ENGL 105A: Twentieth-Century Literature, 1900 to 1945

Course Description

Calender Description

A close examination of a representative selection of works by major authors writing in English such as Yeats, Woolf, Lawrence, Eliot, Hemingway, and Faulkner.

Detailed Description

The years that encompass the "Modernist" Period are some of the most tumultuous in the history of the Western World: the collapse of the British Empire, the rise of totalitarianism, two world wars, genocides, the Great Depression. These are just some of the world-shaping (or world-breaking) events that took place between the 1900 and 1945. Writers tried to deal with their ever-changing world in a number of ways, in both the content and form of their works, from trying to find some sense in the chaos around them to trying to represent that chaos adequately to trying to ignore it as much as they could. In this class, we will examine works by some of the (mostly British) writers of the Modernist Period, paying particular attention to how those works responded, and contributed, to the world(s) around them—the social, political, historical, and literary contexts in which they were produced and to which they contributed. The class will be conducted in a seminar format, with occasional short and informal lectures to introduce key topics, and all students are expected to attend class regularly and to contribute to the on-going class discussion.

Texts

Required

Reading Package. (Available in the University of Waterloo Bookstore.)

Recommended

McArthur, Murray and Jane E. Aaron, eds. *The Little, Brown Compact Handbook*. First Canadian
Assignments

Short Essay (May 31, 2001) 20%
In-Class Mid-Term Writing Assignment (June 21, 2001) 30%
Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Working Bibliography (July 3, 2001) 10%
Research Essay (July 26, 2001) 40%

Short Essay

During the second week of classes, I will provide a selection of essay topics, and you will be asked to write a short, three-to-four-page (approximately 800-1000 words) essay on one of the suggested topics. There is no research component for this assignment; I am interested in what you have to say about the text on which you are writing, in how well you can make an argument based on a careful close-reading of the text, and in how clearly you can develop that argument. The only text that should be on your list of works cited is the primary text—that is, the novel, story, poem, or essay on which you are writing. Further details will accompany the selection of essay topics I will hand out during the second week of classes. The essay must be formatted according to MLA guidelines (see MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers [5th ed.], pages 222-53 of The Little, Brown Compact Handbook, or the sheets accompanying this syllabus). If you are unsure how to use the MLA, please come and see me; all essays not formatted according to MLA standards will be docked 10%. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday May 31, 2001; all late papers will be penalized 5% per day every day including weekends. This assignment is worth 20% (twenty percent) of your final grade.

In-Class Mid-Term Writing Assignment

On Thursday, June 7, 2001, you will be given a list of three (3) short passages or quotations taken from texts we have not read but that clearly relate to issues we have discussed in class. On Thursday, June 21, 2001, you will write an in-class essay responding to one of those passages or quotations; I will choose the passage from the list of three, and everyone will write on the same one. In your response, you must refer to at least three (3) of the texts we have read and discussed in class, but, while I do expect you to be able to discuss the texts in some detail (that is, demonstrate familiarity with the story, its characters, and major themes and images), I do not expect you to quote directly from them. I am primarily interested in two things: first, I want to see you engage with the texts you are writing about in the terms of the discussions we have carried out in class; second, I want to see you take a position and make an argument, not simply repeat what was said in class or offer summaries of the texts we have read. Remember, an essay is an argument: you must introduce your argument, provide a clear thesis, defend that thesis in the body of the essay, and offer a conclusion that summarizes and indicates the relevance of your argument. Take the time to plan your essay carefully: prepare an outline and proofread and
selectively edit the finished product. More details will accompany the list of quotations you will receive on June 7. This in-class assignment will take place on Thursday, June 21, 2001 and is worth 30% (thirty percent) of your final grade.

Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Working Bibliography

Prepare a one-page (approximately 250 words), typed or word-processed, double-spaced working introduction to an eight-page (approximately 2000 words) research essay. Include all of the elements of a good critical research essay introduction: provide a context for discussion, state your thesis as clearly as possible, and suggest the “shape” of the argument that will follow (what points or examples will you discuss and in what order). In addition, prepare a working bibliography of no less than three (3) but no more than six (6) secondary texts in MLA format. Two (2) of the bibliographic entries must be annotated: at the end of the citation, provide a short (approximately 3-4 sentence) paragraph indicating what the source is about--its thesis--and how you think you can use it in your paper. Remember, this is a “working” introduction and bibliography; you will revise, edit, drop, add, and change probably several times before your final paper is complete. The purpose of this assignment is to get you started on the research and essay-writing processes early so that you can produce a stronger final product. Further details will accompany a list of guidelines and suggested topics that I will hand out on May 31. In the week after this assignment is returned, my office hours will be extended and all students will be encouraged to sign up for brief meetings with me in order to discuss your papers-in-progress. The assignment must be formatted according to MLA guidelines (see MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers [5th ed.], pages 222-53 of The Little, Brown Compact Handbook, or the sheets accompanying this syllabus). If you are unsure how to use the MLA, please come and see me; all essays not formatted according to MLA standards will be docked 10%. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday July 3, 2001; all late assignments will be penalized 5% per day every day including weekends. This assignment is worth 10% (ten percent) of your final grade.

Research Essay

Write the essay for which you prepared the working introduction and annotated bibliography. The essay should be approximately six to eight, double-spaced, and typed or word-processed pages (roughly 1500-2000 words). As I stated above, more details will accompany a list of guidelines and suggested topics. The essay must be formatted according to MLA guidelines (see MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers [5th ed.], pages 222-53 of The Little, Brown Compact Handbook, or the sheets accompanying this syllabus). If you are unsure how to use the MLA, please come and see me; all essays not formatted according to MLA standards will be docked 10%. This assignment is due at the beginning of class on Thursday July 26, 2001; all late assignments will be penalized 5% per day every day including weekends. This assignment is worth 40% (forty percent) of your final grade.
Class Policies

Late Assignments

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in each assignment description. All late assignments will be docked 5% (five percent) per day, including weekends. In other words, if a paper is due on Thursday and it is handed in on Monday, it will be docked 20% (five percent for each of four days).

