

Author, Reader, Field **Literary Sociologies of Modernism and the Twentieth Century**

<http://arf.blogs.rutgers.edu>

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Thursdays 1:10-4:00 p.m. in Murray 207

Office hours: Mondays 2:30-4:30 p.m. in Murray 031

Overview

The sociological study of literary practices—reading, writing, and circulation—has become one of the most important areas of new work in the last decade of literary studies. Though such approaches have ranged widely, recent work in this vein has, despite the presentist trend of social science in general, been particularly interested in modernism. Indeed, the most important sociological theory of literature, that of Pierre Bourdieu, is nothing other than a theory of modernism. This course proposes to explore the conjunction of sociological method and modernist literature as more than a coincidence. We will read key recent works in literary sociology, but we will also return to imaginative writings of the early twentieth century to see how they demand, and sometimes anticipate, an analysis in terms of institutions, organizations, hierarchies of power and status, symbolic interactions, classes, and fields of relation.

The aim of the course is not, however, primarily to offer a “reading” of modernism in terms of “social” themes but to facilitate students’ own sociologically-informed work on literature. The so-called “modernist period” is only a case study, and we will reflect on the ways in which the prominence of modernism in literary-sociological work—particularly in the Bourdieuean tradition—may be a limitation. Reading beyond canonical modernism, we will challenge and extend literary sociology’s treatment of nation, race, cultural capital, and readership.

Instead of attempting a comprehensive survey of approaches, this course focuses on three particularly active and productive areas of inquiry in turn: the author as an agent in a field of relations, the institutional forms of world literature, and the development of stratified reading publics. The reading for each unit includes extensive theoretical and secondary sources as well as primary texts. This course fulfills the graduate program’s A5 distributional requirement (Twentieth-Century Studies).

Learning Goals

1. Become fully conversant with current scholarly accounts of early-twentieth-century literature informed by sociology.
2. Analyze key works from multiple early-twentieth-century literatures in English.
3. Engage critically with several major methodological strands in the sociology of literature.
4. Develop a foundation for doing original research in sociology of literature through:
 - a. writing interpretively about literary texts, making critical use of relevant theory;
 - b. researching and presenting a pilot project on a sociology-of-literature model.

Requirements

Because this course aims to introduce methodologies which many students will not have encountered, the course does not require an article-length seminar paper. It rather seeks to lay the foundation for article- (or book-) length work that makes serious use of sociological theories and methods. There will be two shorter assignments:

1. A critical essay, of conference-paper length (8–10 pp.), on one literary text or several texts, informed by sociological theory.
2. A presentation (20 mins.) of a pilot project, to be given in an end-of-term mini-conference. An initial draft, in the form of a 750-word long abstract, will be due ten days before the conference. The pilot project must *not* be limited to the interpretation of a “major” literary text. Instead, the presentation should demonstrate some preliminary work modeled on one of the literary-sociological approaches discussed in class, and it should point out directions for completing that work in a possible longer project.

Ungraded informal writing, in the form of contributions to a course blog that engages with the scholarly texts of the course, will also be assigned to students in the class on a rotating basis. At least two students will blog for each class. Students will be required to blog at least twice in the semester.

Students are also required to create a free [Zotero](https://www.zotero.org/) account (if they do not already have one) to maintain a bibliography for their research in the course. Other bibliography databases are acceptable, but only Zotero users will be able to add easily to the course’s shared bibliography at www.zotero.org/groups/author_reader_field.

Grading

$$\text{final} = 0.45(\text{essay}) + 0.45(\text{presentation}) + 0.1(\text{participation})$$

All components are graded out of 4.0. Scores greater than 3.5 correspond to the letter grade A (outstanding work), scores greater than 3.0 and less than or equal to 3.5 correspond to B+ (very good, some problems), and scores greater than 2.5 and less than or equal to 3.0 correspond to B. The participation score includes the blogging assignment.

