

English 201 / Section A02
Introduction to Modernist Literature:
“Here and Elsewhere”

Fall 2011 CLE A302
CRN 11975
MWR 3:30-4:20

Dr. Lincoln Shlensky
Office: CLE D332
Office hours:
M 4:30-6:00; W 4:30-5:30
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Course description

Literary modernism is a multifaceted international phenomenon of the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the meaning and limits of which scholars dispute even in the present. This course will explore some of the most influential texts of international modernism in a variety of genres: fiction, poetry, drama, parable, film, and the essay. The theme of the course, “Here and Elsewhere,” refers to the idea that one way of grouping modernists and their texts is to think in terms of two groups: those that gesture toward some other place of imaginative potential but outside of existing time and space, and those that engage with the politics and dilemmas of the present time and space. Many consider modernism to be an extension of early nineteenth-century literary Romanticism, and we will trace some of the Romantic roots of modernists we read, and discuss ways in which they rebel against the morality and aesthetics of the Victorian era and positivistic realism. As part of our attempt to understand modernism and its cultural avatars, we will refer occasionally to a cognitive map I have developed to try to conceptualize modernism. The map contains seven branches of the central node

modernism: anti-traditionalism, individualism, subjectivity, anti-rationalism, high/low cultural blurring, nationalism, and mythopoesis. We will discuss each of these sub-themes, or branches of modernism, during the course of the semester.

Learning objectives and assessment

At the end of this course, I expect that you will be able to do the following things you were not able to do before enrolling: 1) identify and chronologically locate a variety of authors and texts associated with international modernism; 2) recognize and distinguish some of the signal themes and aesthetic qualities of modernist texts; 3) evaluate some of the ethical implications of a variety of modernist aesthetic choices; 4) enjoy participating in the aesthetic experiences engendered by some modernist texts, even when these texts may seem intentionally ‘difficult’ or inscrutable at first. During the course of the semester, you will write three essays (including an in-class essay) and take a final exam. I have designed each of these exercises to help you think more deeply about the texts we are reading. I will also use these assignments to assess your progress in understanding how to interpret modernist texts and to compare them thematically and formally with each other.

Required texts

Damrosch, David, et al, eds. *The Longman Anthology of World Literature*, 2nd ed., Volume F.

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

Course pack

I will make some materials available online. Please bring these materials to class on the due dates. Printing costs for these materials are part of your book costs for the course.

Course grades

Final course grades will be determined as follows (as a percent of the final grade):

- 1) Class preparation and participation: 10%
- 2) A 750-word short essay: 15%
- 3) An in-class essay: 15%
- 4) A 1200-word essay: 30%
- 5) A final exam: 30%

I will give you ample notice of any changes to the syllabus.

If you have a disability, please let me know so I can help to accommodate you.

Essay assignments

Essay 1 (due October 5): As a prologue to your essay, please pose three questions you have about James Joyce's short story, "The Dead." Then go on to answer one of your three questions, as succinctly yet deeply as possible, and using only brief excerpts from the text, in 750 words (+/- 100 words; apx. 3 pp.).

In-Class Essay (October 20): I will provide the assignment on the day this is scheduled.

Essay 2 (due November 7): As a prologue to this essay, please pose three questions you have about Césaire's *Notebook* or Beckett's *Endgame*. Then go on to answer one of your questions, as succinctly yet deeply as possible, and using only brief excerpts from the text in question. Please make reference to at least two other texts we have read in the course as you formulate your response in academic essay format. Please be sure to flag your own thesis statement in the first paragraph, so I will know when you are expressing it, and please be sure that each subsequent paragraph relates to your controlling thesis. You may cite secondary sources in your essay, but you are not required to do so; I am more interested in

what you have to say and how convincingly you show me its significance. Please limit your writing to 1200 words (+/- 200 words; apx. 6 pp.).

Essay submission

Please email me <shlensky@uvic.ca> your two assigned essays, with your name and “English 201” in the subject line of your message. The electronic text file you send must be a .docx, .doc, .rtf, or .pages file, and you must include *your last name as part of the document’s file name* (e.g., “shlensky-201-essay1.doc”). I may also request a hard copy of your essay. Be sure to keep a copy of all the written work you submit.

Late submission

I know that completing your work on time requires self-discipline, and I want to reward students who meet their responsibility to turn in assignments when they are due. To be fair to these students, I will deduct credit for assignments turned in late. I will grant submission extensions under some circumstances, if you let me know at least a week in advance. Please give me documentation if there is a medical or other emergency situation for which you are requesting an exception to this policy.

Writing improvement

To help you improve your performance on writing assignments, I may request that you seek tutoring at The Writing Centre, located in the McPherson Library. If I request this of you, please supply documentation of your visit there.

Course participation and attendance

Your active participation in class discussions represents an important contribution to your own development of ideas. When you ask a question or answer one, you are contributing to the intellectual growth of all the students

in the class. I take very seriously the efforts of students who enrich discussion by offering their own views in class, and I reward such efforts in the participation portion of the final grade. Attendance is a vital part of participation, and so I ask that you attend all classes for this course. I understand, however, that there will be rare occasions when you cannot attend class for personal reasons. More than four absences during the semester will compromise your participation and I will note this in your participation mark. If you must be absent for more than four classes due to medical or other emergency reasons, please bring documentation of these issues.

