

# American Modernism

ENG 604A

Professor Jessica Pressman

Fall 2021

## **Course Description**

Modernism was a phenomenon of creative activity and formal experimentation that crossed oceans, art forms, and disciplines in the early decades of the twentieth century. We are still reckoning its influence: postmodernism, digital modernism, and beyond. This course explores a constellation of texts that challenge categories of genre and nationality to collectively represent modernism, specifically American Modernism. We read texts by such authors as T.S. Eliot, Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, Jean Toomer, and more; we consider the impact of media, technology, and speed on the art of the period; we explore the complex interstices of race, gender, and class in emergent concepts of subject and self. We dive into Modernism and grapple with Ezra Pound's poignant but contradictory dictum about it: "make it new."

*A note on our reading practice:* This class is intended to provide an overview to American Modernism and thus goes for breadth rather than depth. Hence, we will not get a chance to discuss all of the texts assigned for each day. However, you are expected to read and be prepared to discuss them so as to conclude the semester with a sense of the longer, more varied history of our subject. I am also providing an "Additional Critical Reading" list to provide you with a starting point for research and assist those who want more.

## **Learning Outcomes**

In this class, you will

- acquire understanding of seminal texts and concepts of Modernist literature and literary criticism, focused on literature by American writers
- gain familiarity with Modernism as a pivotal period in literary history and interdisciplinary studies
- situate Modernist literature in a global, cultural, and multimedia context
- hone your skills as a critical thinker, listener, and writer by focusing on the development of a thesis statement and the ability to prove it through explication and secondary research

### Administrative Information

Email: jpressman@sdsu.edu *Do not expect a response within 24 hours	Course Website: <a href="https://jessicapressman.com/fall2021-eng604">https://jessicapressman.com/fall2021-eng604</a>
Office: AL 261 Office hours: M 11-12, on Zoom—sign up on Google doc (on our website on Admin/Info page). Additional times and dates by appointment; email me for an appointment.  Zoom meeting room: 943 624 7815	Course Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday 2-3:30  Room: Hepner Hall 150
English Subject Librarian: Markel Tumlin Special Collections Librarian: Anna Culbertson	mtumlin@rohan.sdsu.edu aculbertson@sdsu.edu

**NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change... and probably will change!**

### Our COVID situation:

***Masks are required in the classroom at all times. NO exceptions.***

***\*\*Students who do not adhere to the Covid19 Student Policies or the directives of their faculty will be directed to leave the classroom and will be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities\*\****

- Effective Fall 2021, students who register for face-to-face classes are expected to attend as indicated in the course schedule. Faculty teaching face-to-face courses will not be required to create a new, alternative on-line class as an accommodation for any student.
- Students with medical conditions that would present a COVID-related risk in a face-to-face instructional setting should contact the Student Ability Success Center (<https://sdsu.edu/sasc>) to begin the process of getting support.
- Do not come to campus if you do not feel well. Remain home and monitor your symptoms and seek medical attention as needed.

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### READING

**\*all books available at SDSU bookstore unless otherwise noted\***

### REQUIRED Primary Texts

Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land* (Norton)

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time* (Scribners)

Larsen, Nella. *Passing* (Penguin)  
Locke, Alain. *The New Negro Anthology*  
Toomer, Jean. *Cane* (Norton)  
Stein, Gertrude. *Tender Buttons*  
O'Neill, Eugene. *The Hairy Ape*  
Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Penguin)

Additional (not required) primary texts

Barnes, Djuna. *Nightwood* (1934)  
Cather, Willa. *The Professor's House* (1925)  
Dos Passos, John. *Manhattan Transfer*  
Faulkner, William. *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)  
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby* (1925)  
Williams, William Carlos. *Spring and All* (1923)

Additional (not required) Films:

Chaplin, Charlie (dir.). *Modern Times* (1936)  
Crosland, Alan. (dir). *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

