Twentieth-Century Fiction I
http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~ag978/355

MTH 3 (Mondays and Thursdays, 11:30 a.m.–12:50 p.m.) in Murray 213
Professor: Andrew Goldstone (andrew.goldstone@rutgers.edu, Murray 031)
CA: Octavio R. Gonzalez (octavio@eden.rutgers.edu, Murray 036B)
Office hours: Mondays 2:30–4:30 (AG), Thursdays 1:15–2:30 (ORG), or by appointment

Course description

This course is a study of novels and stories drawn from the English-language literatures of the first half of the twentieth century. The goal of the course is to understand the many ways of being modern that the fiction of this period pursued, learning why “modernity” and “modernism” are powerful but problematic conceptual frames for approaching this epoch of literary history. Our readings will be clustered around five overlapping themes: the celebration of the aesthetic, race in global context, small- and large-scale violence, the social real, and cosmopolitan culture.

Though the enormous breadth of the production of fiction in English in this period makes any comprehensive survey inconceivable, the readings are chosen to indicate the range of that production. It is the argument of the course that this range—this diversity, in all senses, stylistic, thematic, generic, geographic, socioeconomic—is the most important fact about the fiction of this period. We will read fictions from the U.S., England, Ireland, and India; we will read avant-garde writing aimed at a self-consciously élite audience and genre fiction shooting for bestseller status; novels that document social and political conflict and novels that reject documentation altogether; texts with a global horizon and texts with a scrupulously local purview.

The format of the class will be mixed lecture and discussion. Normally each eighty-minute period will have two mini-lectures, each followed by small group discussion, during which the instructors will visit several groups.

Learning goals

1. Develop the skills of interpreting and explaining individual fictions in the context of a range of historical possibilities.

2. Be able to discuss critically the way each of the course texts participates in early-twentieth-century history.

3. Understand the concepts of “modernism” and “modernity” and join the academic conversation about how those concepts fit or fail to fit the fictions we study.

4. Gain a substantial knowledge of early-twentieth-century fiction in English through broad reading.
Requirements and grading

5% Participation in class

This class emphasizes active learning. Since every class session will require you to discuss the readings with your peers and with the instructors, attendance and participation are required. You will be graded according to whether you come to class, on time, with the reading done and the texts in hand; during the small group discussions, instructors will visit groups and take careful note of who is contributing thoughtfully and actively. Disruptive behavior during either lecture or discussion—including non-class use of computers or phones, inappropriate talking, multiple or group bathroom breaks, loud eating—harms everyone’s learning and will damage your participation mark.

All this is meant to encourage you to engage seriously with the ideas and ways of thinking we are developing in this course. You aren’t supposed to know all the answers in advance—but you are required to make your best effort to figure things out as we go along, and to work with your classmates to help them do so as well.

5% Regular informal writing assignments

The other aspect of course participation consists in informal writing outside of class. Every week each student will add to an electronic commonplace book; occasionally further analytic writing, on the basis of your own or others’ commonplace-book entries, will also be required and graded on a pass-fail basis. Each student will also be required to visit either the professor or the CA in office hours at least once during the term.

30% Paper 1 (5–7 pp.)

An interpretive essay making an argument about one text by James, Conrad, or Stein. Choice of topics distributed in advance.

30% Paper 2 (5–7 pp.)

An interpretive essay making an argument about one text by Joyce, Sayers, Hemingway, Woolf, Faulkner, or Hurston. Choice of topics distributed in advance.

30% Take-home final

Essay questions, open book, no collaboration. Two comparative questions covering the whole course and one question emphasizing Anand, Hurston, Barnes, and Narayan.