Extensions

All extensions must be requested well in advance of the due dates; except in extraordinary circumstances, extensions will not be granted the day before assignments are due (that is, if an assignment is due on Thursday, extensions will not be granted after Tuesday). I reserve the right to request appropriate documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note) in all cases.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense; all plagiarised papers will be penalized to the fullest extent allowed by the university. (See the attached sheet, referring to Policy #71, for more information on plagiarism and related offenses.) I do recognize the difference between “accidental” plagiarism (a missed citation, for example) and outright cheating, but all such instances are serious and will be penalized accordingly. Take the time to go through all assignments carefully in order to be sure that everything is properly documented. If you are at all unsure, please come and see me. Don’t let a misunderstanding become a major problem.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Students are expected to read all material before the class in which we will discuss it; lectures and discussion questions will assume familiarity with all of the texts scheduled for discussion during that class. All texts marked with an asterisk (*) can be found in the Course Reading Package (available in the University Bookstore).

May 1: Welcome and Introduction

May 3: Backgrounds and Contexts (*James McFarlane, “The Mind of Modernism”)

May 8: Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure

May 10: Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure

May 15: *William Butler Yeats, all selections
May 17: *Virginia Woolf, selection from *Room of One’s Own*


May 24: **Class and Office Hour Cancelled**

May 29: *Edith Sitwell, all selections; Stevie Smith, all selections*


June 5: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

June 7: Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

June 12: *W. H. Auden, all selections*

June 14: *Dylan Thomas, all selections*

June 19: *H. D., all selections*

June 21: **In-Class Mid-Term Writing Assignment**

June 26: James Joyce, *Dubliners*

June 28: James Joyce, *Dubliners*

July 3: *Katherine Mansfield, “Bliss” and “The Garden Party”; Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Working Bibliography Assignment Due*

July 5: T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

July 10: T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland*

July 12: *Tristan Tzara, selection*

July 17: *George Orwell, “Politics and the English Language”*


July 24: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

July 26: Wrap-up and general class discussion; **Research Essay Assignment Due**
### Sequence of Items in a Bibliographic Reference

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*Example:*


*Note:* the indentation and punctuation pattern and the order of information for the Kafka entry above should be employed for a Works Cited list, while the indentation and punctuation pattern and the order of information for the Gibaldi citation should be employed in endnotes. Check with your instructor about whether Endnotes or a Works Cited list is preferred. Note also that book titles may be underlined or italicized, as in the two examples above.
ESSAY WRITING TIPS

Most good essays are not written but re-written. Even if you have thought carefully about your topic, worked out a good thesis statement, and developed your argument as forcefully as possible, consider your first version a rough draft. When the heat of inspiration has cooled, revise your essay at least twice: once for organization (i.e., concept and subject matter), and once for style and grammar. Listed below are a series of questions. After proof-reading your essay, you should be able to answer all of these questions with a "yes."

I. ORGANIZATION

1. Title:
   
a) Does the title express the theme of the essay?

2. Introduction:
   
a) Is the thesis statement clearly stated?
   
b) Does the introduction include all of the ideas which will be discussed in the essay and suggest the order in which those ideas will appear?

3. Body of the Essay:
   
a) Does each paragraph include a topic sentence which is clearly related to a point in the introduction?
   
b) Does each paragraph include reasons to support the topic sentence, or details and examples to clarify it?
   
c) Is each paragraph unified (every sentence dealing with the main topic of the paragraph) and coherent (with clear logical relation between sentences)?
   
d) Are the examples discussed in terms of their significance in relation to the thesis?
   
e) Is the discussion of examples detailed enough to enter into the finer points of the text?
   
f) Does each paragraph confine itself to the main topic of the essay?
   
g) Do the paragraphs follow one another logically, in the order suggested by the introduction?
   
h) Are there effective transitions from paragraph to paragraph?
   
i) Have you avoided jumps in logic by including all of the steps of your argument?

4. Conclusion:
   
a) Does the conclusion sum up the evidence presented in the body of the essay and show its relationship to the thesis statement?
   
b) Does the conclusion suggest the significance of the relationship between the thesis and the examples discussed?
   
c) Does the conclusion avoid the introduction of new evidence or new ideas?
II. STYLE AND GRAMMAR

1. Point of View:
   a) Are you writing to an audience of peers?
   b) Is the essay written in the present tense?

2. Language:
   a) Is the tone appropriate and consistent, neither slangy nor pompous?
   b) Does the sentence structure vary to indicate shifts in emphasis and movement from point to point?
   c) Have you eliminated all unnecessary words?
   d) Have you avoided ambiguous terms such as "these," "those," and "it," and, instead, used specific terms?
   e) Have you avoided the use of qualifiers such as "very," "extremely," "best," "excellent," and so on?
   f) Upon reading your own essay, can you honestly say that it makes sense?

3. Grammar, Spelling, and Punctuation:
   a) Have you avoided sentence fragments and run-on sentences?
   b) Are pronoun references clear?
   c) Have you checked for spelling?
   d) Is the punctuation correct?

4. Mechanics and Citation:
   a) Have you correctly numbered all pages?
   b) Have you remembered to document carefully all primary and secondary sources?
   c) Have you remembered to include a list of works cited?
   d) Have you used one style of documentation (MLA, APA, Chicago Style, etc.) consistently and correctly?
   e) Have you included your name, the course number, the instructor's name, and the date?