Additional (not required) Critical Reading: for your research

Enda Duffy, *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism* (Duke University Press, 2009)  
Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indiana University Press, 1986)  
especially "The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde--Technology--Mass Culture" and "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other"  
Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Harvard University Press, 1995)  
Susan Stanford Friedman, "Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies" in *Modernism/Modernity* (2006)  
Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918* (Harvard University Press, 1983)  
Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, eds. *The New Modernist Studies Reader: An Anthology of Essential Criticism* (Bloomsbury Press, 2021)

**\*\* on reserve in Love Library**

Michael Levenson, *The Genealogy of Modernism: Study of English Literary Doctrine 1908-1922* (Cambridge University Press, 1986)  
Jerome McGann, *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (Princeton University Press, 1993)  
Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1994)  
Jessica Pressman, *Digital Modernism* (Oxford University Press, 2013), especially the introduction.  
Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (Yale University Press, 1999)  
eds. Douglas Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, *Bad Modernisms* (Duke University Press, 2006)

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## ASSIGNMENTS

Participation 20%

Weekly Blog Posts 25%

Midterm Essay: Short Close Reading 20%

Proposal and Annotated Bibliography for Final Essay 5%

Final Essay Project 30%

### Participation 20%

This is *your* class, and your participation is vital to its success. You must attend *all* class meetings in order to receive full credit for participation. Come to class prepared to discuss the text in depth; this means having read the *entire* text *before* class. I expect you to speak and listen.

- **Your participation grade includes engaging in dialogue in class.** This means speaking and listening actively, attentively, and respectfully. (If you have fear of speaking in public, this seminar is a good place to learn to address that fear. Please come see me early in the term to discuss strategies for dealing with this fear).
- **Your participation grade includes a meeting with the professor.**
- **Your participation grade includes a 5-minute presentation on one of the texts.** This presentation should serve to start the class's conversation for the day. You will point us to a question from the day's reading and to the specific passage in the text that sparked that inquiry for you. Your job is to get the discussion rolling.

### Weekly Blog Posts (25%)

You will write (500 words) blog responses to the reading (any text and any idea/section from that text) *and each provide a comment on a peer's blog each week (due before the next week's class meeting, so before Thursday)*. The goal of the blog posts is to extend the conversation and coverage of the course by allowing you to 1) express, share, and comment upon interests, questions, and concerns related to the readings and also to 2) enable the professor to address and incorporate these topics in that week's meeting. It is also a place to draft ideas and text for use in your essays.

--Blog posts are due *on Monday at 6pm* weekly; **late posts will not receive credit.**

--You will be given an *overall* grade for blog posts, based on completion and content, not a grade for each post. Rubric for grading is available on our website and below.

Your Blog Grade is based on 2-parts: 1) a completion grade, and 2) a content grade.

<b>The completion component of the blog grade</b> requires you to have the following number of posts:	<b>The content component of the blog grade</b> is based on the following grading rubric
A= 11-13 posts B= 8-10 posts C= 6-7 posts	A= Post contains a focused thesis or question and close reading of a passage, B= Post contains a close reading of content but no focused question or thesis

D= 4-5 posts F= 3 or less	C= Post contains no analysis of text (no close reading), just summary and undirected ideas D=Post contains little substantive thinking as content
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### **Midterm Short Close Reading (20%)**

This short (3-4 page) essay is intended to provide a *benchmark* for your writing (and grade), a place to test your thesis and explication skills before the final essay. You can revise one of your blog posts or write new content that demonstrates your ability to 1) develop a thesis, and 2) use a text to support, through textual explication/analysis/close reading, your argument.

*\*\*Late essays are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day late*

### **Final Essay Proposal & Annotated Bibliography (5%)**

In preparation for your final essay project, you will write a short proposal (500-words) *that includes a thesis statement* and an annotated bibliography of 8-10 centrally relevant sources for the essay.

-Information about the proposal and bibliography are available on our website.

*\*\*Late assignment are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day late*

### **Final Essay (30%)**

In this 15-20 page analytical essay, you will explore in-depth one research question raised by our course. You will propose your own essay topic and determine the best way to present, your argument and research. You will conduct and implement scholarly research, secondary sources (at least 3) in your essay.

-Your essay must include **a thesis** that guides the analysis and **textual explication** (close reading) to support it. (We will discuss and practice these analytical skills throughout the semester; informative guides to thesis writing and explication are also available on our website).