Grading standards

N.B. You cannot pass the course unless you complete both papers and the take-home final.
Grades will be given on the four-point scale as specified in the Undergraduate Catalog. For the purpose of converting the final numerical mark to a letter, the equivalents specified in the Catalog will be considered to be the maxima of intervals open on the left and closed on the right. Thus A corresponds to scores strictly greater than 3.5 and less than or equal to 4.0, B+ to scores greater than 3.0 and less than or equal to 3.5, B to scores greater than 2.5 and less than or equal to 3.0, and so on. Final grades will not be normalized to fit any particular distribution or “curve.” The general standards for grades are as follows; numerical equivalents use the mathematical notation for an interval which does not include its lower end but does include its upper end:

A range (3.5, 4.0]: Outstanding. The student's work demonstrates thorough mastery of course materials and skills.

B range (2.5, 3.5]: Good. The student's work demonstrates serious engagement with all aspects of the course but incomplete mastery of course materials and skills.

C range (1.5, 2.5]: Satisfactory. The student's work satisfies requirements but shows significant problems or major gaps in mastery of course material.

D (0.5, 1.5]: Poor or minimal pass. The student completes the basic course requirements, but the student's work is frequently unsatisfactory in several major areas.

F [0, 0.5]: Failure. Student has not completed all course requirements or turns in consistently unsatisfactory work.

Academic integrity

Students and instructors have a duty to each other and to our community to abide by norms of academic honesty and responsibility. To present something as your own original writing when it is not is plagiarism. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating are serious violations of trust. Academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, will have severe consequences, in accordance with the University Policy on Academic Integrity and the Code of Student Conduct. For details about the University's academic integrity policies, please see academicintegrity.rutgers.edu.

Students with disabilities

All reasonable accommodation will be given to students with disabilities. Students who may require accommodation should speak with the professor at the start of the semester. For more information, please consult the Office of Disability Services on the web at disabilityservices.rutgers.edu or by phone at 848-445-6800.

Readings

Print readings are available at Barnes & Noble; you are free to acquire them elsewhere. I have given ISBN numbers of the editions I ordered so that you can search for the books on amazon or elsewhere. Other editions from reputable publishers are normally fine for study, but please e-mail
me to make sure.

All books will also be available on reserve at Alexander Library.

Some reading selections will be available through the course Sakai site.

Many of our course texts can also be found in free online versions. In general the book versions are much preferable, but in some cases online texts can be acceptable (though usually worse for study). This matter will be discussed at the first class meeting; see also the explanatory page about online texts on the course website.

N.B. Clickable links to online texts are embedded in the PDF and website versions of this syllabus.


Schedule

Week 1

**Thursday, September 6.**

Introduction. What happened in fiction in English between 1900 and 1950?
Course requirements and grading.
Explanation of the “commonplace book” assignment.
Approaches to the reading in this course.

**Week 2**

*(Sunday, September 9.)*

Make a first commonplace book entry by 5 p.m.

**Monday, September 10.**

“Fiction” and aestheticism.
Henry James, “The Art of Fiction,” in *Major Stories & Essays* or in *Partial Portraits* (online text).
Oscar Wilde, “The Decay of Lying,” in *Intentions*. Online texts: Scan of early edition or (harder to read) text in Literature Online.

**Thursday, September 13.**

What could it mean to be “modern”?
Week 3

Monday, September 17.

James: realism or its aftermath.
Henry James, “The Beast in the Jungle” (1903), in Major Stories or in The Better Sort (online text).
Make a second commonplace book entry.

Thursday, September 20.

Conrad: writerly craft, imperial know-how.
Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1899). Oxford ed. or in Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories (online text).

Week 4

Monday, September 24.

Stein (1): what makes a modernist text difficult.
Focus on the first half for today.
Ungraded assignment: commonplace to analysis.
Paper 1 topics distributed: James, Conrad, or Stein.

Thursday, September 27.

Stein (2): Race and the dialect of modern writing.
Stein, “Melanctha,” continued.

Week 5

Monday, October 1.

Joyce (1): artistic childhood; colonial childhood.
Read chapters 1 and 2.
Commonplace.

Thursday, October 4.

Joyce (2): orchestrating discourses.
Joyce, Portrait. Read chapters 3 and 4.
Comment on someone else’s commonplace entry.
Week 6

Monday, October 8.
Joyce (3): epiphany and routine.
Joyce, Portrait. Focus on chapter 4.
Paper 1 due.

