

ENGLISH 253--SEMINAR IN PERIODS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

Fall 2013: San Jose State University, Thursdays, 1600-1845, in Clark 129

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Course Title: "American Modernism: Jazz, Harlem, Imagism, Film."

Code: 48536

Format: Seminar/discussion, presentations.

Website: <https://sites.google.com/a/sjsu.edu/english-253/>

Course Description:

“Modernism” alludes to a period occurring mainly between the two World Wars (1914 to 1940, though sometimes as late as 1950). If Modernism revolted against Realism, it also embraced technology and urban culture, including film, jazz, and psychology. Modernist poetics drew from the psychology of James, Freud and Bergson, making prose and poetry emulate the flow of human consciousness—its most extreme forms included Surrealism. American Modernists were influenced by the work of French, Italian, Irish, and English writers, filmmakers, painters, etc., particularly Gide, Camus, Cocteau, Dali, Picasso, Rimbaud, Marinetti, Joyce, Yeats, Shaw, and Woolf. While Modernism generally was international and even cosmopolitan, American Modernism was more locally inflected. English 253 attempts to help develop the student’s appreciation for this rich, tumultuous period while also enhancing the sense of what may—and what may not—clearly define any literary period.

Required Texts and Recordings:

Blaisdell, *Imagist Poetry: An Anthology*.

Čapek, *R.U.R.: Rossum’s Universal Robots*.

Cummings, Poems selected by the instructor and provided to you.

Eliot, *Prufrock and Other Observations* and *The Waste Land*. (Choose your own editions.)

Fisher, *The Conjure-Man Dies*.

Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age*.

-----, *This Side of Paradise*.

Hughes, *Collected Poems*.

-----, *The Weary Blues* (Recording provided for you.)

Sitwell and Walton, *Façade* (1918-22). (Provided for you.)

Stein, *Three Lives & Tender Buttons*.

Toomer, *Cane*.

Selected Useful Texts:

Douglass, Paul, and Fred Burwick, eds. *The Crisis in Modernism: Bergson and the Vitalist Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992; repr. 2010.

Gillies, Mary Ann, and Aurelea Mahood. *Modernist Literature: An Introduction*. Edinburgh:

- Edinburgh UP, 2007.
 Hoffman, Michael J., and Patrick D. Murphy, eds. *Critical Essays on American Modernism*.
 New York: G.K. Hall, 1992.
 Levenson, Michael. *A Genealogy of Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
 Miller, Tyrus. *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts Between the World Wars*.
 Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.

Selected Useful Websites:

- Journal of the Cummings Society: <http://faculty.gvsu.edu/webster/cummings/>
 Sitwell and Walton, *Façade* (1918-22): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5AIUOJs2dI>
[Don Pasquito Recreation \(Jon Flynn\)](#)
[Jazz Poetry Site \(U Minnesota\)](#)
[The Modernism Lab at Yale](#)
[The Waste Land](#)
[All American: Glossary of Literary Terms \(U N. Carolina, Pembroke\)](#)
[The Virtual Classroom Glossary of Literary Terms \(Cambridge U\)](#)
[Glossary of Literary Theory \(U of Toronto\)](#)
[Lewis's & Pound's Blast! -- Review of the Great English Vortex \(U of Illinois\)](#)
[Blast!: The Complete First Issue \(1914\) Modernist Journals Project \(Brown U & U of Tulsa\)](#)
[Blast!: War Issue: The Complete Second Issue \(1915\)](#)
[Paul Hindemith: Suite 1922 \(op. 26\)](#)
[Schoenberg: Variations for Orchestra Op 31 \(1934\)](#)

Grading and Written Work:

The purposes of assigned reading and writing in English 253 is to help you think creatively and improve your understanding, writing skills, and oral abilities. The MA Program have student learning outcomes (SLOs), which are related to the assignments below ([view SLOs](#)). Your course grade will be weighted in this manner:

Exercise in Criticism	20%	[SLOs 1, 3, 4]
Background Report (Oral Presentation and Handout)	10%	[SLO 6]
Reading Responses & Participation	20%	[SLOs 3, 7]
Film Club	10%	[SLO 6, 7]
Seminar Paper (14-18 pp.) (Prospectus, Draft, Final Copy)	40%	[SLOs 2, 3, 4]

I will certainly work with you when you have a schedule problem, but please make arrangements in advance. Late work may be lowered one full grade. [Statements on Department Grading Policy and Academic Integrity](#).