**MFA students:** Instead of a 15-20 page analytical essay, you can choose to instead create a work of poetry or fiction inspired by or related to our reading/learning and then write a 10-page analytical explanation of your creative piece. The analytical essay must include **a thesis** that guides the analysis and **textual explication** (close reading) to support it and scholarly research, secondary sources (at least 3) in your essay. You also must submit the formal proposal and annotated bibliography for your project.

-You must *meet with the professor* to discuss your plans for the final essay

-You will *briefly present* your project during the final week of class.

*\*\*Late essays are docked 1/3 of a grade for each day late*

### **Extra Credit (Total of 1%)**

There are multiple ways to earn extra credit in this class, all of which will be listed on our website but include the following:

*\*\*To receive credit for any of these events, you must not only attend but also write a blog post that situates that event (the reading, the literature, the discussion) in the context of our class*

## **READING SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1: Introduction to the course & each other**

August 24: Introduction to the class

August 26: Introductions to each other

-Michael Levenson, preface to *The Genealogy of Modernism: Study of English literary doctrine 1908-1922* (pps. vii-xi)

-Michael Levenson, "Introduction," *Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (pps. 1-8)

### **Week 2: Genealogies: Imagism & Manifestos**

August 31: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti "The Futurist *Manifesto*" (1909)

-excerpts from Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, *Blast 1* (1914)

September 2: Ezra Pound, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste" (1913)

-Ezra Pound, "A Station in the Metro"

-William Carlos Williams, "The Red Wheelbarrow," "The Great Figure"

-H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), "Oread," "Hermes of the Ways," "Sea Poppies"

### **Week 3: Objects, Nonsense and Perspective**

September 7: *No class, Rosh Hashanah*

September 9: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914)

### **Week 4: Objects and Perspectives**

September 14: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (1914)

September 15: *No class, Yom Kippur*

Additional: Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation" (1925-6)

### **Week 5: The Little Magazines—Special Collections Visit**

September 21: Special Collections Visit with Anna Culbertson (Head of Special Collections)  
Pound, Ezra. "Small Magazines." *The English Journal*, 19.9 (Nov 1930): 689-704.

September 23: Special Collections Visit with Anna Culbertson (Head of Special Collections)  
-Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*,  
chapter 3: "The Price of Modernism: Publishing *The Waste Land*"

### **Week 6: The Waste Land**

September 28: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)

September 30: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)

### **Week 7: War and Minimalism**

October 5: Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1924)

October 7: Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (1924)

Additional: excerpt from Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918*

### **Week 8: Hybridity**

October 12: Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)

October 14: Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)

*\*\*Midterm short close reading essay due: Sunday @ midnight, posted to the blog*

### **Week 9: The Harlem Renaissance**

October 19: excerpts from Alain Locke, *The New Negro Anthology* (1925):

Alain Locke, "The New Negro"

Albert Barnes, "Negro Art and America"

William Stanley Braithwaite, "The Negro in American Literature"

Alain Locke, "The Negro Spirituals"

Claude McKay, "Negro Dancers"

J.A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home"

James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem: The Culture Capital"

October 21: excerpts from Alain Locke, *The New Negro Anthology* (1925):

Countee Cullen, "Poems"

Langston Hughes, "Poems"

Gwendolyn Brooks, "Song"

Helene Johnson, "The Road"

### **Week 10: Passing and Reading**

October 26: Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

October 28: Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

-Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language and Twentieth-Century Literature*, Ch. 1: "Against the Standard: Linguistic Imitation, Racial Masquerade, and the Modernist Rebellion" (pps. 3-34)

### **Week 11: Capitalism, Automation, and Theater == STUDENT SELECTION**

November 2: Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (1922) OR Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925)

November 4: Eugene O'Neill, *The Hairy Ape* (1922) OR Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925)

-excerpts from Edna Duffy, *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism*

## **PART II**

### **Week 12: Responses and Rewritings**

November 9: Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Last Quatrain Of The Ballad Of Emmett Till" (1955)

Phillip B. Williams, "Mastery" (2017)

