Major Modernists:
Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, T.S. Eliot
ENG 144

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80-115
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‘Modernism’ is not so much a thing as a set of responses to problems posed by the conditions of modernity. The recognition that modernism and modernity are related but not identical is crucial to most recent work in the area. At one time it was possible to write of there being ‘two modernities’, one being the modernity of technology and social life, and the other being aesthetic modernity; more recently, critics have used ‘modernism’ for the second of these, reserving ‘modernity’ for the social and ideological context. [...] But exactly which factors are included within modernity, and the relative importance of each, is something over which there is little critical agreement, and is one reason for the diversity in [...] accounts of modernism.


This course examines the transformative artistic movement, Modernism, through the novels, poetry, and short fiction of four iconic pioneers. As the epigram above argues, modernism encapsulated a broad spectrum of responses to the technological, political, cultural, and social changes that occurred at the turn of the last century. The formal innovations in writing pioneered by Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Katherine Mansfield, and T.S. Eliot were in many ways radical and utterly new. Students will find close study of the linguistic, thematic, and material changes they catalyzed startling, in part because so many of these new forms of representation are now, paradoxically and unevenly, culturally assimilated across many media. They have become part of our lingua franca.

What students will learn in this course is how these writers began and what was at stake in their pursuit of the ‘new’. They will learn how collaboration, affiliation, and difference—particularly as related to issues of gender, sex, nation, and culture—informed and differentiated these writers’ narrative and poetic experimentations, including the drive to self-consciously claim the mantle of ‘artist’ for themselves.
These four writers all knew one another either personally or professionally, read and commented in public and in private on one another’s works, and wrote about and were deeply affected by the great political crises of their day, notably the Great War (1914-1918) and the concomitant passage of the Suffrage Act (1918) granting women the right to vote and the Sex Disqualification Act (1919) opening the professions to women. Eliot, Woolf, and Mansfield knew each other socially. Woolf, a pioneering self-publisher who co-ran The Hogarth Press, published both Eliot and Mansfield, and was approached by Joyce’s Paris publisher, Sylvia Beach, to publish Joyce. Woolf and Mansfield knew that women’s enfranchisement was a watershed and just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the expressive possibilities churning beneath the surface of cultural consciousness for what women might yet achieve. All sought to elevate the role of the artist in cultural and political significance, but constructed their male and female artist figures with critical distinctions. All took on taboos surrounding sex and gender, convention and tradition broadly defined and worked to challenge orthodoxy wherever it constrained creative self-making.

This class will also invest heavily in students’ own writing practice, training them to write critically and lucidly on authors known for their difficult poetic and poetic-prose styles, but whose methods generate good material for helping students confront complexity in language and to find clarity in complexity. We will workshop essay drafts and have ‘stepped’ assignments that build out from the small fragment to the larger critical argument. Students will be able in consultation with me to generate their own topics for the final paper in order to build upon a sustained interest in a specialized critical area that ideally will develop over the course of their readings, discussions, and writing exercises.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1 (Origins and Reading Models)**

**Introduction to Modernism**

1. What is modernism? What was modernism? Why do we still care about the modernists as a self-identified group? Did they self-identify? How are these particular modernists both foreign to us now and intimate chroniclers of the contemporary scene, theirs and ours? Why have I
chosen **two male writers** and **two female writers** to support claims to equal canonicity? Could I have chosen or designed this syllabus otherwise?

How do we ‘read’ modernist works? What are these four writers’ legacies? What do book history, publication venue, and authorial biography have to do with modernist aesthetics?

- Class introductions and reading exercises

2. In-class close reading and discussion:

- Virginia Woolf, “Kew Gardens” (1919) and “The Mark on the Wall” (1917) on Canvas
- Woolf’s 1919 modernist manifesto “Modern Novels” on Canvas and then in its original publication context, *The Times Literary Supplement*: source in Stanford Library’s Searchworks under **databases**, “The TLS Historical Archive 1907-2002”

**Weeks 2&3 (WOOLF):**
Read Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* in full before the first class

Week 2: *To the Lighthouse*: “The Window” & “Time Passes”

Week 3: *To the Lighthouse* (continued): “The Lighthouse”

Woolf’s compositional practice: [http://www.woolfonline.com](http://www.woolfonline.com) especially “Time Passes” section

**End Week 3 Assignment #1:** Focus: ‘the morphology of the Woolfian sentence’. Take one sentence in consultation with me and shared on class Google doc and write a 600-700 word analysis of its formal properties. How do they manifest a quality of social, political, or cultural urgency necessary to the development of a character’s viewpoint?

