

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)

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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 elite 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.

Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. London: Penguin, 1935. ISBN 9780140183955.

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953. Excerpt online on course website.

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood*. New York: Norton, 2006. ISBN 9780811216715.

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984. Excerpt on course website.

Casanova, Pascale. *The World Republic of Letters*. Trans. M.B. DeBevoise. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004. Excerpt on course website.

Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Oxford ed. or in *Youth: A Narrative; and Two Other Stories* ([online text](#)). ISBN 9780199536016.

Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. New York: Vintage, 1990. ISBN 9780679732259. Alternative edition: New York, Norton, 2009. ISBN 9780393931389.

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time*. New York: Scribner, 1996. ISBN 9780684822761. Excerpts.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 9780061120060.

James, Henry. "The Art of Fiction." In *Major Stories & Essays*. New York: Library of America, 1999. ISBN 9781883011758. Or online in [Partial Portraits \(Internet Archive\)](#).

James, Henry. "The Beast in the Jungle." In *Major Stories & Essays*. Or online in [The Better Sort \(Internet Archive\)](#).

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Edited by Jeri Johnson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. The least bad (still very bad) free text is [a Google Books scan of the 1918 printing of the Huebsch ed.](#)

Narayan, R.K. *Malgudi Days*. New York: Penguin, 2006. ISBN 9780143039655. Selections. Or online on course website.

Sayers, Dorothy. *Whose Body?* Rpt. New York: Dover, 2009. ISBN 9780486473628.

Stein, Gertrude. "Melanctha." In *Three Lives*. Rpt. New York: Dover, 1994. ISBN 9780486280592. Or [online \(Internet Archive\)](#).

Wilde, Oscar. "The Decay of Lying." In *Intentions*. Online texts: [Scan of early edition](#) or [Literature Online via Rutgers Library](#).

Wilson, Edmund. *Axel's Castle: A Study of the Imaginative Literature of 1870–1930*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004. Excerpt on course website.

Woolf, Virginia. "Modern Fiction." In *The Common Reader*. Text on course website.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. San Diego: Harcourt, 1925. ISBN 9780156628709.

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"?

Woolf, "Modern Fiction" (1919). In *The Common Reader* (1925). Library reserve or [online text](#).

Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle*, 3–4, 10–11, 14–21, 211–14, 225–36. Excerpt on course website.

Peter Bürger, "Theory of the Avant-Garde," 47–54. Excerpt on course website.

Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, 91–96. Excerpt on course website.

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.

Stein, "Melanctha," in *Three Lives* (1909). Dover ed. or [online text](#).

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.

James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Oxford ed.; digital **not** recommended.

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.

Dorothy Sayers, *Whose Body?* (1923). Dover or Harper ed.

Commonplace.

Thursday, October 18.

Hemingway: craft, masculinity, the postwar.

Hemingway, “Big Two-Hearted River” and interchapters in *In Our Time* (1925). Scribner ed.

Commonplace.

Week 8**Monday, October 22. Guest lecture: Octavio Gonzalez.**

Woolf (1).

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). Harcourt ed.

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*.

Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 525–53. Reading on Sakai.

Jennifer Wicke, "Mrs. Dalloway Goes to Market: Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets," *Novel* 28, no. 1 (Autumn 1994): 5–23 (online via [JSTOR](#); [proxy link for off-campus access](#)).

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.**

Faulkner (1): multiple perspectives and social status.

Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Vintage ed. (or Norton Critical ed.).

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.

Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*. Read the whole novel.

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.

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable* (1935). Penguin ed. Read the whole novel.
Commonplace.

Thursday, November 15.

Anand (2): Consciousness and status revisited; the social problem novel.
Anand, *Untouchable*, continued.

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

Ungraded blogging assignment on style: Faulkner.

Week 12

Monday, November 19.

Hurston (1): Harlem Renaissance (late phase); dialect of modern writing once more.
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). HarperCollins ed. Focus on the first five chapters (through p. 50).

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.

Barnes (1): Expatriation and the interwar period.

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1937). Focus on the first half, through “The Squatter” (3–83).

Ungraded assignment: make a historical line.

Week 14

Monday, December 3.

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

Barnes, *Nightwood*. The whole novel.

Commonplace.**Thursday, December 7.**

Narayan (1): Indian English writing: another path.

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)
4. "The Axe" (102–7) (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)
5. "The Doctor's Word" (21–25) (1944)
6. "The Missing Mail" (14–20) (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

Thanks to Marianne DeKoven for suggestions and a model syllabus.

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