first few weeks of term. Students are responsible for communicating directly with the bookstore if they need to order texts or ask for texts to be held for them.
14. No unauthorized material or equipment may be brought with you to the final exam.
15. For more information regarding the English Department, please refer to our website at <http://english.uwinnipeg.ca>
16. **IMPORTANT NOTE ON EMAIL:** I only respond to students' emails during regular work hours (M-F 9am-5pm) and I may take up to 24 hours to respond. Due to the high volume of junk mail I receive, I can only respond to emails sent from UW student accounts (iam.uwinnipeg).
17. **IMPORTANT NOTE ON MOBILE DEVICES AND LAPTOPS:** Absolutely no texting in class. All mobile devices must be turned off once class begins and remain off until it is over. **Laptop use requires the instructor's permission.** You may not record lectures without my prior permission.
18. Please do not eat during class.

**FALL TERM READING SCHEDULE**  
(subject to changes announced in class)

Date	Texts	Assignments and Presentation Topics
Sep. 7	Introductions  Screening: Charlie Chaplin, <i>Modern Times</i>	
Sep. 14	Modernism and the 1930s a. "Biting Back at the Machine: Charlie Chaplin's <i>Modern Times</i> " <i>Senses of Cinema</i> 60 (web) b. e-reserve: Lewis, Pericles, Ch. 1 of <i>The Cambridge Companion to Modernism</i> c. e-reserve: Williams, Raymond, "When Was Modernism?" and "The Emergence of Modernism" from <i>The Politics of Modernism</i> .	key terms: modern, modernity, modernism
Sep. 21	Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i> (come to the next 3 classes with your own 3 key terms)	1. The Harlem Renaissance _____ 2. The mulatto (see Sherrard-Johnson) _____
Sep. 28	Dashiell Hammett, <i>The Maltese Falcon</i>	3. Classical detective fiction (see Hühn) _____ 4. Hardboiled detective fiction _____
Oct. 5	Faith Baldwin, <i>Skyscraper</i>	5. Skyscrapers (the International Style) _____  6. The spectacular modern woman (see Connor on reserve) _____
Oct. 12	Screening: Lang, <i>M</i> e-reserve: Lang, Fritz, "The Future of the Feature Film in Germany"	7. German Expressionism _____
Oct. 19	Virginia Woolf, <i>The Waves</i>	8. The Bloomsbury Group _____
Oct. 26	Virginia Woolf, <i>The Waves</i> e-reserve: Marcus, Jane, "Brittania Rules <i>The Waves</i> "	9. Woolf and music (see Clements) _____ 10. Woolf and imperialism _____
Nov. 2	The Scottsboro Trials a. Williams, Lynn Barstis. "Images of Scottsboro." <i>Southern Cultures</i> 6.1 (2000): 50-67. Project Muse. b. e-reserve: Hughes, Langston from <i>The Political Plays of Langston Hughes</i> (pp. 24-49)	11. Langston Hughes, jazz, and poetry _____ 12. The Scottsboro trials _____
Nov. 9	Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i>	13. Dystopian fiction _____
Nov. 16	Dorothy Livesay and the Canadian literary left a. Reserve reading: "Montreal 1933-34" (pp. 69-114) from <i>Right Hand, Left Hand</i> b. e-reserve: Livesay, Collected Poems (print and bring to class): "In Green Solariums"; "Depression Suite"; "Day and Night"	14. The Workers' Theatre and <i>Eight Men Speak</i> (Ryan et al.) _____
Nov. 23	Screening: LeRoy, <i>Gold Diggers of 1933</i>	<b>Fall Term Essays due</b>

**WINTER TERM READING SCHEDULE**  
(subject to changes announced in class)

Date	Texts	Workshops and Assignments
Jan. 11	Screening: Gréville, <i>Princess Tam Tam</i> a. Francis, Terri. "Embodied Fictions, Melancholy Migrations: Josephine Baker's Cinematic Celebrity." <i>MFS Modern Fiction Studies</i> 51. 4 (2005): 824-845. Project Muse. b. Cheng, Anne Anlin. "Skin Deep: Josephine Baker and the Colonial Fetish." <i>Camera Obscura</i> 23 (2008). Project Muse.	
Jan. 18	Hemingway, magazines, and celebrity culture a. Hemingway, "The Snows of Kiliminjaro." Web. b. ---. "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Web. c. Maier, Kevin. "A Trick Men Learn in Paris": Hemingway, <i>Esquire</i> , and Mass Tourism. <i>The Hemingway Review</i> 31.2 (2012): 65-83. Project Muse. d. Newton, Leslie. "Picturing Smartness: Cartoons in the <i>New Yorker</i> , <i>Vanity Fair</i> , and <i>Esquire</i> in the Age of Cultural Celebrities." <i>J. of Mod. Periodical Studies</i> 3.1 (2012). Project Muse.	
Jan. 25	Documentary film, photography, poetry, and dance a. Miller, Tyrus. "Documentary/ Modernism: Convergence and Complementarity in the 1930s." <i>Modernism/ Modernity</i> 9.2 (2002): 226-241. Project Muse. b. Miller, James S. "Inventing the 'Found' Object: Artifactuality, Folk History, and the Rise of Capitalist Ethnography in 1930s America." <i>J. of American Folklore</i> 117. 466 (2004): 373-393. Project Muse.	<b>Workshop I:</b> the documentary impulse across media.
Feb. 1	Mulk Raj Anand, <i>Untouchable</i>	<b>Proposal and Bibliography Due</b>
Feb. 8	Zora Neale Hurston, <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>	
Feb. 15	Vernacular surrealisms a. Reserve: McDonnell, <i>Krazy Kat: The Comic Art of George Herriman</i> b. ee cummings. "A Foreword to Krazy." <i>The Sewanee Review</i> . 54.2 (1946). JStor. c. Eggener, Keith L. "An Amusing Lack of Logic": Surrealism and Popular Entertainment." <i>American Art</i> 7.4 (1993). JStor.	<b>Workshop II:</b> surrealism and popular cultures (comics, fashion, advertising, film, dance)  "Surrealism and Design." Victoria & Albert Museum. Web.
Mar. 1	The Spanish Civil War a. "About the Spanish Civil War." <i>Modern American Poetry</i> . Web. b. SCW poems selected and circulated by students from Cunningham and Vulpe on reserve.	<b>Workshop III:</b> the Spanish Civil War in painting and poetry
Mar. 8	Lynd Ward, <i>Vertigo</i>	
Mar. 15	Aimé Césaire, <i>Notebook of a Return to the Native Land</i>	
Mar. 22	Bertolt Brecht, <i>Mother Courage</i> e-reserve: Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre"	<b>Research Essay Due</b>
Apr. 5	Serial culture: 1930s comics and radio e-reserves: a. Gardner, Jared, Ch. 2 of <i>Projections: Comics and the History of Twenty-First-Century Storytelling</i> b. Lenthall, Bruce, Ch. 3 of <i>The Radio Reader</i>	<b>Workshop IV:</b> <i>Superman, Flash Gordon, Little Orphan Annie, Dick Tracy</i>
Apr. 8	Screening: Fleming, <i>The Wizard of Oz</i>	<b>Final Assignment Due on April 11<sup>th</sup></b>