Schedule

In the digital version of this file, [blue](#) text is a hyperlink to an online reading; [violet](#) text is a clickable link to the bibliography entry below.

The Author in the Field

January 24. What is the sociological impulse?

Please read before the first meeting, if possible:

Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, [chap. 1](#).

Lepenies, *Between Literature and Science*, [Introduction and 155–63, 191–95](#).

Frow, “[On Midlevel Concepts](#).”

January 31. Bourdieu.

Complete any remaining readings from last week.

Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, preface, “Prologue,” all of pt. 1, pt. 2, chap. 1, pt. 3, chap. 1.

If you don’t know Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education*, read the summary of the novel (appendix 1 to the prologue) first.

February 7. Applying Bourdieu in England.

Bennett, *The Truth about an Author*.

McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice*, [introduction and chap. 2](#).

Bennett, *The Grand Babylon Hotel*, chap. 1–2, 28. (The rest is optional.)

Bennett, *The Old Wives’ Tale*, preface and book 1, chap. 1§1–2, chap. 4§3. (The rest is optional.)

Woolf, *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown*.

February 14. Joyce and the Irish field?

Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

Gibson, “[Time Drops in Decay](#).”

Joyce, *Ulysses*, “Telemachiad,” “Scylla and Charybdis.” Optional: “Oxen of the Sun.”

Hutton, “[Joyce, the Library Episode, and the Institutions of Revivalism](#).”

February 21. Eliot, at work on the field.

In Eliot, *The Annotated Waste Land*:

The Waste Land.

“The Lesson of Baudelaire.”

“Andrew Marvell.”

“John Dryden.”

“The Metaphysical Poets.”

Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” [pt. 1](#) and [pts. 2–3](#).

Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, [introduction](#) and [chap. 3](#).

February 28. The Harlem Renaissance as a distinctive subfield.

Selections from Locke, *The New Negro*:

Alain Locke, foreword.

Alain Locke, “The New Negro.”

Albert C. Barnes, “Negro Art and America.”

Rudolph Fisher, “The City of Refuge.”

Jean Toomer, “Carma, from *Cane*.”

Jean Toomer, “Fern, from *Cane*.”

Zora Neale Hurston, “Spunk.”

Eric Walrond, “The Palm Porch.”

“Poetry” (all selections, 129–150).

Willis Richardson, *Compromise (A Folk Play)*.

Gwendolyn B. Bennett, “Song.”

Langston Hughes, “Jazzonia.”

Langston Hughes, “Nude Young Dancer.”

Locke, “The Legacy of the Ancestral Arts.”

Paul U. Kellogg, “The Negro Pioneers.”

Melville J. Herskovits, “The Negro’s Americanism.”

W. E. B. DuBois, “The Negro Mind Reaches Out.”

“Who’s Who of the Contributors.”

Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White*, [1–31](#), [125–35](#), [387–400](#), [429–33](#).

Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, [16–25](#).

World Literature as a Sociological Problem

March 7. Casanova. Is world literature modernist?

Casanova, *World Republic of Letters*, xi–xii, 1–44, 82–172, 189–96, 205–12, 254–69, 330–47.
Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*, all paratexts and chap. 1.

March 14. Responses to Casanova: India as example.

Orsini, “India in the Mirror of World Fiction.”

Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature.”

Mufti, “Orientalism and the Institution of World Literatures.”

Optional: Desani, *All About H. Hatterr*, complete.

Optional: selections from Chaudhuri, *The Vintage Book of Modern Indian Literature*: Chaudhuri, “Modernity and the Vernacular”; Tagore, “The Postmaster”; Verma, “Terminal”; Hyder, “Memo-ries of an Indian Childhood”; Anantha Murthy, “A Horse for the Sun.”

(March 15.) Critical essay due.

(March 16–24. Spring recess.)

March 28. Seminar guest: Jim English (Penn). Consecration, globalized and glocalized.