University Policy: Credit Hours:

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours per the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

Description of Assignments:

1. **Exercise in Criticism:** A 2-4 page typed report assessing a significant book, book

chapter, or journal article that deals with an issue relating to the course theme. Submit in electronic form.

2. **Background Report, Oral and in Writing:** Make a presentation on the background of one of the authors assigned, offering a critical perspective supported by secondary source(s). The presentation is meant to serve as a prompt for discussion. Prepare a bibliography and any other appropriate items: chronology, pictures, charts, family trees, outlines, quotations, key terms, CD or cassette recordings, transparencies. Oral Report Length: 10-15 minutes. *Please* observe the time limit. If your handouts are extensive, you will not be able to cover everything in detail. *Please avoid simply reading what is on your handout.* Describe it, explain it, walk us through it quickly, but don't simply read a text. The oral report should be a demonstration of your mastery of the material through extemporaneous (however thoroughly planned) speech. Sign up for a date to make your presentation.

3. **Reading Responses & Participation:** Each week, on or before the day *before* class, [VISIT COURSE BLOG](#) and write a response to the instructor's post, or to someone else's comment. In class, find opportunities to contribute to the discussion and demonstrate understanding of the text. Try to find a way to make one original contribution to the course (in class or via the website) during the semester.

4. **Seminar Paper:** on a topic relating to the Jazz Age in/and American literature. You must address one or more significant literary texts in 14-20 pages, with an appropriate bibliography (normally, at least ten items). Follow the *MLA Handbook*, 7th ed. *Written prospectus, including bibliography, and rough draft required.* n.b.: one item in your bibliography should be an article in the language you have chosen to fulfill the degree foreign language requirement.

5. **Film Club:** Agree with at least one other class member to watch two films from the list below (or other films that you submit for approval to the instructor). Most of these films are available through Netflix. Submit a brief written report on your experience, discussing your fresh understanding of the nature of film and story-telling in the Jazz Age. On the day the film club meets, attempt to present a short clip from your film illustrating an observation you make in your report.

Some Film Club Possibilities:

- D.W. Griffith, *Birth of a Nation* (1915).
- D.W. Griffith, *Way Down East* (1920).
- Cecil B. DeMille, *The Cheat* (1915).
- D.W. Griffith, *Broken Blossoms* (1919).
- Cecil B. DeMille, *Don't Change Your Husband* (1919).
- Cecil B. DeMille, *The Affairs of Anatole* (1921).
- Wesley Ruggles, *The Plastic Age* (1925).
- Wesley Ruggles, *The Show-off* (1926).
- Bruckman & Keaton, *The General* (1926).
- Clarence Badger, "It" (1927).
- Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927).
- Remarque and Milestone, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930).
- Cocteau, *The Blood of a Poet (Le Sang d'un Poète)* (1930).
- Bunuel and Dali, *L'Age d'or* (1930)

ENGLISH 253: CALENDAR

Fall 2013

- Aug. 22: Introduction to the Course. Melies, film clips. BLAST! Satie, Schoenberg.
Aug. 29: Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914) and *Three Lives* (1909).
Sept. 5: Blaisdell, *Imagist Poetry*: Crapsey, H.D., Lowell, Pound, Stevens, Williams.
Sept. 12: Eliot, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917).
Sitwell and Walton, *Façade* (1918-22).
Sept. 19: *The Waste Land* (1922).
Sept. 26: Toomer, *Cane* (1923).
****Seminar Paper Prospectus (Proposal) Due****
Oct. 3: Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (1920).
Oct. 10: Film Club Meetings and General Discussion.
****Exercise in Criticism Due****
Oct. 17: No class: Spring Recess.
Oct. 24: Cummings, “The Creative Process” (pre-1920), “Cubist Break-up” (pre-1920),
and “(im)c-a-t(mo).” (provided to you).
Oct. 31: Fitzgerald, *Tales of the Jazz Age* (1922).
Nov. 7: Hughes, *The Weary Blues* (1926) and other poetry
Nov. 14: Hughes, *Collected Poems*, and Hurston and Still, *Caribbean Suite* (1941): Blues
and Calypso.
****Draft of Seminar Paper Due**** General Discussion of Seminar Papers.
Nov. 21: Fisher, *The Conjure Man Dies* (1932).
Nov. 28: Thanksgiving Break: No Class Meeting
Dec. 5: Last Class Meeting.
Recommended: Dec. 6, Ken Burns, Morris Dailey Auditorium, 7:00 PM.
Dec. 17: ****Seminar Paper Due****