Modernism, Experimentation and Form

Seminar 1

What is Modernism?

Tutor: Dr Ulrika Maude

Literary Modernism is characterised by dazzling experimentation, perplexing narrative and poetic form and often contradictory aesthetic and ideological tendencies. The desire to ‘Make it new!’ is combined with a nostalgic yearning for a lost and at times primitive past; the admiration and fetishization of technology and science is paired with a suspicion of their dehumanising threat, and while Modernist writing is often politically and sexually radical, it also frequently expresses a fascination with totalitarian ideologies.

This inaugural seminar will ask what it means to be modern, and how the term modernism should be understood.

Reading List

Charles Baudelaire, ‘The Painter of Modern Life’ (1859-60) [Selected passages of this essay will be made available through e-reserves]

Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1936) [Selected passages of the essay will be available through e-reserves]


Virginia Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’ [Extracts will be made available through e-reserves]


****
Seminar 2

Early Modernism: Joyce and Mansfield

Tutor: Dr Ulrika Maude

In this seminar, we will discuss James Joyce’s early short story sequence, *Dubliners* (1914), and Katherine Mansfield’s impressionist prose, and analyze the formal and thematic characteristics of early modernism.

Reading List


****

Seminar 3

High Modernism: T. S. Eliot

Tutor: Professor Andrew Bennett

Please read widely in T.S. Eliot’s collected poems. In the seminar, we are likely to focus on some of the early poems (‘The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock’, ‘Portrait of a Lady’, ‘Gerontion’) and, in particular, on *The Waste Land*.

Reading List


****
Seminar 4

High Modernism: Virginia Woolf

Tutor: Dr Ulrika Maude

In this seminar, we will focus on Woolf’s essay, ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’ (1927) and her most radically-experimental novel, The Waves (1931), which leads the reader to ‘the world that lies submerged in our unconscious being’.

Reading List

Virginia Woolf, ‘Street Haunting: A London Adventure’ [This essay will be made available through e-reserves]


****

Week 5

How to Write an Essay?

****

Week 6

Reading Week

****

Week 7

Modernist Poetry and the Object

Tutor: Dr Andrew Blades

Many of the ‘isms’ associated with modernist poetry – imagism and objectivism especially – sought to renegotiate the way we write the relationship between subject and object. This seminar will focus on some key poems by Moore, Stevens, Pound and Williams, asking how they study and ‘know’ objects through their poetry.

Reading List

Ezra Pound, ‘The Encounter’, ‘In a Station of the Metro’, ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley’, in

Wallace Stevens, ‘Metaphors of a Magnifico’, ‘Valley Candle’, ‘Of the surface of things’,
‘Anecdote of the jar’, ‘Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird’, ‘The American


****

**Week 8**

*Gender and Modernism: Stein, H.D., Rukeyser, Brooks*

Tutor: Dr Rowena Kennedy-Epstein

Exploring the relationships between modernist experimentation and gender politics, this
seminar will focus on four long poems by women writers: Gertrude Stein’s ‘History or
Messages from History’, H.D.’s ‘Trilogy’, Muriel Rukeyser’s ‘The Book of the Dead’, and
Gwendolyn Brooks’s ‘Annie Allen’.

**Reading List**

Berkeley: UC Press, 2008 (Copies will be made available).


Kaufman and Herzog. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006. (Copies will be
made available).

****
Week 9

Late Modernism: Samuel Beckett

Tutor: Dr Ulrika Maude

Beckett wrote his four novellas, *The Expelled, The Calmative, The End* and *First Love* in the final months of 1946, in the wake of the Second World War. They are the first texts he originally composed in French, and later (himself) translated into English. They inaugurate what is often called ‘Beckett’s mature style’, which has become synonymous with late modernism.

**Reading List**


****

**General Reading**


