

English 385

Modernism

Professor Hilgart

Office: 308 B Palmer
Phone/Voice Mail: 843-3135
Home phone: 276-6719
E-mail: Hilgart@Rhodes.edu
Office Hours: TBA

Required Texts (you must buy the assigned editions)

T.S. Eliot: The Wasteland
F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Great Gatsby
Willa Cather: Death Comes for the Archbishop
William Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury
Gertrude Stein: Three Lives

Art Berman: Preface to Modernism
Stephen Kern: The Culture of Time and Space

Course Objectives

- 1) A clear understanding of the concept of literary modernism, of its relationship to its time period, and of some major representative U.S. texts.
- 2) Development of each student's critical reading and writing practices.
- 3) Preparation for more advanced work (such as the Senior Seminar and Senior Paper). Specifically, students should become significant leaders of class discussion and debate (this is a true seminar), and they should become much more comfortable reading, discussing, and implementing secondary materials.

Expectations for Class Preparation and Discussion

Because it is of an advanced level, this course includes as much secondary material as it does primary texts. While you will receive a good grounding in some major American modernist authors/texts, we are equally interested in using these texts as a way to ground our inquiry into theories of modernism and modern culture. So, you should consider the nominally "secondary" readings *to be* primary readings; you are expected to read them carefully, marking up your texts, taking notes on them, noting questions, and generally committing them to memory. You will be expected to work with them in your papers, on the exam, and in class.

You will be expected to come to class with something to say *every day*; that is, you should have the equivalent of a response paper's ideas ready to articulate when you walk in the door. Often I will begin by calling on students to prime the pump of

discussion, and I will expect a short commentary, not simply a sentence or two. Reading is one thing; preparing for class is another; I expect you to do both.

Reading Journal

As part of your preparation for class, you must keep a reading journal. You should write for it once a week (excluding weeks when papers are due or other odd weeks when it seems reasonable). The complete journal will be due at the end of the term, but I will probably collect it at some unannounced time around mid-term as well. Date your entries keeping in mind the Honor Code.

You must *type* your journal entries on the computer, print them out, and keep them in folder with pockets. Always bring this folder to class; I may ask you to read your journals to start discussion on any given day.

Reading journal entries *are not* the same as a more polished response paper. There is no required length, and while they should be quite comprehensible to someone who reads them, they need not be "finished" work. Rather, you should use them to keep track of (and slightly expand) ideas that you can use to advance our class discussion. These might include: Interpretations of some aspect of a primary text, commentary on a particular passage, ideas about an author's style, the connections/differences between the current text and some other text (from the course or not), the ways in which a secondary reading speaks to some aspect of a primary text we've read, etc. etc. In other words, the content is open, but the point is uniform: Write down something that demonstrates that you have *been thinking about the reading with some seriousness*.

Written Assignments

Mid-term Exam: A take home exam that will measure to degree to which you have absorbed, pondered, and retained the ideas and texts of the first half of the term.

Paper 1: A "regular" thesis English essay (6-8 pages) on any of the primary texts read up to that point. You will be expected to devise a good topic/issue on your own (using office hours as you see fit) and to use ideas from the secondary readings we have covered to buttress your paper's argument. No research is required, but it is not forbidden.

Paper 2: A long essay on the text of your choice (not the same one as in Paper 1) utilizing your own research into the secondary material on the text (approximately 10 pages). Your paper must be a unified argument, not a report on others' readings. You should pick a particular aspect of your chosen text, use the MLA bibliography to find the best articles on that topic/question, and use 2-3 of the very best ones to expand/ground your own argument (whether you agree or disagree with them). While I will hold meetings with you close to the due date, I will not be holding your hand or verifying your progress prior to that point. If you wait too long to begin, you will be in trouble. Because you must focus on a particular issue (of your choosing), you will have to find secondary material that speaks specifically to it. While the MLA bibliography makes it fairly easy to identify your sources, Burrow library will likely not have any or all of the ones you need; you will need to use other local libraries and interlibrary loan. For this reason, you should complete your bibliographic work and begin acquiring your sources soon after Paper 1 is handed in.

Reading Journal: See above.