English, *The Economy of Prestige*, introduction, chaps. 3, 8–9, 12–13, appendices A and B.
Nobel prize materials from Nobelprize.org: arf.blogs.rutgers.edu/2013/03/nobel-assignment/.
Jim English will also lecture today in the Modernism and Globalization Seminar Series (4:30 p.m., Plangere Annex).

Reading and Modernity

April 4. Periodicals and publics.

The Modernist Journals Project: arf.blogs.rutgers.edu/2013/03/modernist-periodicals-readings/.

Long and So, “Network Analysis and the Sociology of Modernism” ([preprint online](#)).

Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism*, 84–121.

Optional: Thompson, *The Media and Modernity*, 10–37, 69–80.

Guest bloggers: Hoyt Long and Richard So (University of Chicago).

April 11. Mass readership.

Hull, *The Sheik*, 1–142. The rest is highly recommended but optional.

Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 40–64.

Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 19–51, 86–99 and (optionally) 209–22, and nn.

Griswold, *Regionalism and the Reading Class*, chap. 2.

April 18. Disciplinary reading in and beyond modernism.

Ransom, "The World's Body."

Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, [preface and chap. 3](#).

Selected visualizations of metadata from JSTOR, to be prepared by instructor. Webpage.

Optional: Guillory, "How Scholars Read."

Optional: Radway, *A Feeling for Books*, [1-14](#).

Optional: Brooks, "The Language of Paradox."

(Monday, April 22.) Long abstract of presentation (750 words) due.

The Long Modernist Period**April 25. Modernist sociologies of the later twentieth century.**

McGurl, *The Program Era*, [21-37](#), [56-63](#), [67-69](#), [346-60](#), [409](#).

Thompson, *Merchants of Culture*, [146-68](#), [291-98](#), [386-94](#).

Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*.

Mini-conference

May 2, 11 a.m.-4 p.m., Murray 107

Twenty-minute presentations.

Papers will be grouped in panels and followed by discussion; lead questioners will also be assigned to each paper. Turn in any slides or handouts.

Peter McDonald will lecture on May 2 at 4:30 in Alexander Library.

End-of-term dinner on date TBA.

Blogging

Each week, two students will be assigned to write a response to the secondary readings assigned for that week, completing their postings by 5 p.m. on the Wednesday before we meet to discuss those readings. The rest of the class is required to read these postings before seminar.

The response can be informal, experimental, inconclusive, or polemical, strident, tendentious, or anywhere in between. It should be at least a couple of paragraphs. It can engage with primary texts (assigned or not) as well, but the main purpose of the blog is to think through the arguments and methods proposed by the sociology of literature as we are looking at it in this course. If this engagement occasionally happens via discussions of literary texts as well, so much the better; if it occasionally happens via lolcat, so much the better.

It is my hope that other students will comment on posts and add their own posts whenever inspiration strikes them, even on non-required weeks. But this is by no means an obligation.

As the major assignments near, students may find it helpful to incorporate their thinking about the critical paper or the conference presentation into blog posts.

The blog will be on the public internet. In order to safeguard student privacy, every student will choose a handle under which they will post and comment pseudonymously. It is important that students also use only these handles to refer to one another in the public space of the blog. If you wish to depseudonymize yourself, you may; remember that what you say will then be discoverable by a Google search for your name. You may also elect to explicitly designate a license under which your material is posted (for example: “All posts by SocIt2em are CC-BY-SA SocIt2em 2013”). In addition to copyright, consider the [Creative Commons licenses](#).

The wordpress site for the course is at arf.blogs.rutgers.edu, with hosting graciously provided by Rutgers—Camden Computing Services.

Acknowledgments

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This syllabus is available for duplication or modification for other courses and non-commercial uses under a [CC BY-NC 3.0](#) license. Acknowledgment with attribution is requested.

Readings

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- Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. 1st ed. Translated by Susan Emanuel. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996. ISBN: 9780804726276.
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