

AMERICAN MODERNISM

English 3675/6675, Spring 2018

M/W/F 10:00-10:50 HNS 120

Instructor: Dr. Ian Afflerbach

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Office Hours: MW 3-5:30 and by appt, Dunlap 206D

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sometime around the turn of the century, a radical transformation swept across the arts. Literature, painting, music, architecture, dance, theater—all began unprecedented experimentation, exploding traditional ideas about the appropriate subject matter and expected forms for artwork. We call this cultural outpouring “modernism.” This remarkable epoch, however, emerged in response to a series of dramatic and unsettling changes in western society: a loss of traditional moral values, from the crumbling optimism of middle class life to the dwindling belief in God; collapsing hierarchies of gender and race, which Anglophone civilizations had long used to define personhood; and an inability to believe in absolute truths, given the revolutionary and terrifying awakenings prompted by philosophy, science, and war. Modernism diagnosed the brokenness of this new world and—through the aesthetic experience of art—sought to make it whole once again.

If modernist literature never quite succeeds in repairing the wounds of modernity, it remains our most profound site for exploring what it means to live in this modern world—and this world is still very much ours. For this reason, the works we read will read are deeply rewarding and yet deeply challenging, each presenting a new difficulty for our understanding because it seeks to capture a new experience. Our course explores the major authors, texts, and problems in American literary modernism, a central national vector for this international movement. We’ll focus on two cardinal tasks for all modernist art: 1) how to establish a form suitable for capturing the complexities of personal experience and shared history; and 2) how to use this literary form as a means for changing society, for critiquing the injustices that exist and imagining new and more just ways of living. As we do so, we’ll place particular emphasis upon those institutions, such as the “little magazines,” responsible for promoting modernism, and upon the ways that American history and geography created unique conditions for modernist literary production: from Jim Crow in Georgia, to the Great Depression in Greenwich Village, to sharecropping in Alabama during the New Deal.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

For purchase at the bookstore (must be the correct editions if bought elsewhere):

William Faulkner *The Sound and the Fury*

Nella Larsen *Passing*

Nathaniel West *Miss Lonelyhearts*

James Agee and Walker Evans *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

Other readings available on D2L (Must be printed, annotated, and brought to class).

ASSIGNMENTS

Group Presentation (20%)

Close Reading Paper, 3-4 pgs. (15%)

Annotated Bibliography 5-10 Sources (5%)

Research Paper 7-10 pgs. (25%)

Final Exam (15%)

Participation (20%)

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Literary History: You will gain familiarity with major works and problems in American modernist fiction and poetry, and with the historical concerns to which they were responding.

Writing: Through our assignments, you can expect to work on (a) clear, concise expression of your ideas in prose, (b) detail-driven argument (c) readerly engagement, and (d) citation practices.

Speaking: During the semester, you can expect to work on (a) building comfort contributing to group conversation, (b) preparing formal/informal oral presentations (c) eliminating verbal fillers.

HOW TO APPROACH THIS COURSE

Active Participation: Because our course will be driven by discussions, it is vital that you show up ready to be actively involved. This means volunteering your ideas and questions, commenting on and challenging our readings, and drawing upon your individual interpretations and experiences.

Active Reading: All our readings must be annotated and brought to class with you. Annotating, or “marking up” a text, means taking notes, creating questions, and just recording places that interest, confused, amuse, or otherwise move you.

Professionalism: The classroom is a professional space and demands the same forms of etiquette as you would bring to a workplace. Your participation grade will decrease—or I may mark you absent—if you cannot (a) be on time each day, (b) come prepared each day with readings and notes, (c) respect your peers by refraining from any background chatter.

Technology in the Classroom: We will conduct discussions without laptops. At all times, cell phones should be kept out of sight (and silent); failure to do so will lead to lowered participation grade, or even an absence for the day.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Students can miss three classes over the course of the semester, for any reason, without penalty. Each of the next three additional unexcused absences will deduct half a letter grade from the student’s final grade. Missing seven classes results in automatic failure. Absences can only be exempted with official documentation (e.g., participation in official athletics, religious observance, medical note, or other campus activities). Students who sleep during class or who arrive late may be counted absent.

Late Work: If you anticipate a situation that will prevent you from finishing a project, you need to e-mail me *before* your due date, explain the situation, and propose a new deadline.

Plagiarism: Whether you intend to do so or not, passing off the words or ideas of others as your own is a serious academic offense. Pleading ignorance is no defense. If you are the least bit unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me and/or check [this website](#). Please also consult UNG’s [Student Code of Conduct](#).

FINDING SUPPORT

Instructor Contact: Please try to visit office hours. If you have a scheduling conflict, let me know and we can find another time. Even one meeting per unit can have an enormous impact on your purpose and goals going forward. Email is the best way to reach me for any simple questions; I try to respond within 24 hours.

Outside Help: Students should have a basic understanding of English grammar and a familiarity with the rules of standard English. If you are concerned about your basic grammar and mechanics, or would simply like [additional support](#) for your writing, please contact the [Writing Center](#) or Gainesville’s Academic Computing Tutoring and Testing Center ([ACIT Center](#)). I also wholeheartedly recommend the grammar, citation, and style guide offered by the [Owl at Purdue](#).