Thursday, October 11.
Joyce (4): structure and arrested development. Exile?
Joyce, Portrait. Finish the novel.
(Very optional—what Joyce did after Portrait: read chapter 4 of Ulysses. Online texts: a scan of the first ed. or of the earlier magazine publication in the Little Review.)

Week 7

Monday, October 15.
Not modernism: a detective novel.
Commonplace.

Thursday, October 18.
Hemingway: craft, masculinity, the postwar.
Commonplace.

Week 8


Woolf (1).
Focus on the first half of the novel, up through the tolling of twelve o’clock (p. 94).
Commonplace.

Thursday, October 25.
Woolf (2): sensation, gender, the postwar.
Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway. Read the whole novel.
Week 9

Monday, October 29.

Class cancelled due to campus Weather Alert.
Woolf (3): modernity again. Woolf and Sayers compared.
Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.
Woolf, “Modern Fiction.” Look at this essay again.
Comment on someone else’s commonplace entry.

Thursday, November 1.

Woolf (4): Modernity again, again.
Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*.
Optional: Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, chap. 1. Reading on Sakai.
Optional: Alex Zwerdling, “Mrs. Dalloway and the Social System,” *PMLA* 92, no. 1 (January 1977): 69-82 (online via JSTOR; proxy link for off-campus access).

Week 10

Monday, November 5.

Focus on the first half, through Tull’s chapter beginning “When I told Cora how Darl jumped out of the wagon.”
Commonplace.

Thursday, November 8.

Faulkner (2): the grotesque; the significance of regionalism.
**Paper 2 topics distributed: Joyce through Hurston.**
Commonplacing and attendance amnesty for this week.

Week 11

Monday, November 12.

Anand (1): Indian writing in English; comparative colonial fiction; dialect of modern writing again.

**Commonplace.**

**Thursday, November 15.**


(Recommended: begin reading Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.)

**Ungraded blogging assignment on style:** Faulkner.

**Week 12**

**Monday, November 19.**


**Tuesday, November 20 (Thursday classes meet today).**

**Double feature:** Gonzalez and Goldstone.

Hurston (2): Respectability and gender.

Hurston, *Their Eyes*. Focus on the first half (through p. 99).

(Thursday, November 22. *Thanksgiving recess.*)

**Week 13**

**Monday, November 26.**

Hurston (3): Play, work, love.

Hurston, *Their Eyes*. The whole novel.

**Paper 2 due.**

**Thursday, November 29.**


**Ungraded assignment:** make a historical line.

**Week 14**

**Monday, December 3.**

Barnes (2): Queer narrative, style, community.

Commonplace.

Thursday, December 7.

R.K. Narayan, *Malgudi Days* (selections). Please read in the following order, which tracks the order of publication rather than the order Narayan chose much later for the collection:

1. “Father’s Help” (66–72) (1942)
2. “Out of Business” (91–96) (1942)
3. “Attila” (97–101) (1942)
5. “Forty-five a Month” (85–90) (1943)
6. “Engine Trouble” (78–84) (1943)

You may read in the Penguin or in the text provided in the course website (which, however, does not have “Lawley Road,” which is assigned for next time).

Week 15

Monday, December 10.

Narayan (2): Realism, or, the failed modernist revolution.
Narayan, *Malgudi Days* (further selections, reading order):

1. “Iswaran” (53–60) (1944)
2. “Fellow-Feeling” (40–46) (1944)
3. “Gateman’s Gift” (26–33) (1944)
4. “An Astrologer’s Day” (9–13) (1944)
7. “Lawley Road” (111–17) (1956)

Commonplace.
Thursday, December 13. Reading day; no class.

Optional: review all entries in your commonplace book. Make a historical line linking at least five of those entries.

(December 14–21. Exam period.)

Monday, December 17

Take-home final distributed. Spend no more than six hours.

Thursday, December 20.

Take-home final due by 3 p.m. Submit via Sakai Drop Box.

Acknowledgments

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