Presentation of Written Work:

All assigned work is due at the beginning of the class session in which it is due. Any paper that is late without advance permission from me will receive a grade lower than it would have had it been on time. Generally this means a 1/3 letter grade drop immediately and a full grade drop for each day thereafter (including week-ends).

Every piece of written work -- unless *explicitly* excepted by me in class -- must:

- 1) Be a computer print out
- 2) Be spell-checked & proof-read
- 3) Be double-spaced (paragraphs indented, no extra spaces between paragraphs)
- 4) Be in a normal 12 point font (i.e. like you might see in a book).
- 5) Have pages numbered on the computer.
- 6) Have your name, the date, and the course & section numbers at the top of the first page.
- 7) Have a clear indication of the assignment at the center top of the first page
(no cover pages).
- 8) Be *stapled stapled stapled* at the top left-hand corner. No paper clips or fold-overs.

Note: Papers that are clearly last-minute hack-jobs or that obviously have not been proof-read will receive a failing grade. Remember, spell-checking is not proof-reading. It is generally in your interest to hand a good paper in late than to hand total slop in on time.

Missed Class Responsibility

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility not only to seek but to obtain information regarding what went on -- adjustments to the syllabus, class notes, etc.

If a paper is due, the late-paper clock starts running at the beginning of class and it includes week-ends.

Therefore, you should endeavor to get your work to me as soon as possible after the missed class.

If you have some pre-planned responsibility that will take you away from class on a paper-due-day -- such as a plane ticket, an athletic event, or other school activity -- your paper is due *in advance* of your departure. Soccer games, model U.N. events, and extended vacations do not constitute valid excuses for late papers; you know when they are coming, so you can get your work in to me before you leave.

Attendance:

You may miss 4 class days (two weeks). A fifth absence will cause you to fail the course.

Term Grade Breakdown

Midterm Exam: 15%

Paper 1: 25%

Paper 2: 30%

Reading Journal & In-Class Participation: 30%

Syllabus

August

Th 23: Introduction

Tu 28: Handout from *New Yorker*; Stein: *Three Lives* ("The Gentle Lena"); Kern: CH 3: "The Present"

Th 30: Berman: CH 1: "Modernity and Modernism"; CH 2: "Modern Art and Literature: Early Phases"

September

Tu 4: T.S. Eliot: *The Wasteland*: Poem Itself, Notes by Eliot, Sources (pp. 3-66)

Th 6: : Eliot: on "The Wasteland" and on poetic theory (pp. 112-136)

Tu 11: Eliot: The New Criticism (pp. 167-210)

Th 13: Kern: CH 7: "Form" and CH 11: "The Cubist War"

Tu 18: Eliot: Recent Critical Evaluations in book and photocopies (TBA)

Th 20: Berman: CH 3: "Modern Art and Literature: Later Phases"; CH 4: "Modernism and Empiricism"

Tu 25: Willa Cather: *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (Books 1, 2, 3); photocopied handouts.

Th 27: Cather (Books 4, 5); Berman: CH 5: "Science and Modernity"

October

Tu 2: Cather (Books 6, 7, 8, 9)

Th 4: Kern: CH 6: "The Nature of Space" and CH 8: "Distance"

Tu 9: Catch-up day (midterm exam handed out)

Th 11: Midterm Exam (take home)

Fall Break

Th 18: Short Story (hand-out)

Tu 23: Berman: CH 11: "Sources of the Modernist Self"

Th 25: Kern: CH 1: "The Nature of Time"; CH 2: "The Past"; Berman pp. 160-165

Tu 30: Fitzgerald: *The Great Gatsby* (CH 1-5)

Th 1: Fitzgerald (CH 6-9)

November

Tu 6: PAPER DUE; Fitzgerald discussion concludes

Th 8: Faulkner: *The Sound and the Fury* (Benjy section, pp. 3-75)

Tu 13: Faulkner (Quentin section, pp. 76-179)

Th 15: Faulkner (Jason section, pp. 180-264)

Tu 20: Faulkner (Dilsey section, pp. 265-321)

Thanksgiving Break

Tu 27: No class - final paper conferences

Th 29: No class - final paper conferences

Tu 4: Final paper due.