Disability Services: University of North Georgia is committed to equal access to its programs, services, and activities. Students who require accommodations must register with Disability Services and submit supporting documentation. Disability Services provides accommodation memos for eligible students to give to their instructors. Students are responsible for making arrangements with instructors, and must give reasonable prior notice of the need for accommodation

Feeling Overwhelmed: College can be a stressful time; don’t hesitate to ask for help if you’re feeling overly anxious, stressed, or depressed. UNG has two main ways to seek support: through the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) and through the counseling services offered by the [Student Center](#).

Please consult [UNG’s Supplemental Syllabus](#) for campus-wide regulations.

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1	Jan 8	Introduce Course
	Jan 10	Daniel Singal “Towards a Definition of American Modernism” (1987)
	Jan 12	Henry Adams “The Dynamo and the Virgin” from <i>The Education of Henry Adams</i> (1900); Ezra Pound “In a Station of the Metro” (1913)
2	Jan 15	MLK Day
IN SEARCH OF A FORM: MODERNITY/MAGAZINES/MODERNISM		
	Jan 17	Gertrude Stein “Portraits” of Picasso and Matisse [<i>Camera Work</i> 1912] Latham and Scholes, “Rise of Periodical Studies”
	Jan 19	Ezra Pound “Contemporania” [<i>Poetry</i> 1913]
3	Jan 22	T. S. Eliot <i>The Waste Land</i> [<i>Dial</i> 1922]
	Jan 24	T. S. Eliot <i>The Waste Land</i> [Annotated Version]
	Jan 26	Ezra Pound from <i>Cathay</i> (1915): “Fan-Piece, For Her Imperial Lord,” “Ts’Ai Chi’h,” “The Encounter,” “In a Station of the Metro,” and “A Few Don’ts by an Imagiste”

4	Jan 29	Wallace Stevens from <i>Harmonium</i> (1923): “The Snow Man,” “Anecdote of Men by the Thousands,” “A High-Toned Old Christian Woman,” “Anecdote of the Jar,” “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird”
	Jan 31	Ernest Hemingway “The Killers” and “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1927)
	Feb 2	[No Class]
5	Feb 5	Alain Locke “The New Negro” (1925) Langston Hughes “I, Too,” “The Weary Blues,” “Harlem”
	Feb 7	Jean Toomer from <i>Cane</i> (1923) “Reapers,” “Georgia Dusk,” “Portrait in Georgia”
	Feb 9	Jean Toomer from <i>Cane</i> “Karintha” and “Blood-Burning Moon”
6	Feb 12	Nella Larsen <i>Passing</i> (1929) Part I
	Feb 14	Nella Larsen <i>Passing</i> Part II
	Feb 16	Nella Larsen <i>Passing</i> Part III
7	Feb 19	Class Presentations
	Feb 21	Class Presentations
	Feb 23	Class Presentations
8	Feb 26	William Faulkner <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (1929) (3-75)
	Feb 28	William Faulkner <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (76-179)
	Mar 2	No Class
9	Mar 5	William Faulkner <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (180-264)
	Mar 7	William Faulkner <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> (265-321) and “Introduction to <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> ” (1933/1970)
	Mar 9	William Faulkner “Absalom, Absalom” (1936) <i>Close Reading Paper Due Sunday 11:55pm</i>
10	Mar 12	HOLIDAY
	Mar 14	HOLIDAY
	Mar 16	HOLIDAY
IN SEARCH OF A POLITICS: MODERNISM AFTER THE CRASH		
11	Mar 19	Nathaniel West <i>Miss Lonelyhearts</i> (1933) (1-35)
	Mar 21	Nathaniel West <i>Miss Lonelyhearts</i> (1933) (35-End)

	Mar 23	Archibald Macleish “ars poetica,” (1913) “Invocation to the Social Muse,” (1932) and “American was Promises” (1939)
12	Mar 26	Tess Slesinger “After the Party” (1935)
	Mar 28	Tess Slesinger “Missis Flinders” (1934)
	Mar 30	Muriel Rukeyser from “The Book of the Dead” (1938)
13	Apr 2	James Agee and Walker Evans <i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> (1941) 1-84 and “Notes and Appendices” (395-406)
	Apr 4	<i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> (85-194)
	Apr 6	<i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> (195-278) Annotated Bibliography Due
14	Apr 9	Writing Workshop
	Apr 11	<i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> (279-380)
	Apr 13	<i>Let Us Now Praise Famous Men</i> (381-End)
15	Apr 16	Hart Crane from <i>The Bridge</i> (1930) “To Brooklyn Bridge” and “Cape Hatteras”
	Apr 18	Robert Hayden “Middle Passage” (1941)
	Apr 20	Gwendolyn Brooks <i>A Street in Bronzeville</i> (1945) selections: “kitchenette building,” “a song in the front yard,” “the vacant lot”
THE SENSE OF AN ENDING		
16	Apr 23	H.D. from <i>Trilogy</i> (1944) “The Walls Do Not Fall”
	Apr 25	Irving Howe “The Culture of Modernism”
	Apr 27	Wallace Stevens “Sunday Morning” and “The Idea of Order at Key West”

FINAL EXAM: In-Class Monday April 30th 10:20am-12:20pm

FINAL ESSAY DUE in Hard Copy, Dunlap 206D by Monday April 30th by 3:00pm