Learning environment

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing, and protecting a positive, supportive, and safe working and learning environment for all its members. We, students and faculty members, are all expected to adhere to the UVic human rights policy. Please let me know if something is going on in the classroom that makes you feel personally uncomfortable.

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is a sign of your interest in helping to build and support an intellectual community. Please be aware of and adhere to the UVic academic integrity policy (<http://bit.ly/plisla>). Using someone else’s ideas or writing without attribution (plagiarism), cheating, multiple submission, or other forms of academic dishonesty may result in a student’s receiving a failing grade for the course and further sanctions by the University. You can easily avoid plagiarism by putting any material taken from another person’s writing in quotation marks and by acknowledging the source of any ideas or information you are paraphrasing. I may submit student writing assignments to TurnItIn.com for an originality review.

Computers in the classroom

I have found that computer use during class is often a source of distraction. If you feel you must use a computer in class, please refrain from using it for any activity not directly related to class.

About me

It may be helpful for you to know a little about me. I am American-born and did my graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, in Comparative Literature. My MA focused on the Enlightenment French *philosophes*, Rousseau and Diderot. My PhD dissertation was a comparison of the writing of two late-modernist/postmodernist writers, Aharon Appelfeld, an Israeli author who writes in Hebrew, and Edouard Glissant, a francophone writer from Martinique. I have since continued to work in both Caribbean and Jewish studies, writing about the francophone and, increasingly, the anglophone Caribbean, as well as about Hebrew literature and Middle Eastern topics. I am fascinated by the intertextual dialogue and rivalries between literary movements and eras, and by the ways that one generation departs from, or reformulates, what it construes as the dominant model of the former one. I am also interested in small societies, and especially those where the memory of a collective traumatic past becomes part of the larger cultural and political discourse. I am currently working on a research project on Glissant, and I am gathering materials for a prospective project on a young Jamaican poet, Millicent Graham. I have a side interest in film and semiotic theory, which was the focus of my undergraduate degree at Brown University. Just so you'll know, I have a newborn son, our first child, who I expect will someday understand why I must spend so much time at the university during his infancy!

Schedule of assignments

Please read the assigned material before the due date and be prepared to discuss it.

Wednesday, September 7

Introduction

Thursday, September 8

Charles Baudelaire, poems from *Fleurs du mal* [Flowers of Evil] (1857): “To the Reader,” “The Albatross,” “To a Passer-By,” “A Carcass” (practa.com > handouts)

Monday, September 12

Manifestos:

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909), pp. 22-25.

André Breton, “The Surrealist Manifesto” (1924), excerpt, pp. 28-32.

Wednesday, September 14

Mina Loy, “Feminist Manifesto” (1918), 34-36.

Oswald de Andrade’s “Cannibalist Manifesto” (1928), 38-43.

In class film: Salvador Dali, *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).

Thursday, September 15

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), pp. 61-74.

Monday, September 19

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 74-93.

Wednesday, September 21

Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 93-115.

Thursday, September 22

James Joyce, “Araby,” in *The Dubliners* (1914), 142-45.

Monday, September 26

James Joyce, “The Dead,” in *The Dubliners*, 146-59.

Wednesday, September 28

James Joyce, “The Dead” (160-76).

Thursday, September 29

Class cancelled.

Monday, October 3

William Butler Yeats, “Easter 1916” (1916/19), “The Second Coming” (1919), “Sailing to Byzantium” (1928), 301-7.

Wednesday, October 5

Essay 1 due (750 words): Joyce.

Virginia Woolf, “Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street,” from *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), pp. 174-79; “The Lady in the Looking Glass” (1929), pp. 179-82.

Thursday, October 6

Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One’s Own* (1928), excerpts, 194-207.

Monday, October 10

Thanksgiving Day

Wednesday, October 12

T. S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1920), 221-24.

Thursday, October 13

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922), 224-29.

Monday, October 17

Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 229-37.

Wednesday, October 19

Franz Kafka, “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk” (1924), 12 pp. (prata.com > handouts)

Thursday, October 20

In class essay.

Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land* (1936/1947), 591-617.

Monday, October 24

Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to My Native Land*, 591-617.

Wednesday, October 26

Ezra Pound, "In a Station of the Metro" (1913); Canto XLV: "With Usura" (1937) (practa.com > handouts).

Thursday, October 27

Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (1957), 435-451.

Monday, October 31

Beckett, *Endgame*, 452-469.

Wednesday, November 2

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), first half (practa.com > handouts).

Thursday, November 3

Benjamin, "The Work of Art..." last half (practa.com > handouts).

Monday, November 7

Essay 2 due (1200 words): Césaire or Beckett.

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), "Introduction," pp. 5-12.

Wednesday, November 9

Reading Break.

Thursday, November 10

Reading Break.

Monday, November 14

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 15-56.

Wednesday, November 16

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 59-97.

Thursday, November 17

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 98-136.

Monday, November 21

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, 136-171.

Wednesday, November 23

La Jetée (1962), dir. Chris Marker.

Thursday, November 24

Discussion of *La Jetée*.

Monday, November 28

Gerald Vizenor, "Ice Tricksters" and "Shadows," in *Landfill Meditation: Crossblood Stories* (1991), 644-57.

Wednesday, November 30

Salman Rushdie, "Chekov and Zulu," in *East/West* (1994), 957-66.

Thursday, December 1

Exam preparation and course wrap-up.