**Week 4 & 5 (JOYCE):**
Week 4: James Joyce, *The Dead and Other Stories*: “Araby” & “The Dead”
Weeks 4&5: James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Week 6 & 7 (MANSFIELD + Writing workshop):

Mansfield, “Prelude” (1918) on Canvas


Writing class: peer workshops on assignment #2 due beginning of 8th week.

Week 8 & 9 (ELIOT):

*The Waste Land*

Brainstorming final paper arguments in the round (students working on similar topics but different authors will be grouped together and provide collaborative commentary on Google Docs).

**Week 10: Writing Workshops + Course Conclusion**

Outline and Thesis argument for final paper presented in class

Bring in 4 pages of essay writing related to your longer paper for peer review

Final Paper Due: Early in 9th week

**EVALUATION**

- Class Participation: 25% (more than 2 class absences results in lower participation grade): Because this is a seminar, class preparation and participation is crucial. Please read all novels and stories in full before the first day we discuss a new author. I will be designing exercises and activities to allow everyone room to speak and contribute, so please come eager to both listen well to others and offer your insights on the readings.
- First short paper (close reading) 15%
- Second paper: 25%
- Final Paper: 35%
ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Students with Documented Disabilities
Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk phone: 723-1066 http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae

Honor Code

The Honor Code is the University's statement on academic integrity written by students in 1921. It articulates University expectations of students and faculty in establishing and maintaining the highest standards in academic work:

The Honor Code is an undertaking of the students, individually and collectively:

• that they will not give or receive aid in examinations; that they will not give or receive unpermitted aid in class work, in the preparation of reports, or in any other work that is to be used by the instructor as the basis of grading

• that they will do their share and take an active part in seeing to it that others as well as themselves uphold the spirit and letter of the Honor Code.

• The faculty on its part manifests its confidence in the honor of its students by refraining from proctoring examinations and from taking unusual and unreasonable precautions to prevent the forms of dishonesty mentioned above. The faculty will also avoid, as far as practicable, academic procedures that create temptations to violate the
Honor Code.

• While the faculty alone has the right and obligation to set academic requirements, the students and faculty will work together to establish optimal conditions for honorable academic work.

Writing Support

Hume Writing Center. Offers one-time or repeated writing tutorials and one-on-one support for ALL WRITERS! Schedule online. You can plan ahead and book an appointment – they go quickly – when you know paper deadlines are coming up:

https://undergrad.stanford.edu/tutoring-support/hume-center

Books

1) James Joyce, *The Dead and Other Stories*  
Broadview Edition  
ISBN: 9781554811656

2) T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land and Other Poems*  
A Broadview Anthology of British Literature Edition  
ISBN: 9781551119687

3) Katherine Mansfield, *The Garden Party and Other Stories*  
Penguin 2007 (introduction Lorna Sage)  
ISBN: 978-0-141-44180-1

4) Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Ed. Mark Hussey, Harcourt Brace  

Paperback  
April 2007  
ISBN 978-0-393-92679-8

**Please buy AT LEAST the WOOLF and JOYCE in the editions I’ve ordered at the bookstore or as above. We need to be on the same page (literally) when we talk about which sections of the novels we’ll study. Modernist novels are
notorious – and celebrated – for their unconventional chapter divisions, so it’s impossible to move quickly in class if students are reading various different editions (we spend more time coordinating pages then attending to the language under investigation!)**

**FURTHER BIBLIOGRAPHY**

There are some readable, optional secondary sources on Modernism students may wish to access. These are available in the library, are often e-book accessible, and I also have copies of many of them. Feel free to borrow from me, so long as you return them at the end of quarter.

- Whitworth, Michael, ed. *Modernism* (Blackwell’s Critical Guides). Oxford: Blackwell’s Publishing, 2007. *Good introduction, and smart synopses in chapter headings of key theoretical categories: Modernism and Romanticism; Realism and Formalism; Modernist and the Avant-Garde; Modernism and the Masses; Modernity and the City; Regendering Modernism; Publishing Modernism; Late Modernism. In Searchworks; I have a copy.*

- Bonnie Kime Scott, ed. *Gender in Modernism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005. *Excellent updated follow-up volume to the now classic edition of Scott’s, The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology (1990) which had staged a necessary intervention in the field of modernist studies to date, asking what women writers had been overlooked in the canonical modernist traditions, and also debating whether a movement can ‘have’ or reflect gender differences. In Searchworks, but often out – can be recalled. I also have copies.*