November 11: *No class, Veteran's Day*

### **Week 13: Thesis Statement Writing Workshops**

November 16: *-\*Bring to class a one-paragraph abstract of final essay with thesis statement (2-3 sentences) highlighted for peer review workshop*

November 18: *no class meeting—asynchronous thesis workshop online*

**Week 14: Thanksgiving Week- No Class**

November 23: *No class—Thanksgiving*

November 26: *No class—Thanksgiving*

*\*\*Proposal and Annotated Bibliography for Final Essay due: Sunday 11/28 @ midnight, posted to the blog*

**Week 15: New Modernist Studies & Sharing Final Projects**

November 30: Douglass Mao and Rebecca Walkowitz, “The New Modernist Studies” in *PMLA* (2008)

December 2: Share essay topics in class. *Thesis workshop in class*

Additional: excerpts from Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, eds. *The New Modernist Studies Reader: An Anthology of Essential Criticism* (Bloomsbury Press, 2021) \*\* on reserve in Love Library

**Week 16: Conclusions**

December 7: Share essay topics

December 9: Concluding Discussion

*-- Final Essay Due, Wednesday 12/15 at midnight—posted to the blog*

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**OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

**Communication**

Students are provided with an SDSU Gmail account, and this [SDSU email address](#) will be used for all communications. University Senate policy notes that students are responsible for checking their official university email once per day during the academic term. For more information, please see [Student Official Email Address Use Policy here](#).

**Medical-related absences**

University policy instructs students to contact their professor/instructor/coach in the event they need to miss class due to an illness, injury, or emergency. Please inform me as soon as possible if you are missing class due to an illness or a Covid-related situation.

**Finding Help on Campus**

Need help finding an advisor, tutor, counselor, or require emergency economic assistance? The **SDSU Student Success Help Desk** is here for you. Student assistants are available via Zoom Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM to help you find the office or service that can best assist with your particular questions or concerns.



**Other important resources:**

- CAL Student Success Center: <https://cal.sdsu.edu/student-resources/student-success>
- College of Education Student Success Center: <https://education.sdsu.edu/oss>
- Center for Student Success in Engineering: <https://csse.sdsu.edu/>
- CoS Student Success Center: <https://cossuccess.sdsu.edu/>
- FSB Student Success Center: <https://business.sdsu.edu/undergrad/advising>
- HHS Advisors: <https://chhs.sdsu.edu/student-resources/advising/>
- IVC Student Success and Retention: [https://ivcampus.sdsu.edu/student\\_affairs/retention](https://ivcampus.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/retention)
- PSFA Advisors: [https://psfa.sdsu.edu/resources/student\\_advisors](https://psfa.sdsu.edu/resources/student_advisors)

**Accommodations**

SDSU via the Student Ability Success Center (SASC) provides accommodations for students with documented disabilities or medical conditions covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In keeping with current public health guidance, I cannot provide arrangements to students without an ADA-qualified disability or medical condition.

If you are a student with a disability and are in need of accommodations for this class, please contact the Student Ability Success Center at [sascinfo@sdsu.edu](mailto:sascinfo@sdsu.edu) (or go to [sdsu.edu/sasc](https://sdsu.edu/sasc)) as soon as possible. Please know accommodations are not retroactive, and I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from the Student Ability Success Center. SASC registration and accommodation approvals may take up to 10-14 business days, so please plan accordingly.

**SDSU as “safe space”**

The CSU has affirmed its commitment to ‘protecting access, affordability, intellectual freedom, inclusivity, and diversity for all students . . . including supporting DACA students.’ Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation against students, faculty, and staff on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, nationality, immigration status and other categories of identity is prohibited. If you have concerns about your status at the university, please visit <http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/EOP/> for information or contact the Dean of Students or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in your College.”

**Academic Honesty**

I take teaching seriously, and I expect you to take seriously your work as a student. That means that academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonest includes, but is not limited to: (a) using assignments that you wrote for another class, (b) representing work done by someone else as your own (i.e., plagiarism), and (c) copying someone else’s work on an assignment, basic cheating. Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be referred to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities for further action. If you have questions at all, you should consult me immediately.