ENGLISH 105A
20th-Century English Literature, 1900-1945

Instructor: Stephen Bennett
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Class Meets: Tues., Thurs., 1pm-2:30pm, 150 H.H.
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Course Description:

We will examine in 105A a selection of texts produced by authors and poets writing in English during the first half of the 20th-century, in the eclectic era of literary and social history often labelled the "Modern" period.

This "Modern" epoch is marked by several socio-cultural and intellectual contexts and influences that 'speak' to each other and, in varying ways, combine to express some notion of that which is typically "Modern." We will consider, as the term unfolds, the increasing influence of figures like Marx, Freud, and Darwin; the oppressive weight of the scientific mind; the rapid shifts and growth in technologies; the rise of new media such as film and radio; and the spirit of rationalism looming over Europe in the early 20th-century. In addition, we will address the disillusionment and alienation of a "Lost Generation" of writers who came of age during a time of World Wars, the "Great Depression," the rise of Fascism in Europe, and the growing presence of weapons of Mass-destruction.

We will investigate, then, the ways in which these texts--individually and collectively--reflect the various conditions which influence their production; as well, and most importantly, we will work to develop competent reading/critical thinking skills and sound strategies for constructing effective 'formal' writing assignments.

Required Texts: (studied in the following order)

3. Woolf, Virginia. To The Lighthouse.
5. Hurston, Zora Neal. Their Eyes Were Watching God.

Recommended Texts:


Course Requirements:

1. Issue/Response Cards -- 20% (see attached "Explanation/Criteria")
2. Essay #1 -------------- 15% (750-1000 word essay; approx. 3-4 pages typed and double-spaced)
3. Essay #2 -------------- 30% (2000 word essay; approx. 8-10 pages typed and double-spaced)
4. Final Exam -------------- 35%
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-- Grading System --

1. For a numeric scale of letter grades (A, B, C etc.), see University of Waterloo Undergraduate Calendar.

2. The following are brief explanations, passed down from the University of Waterloo English Department, of the various letter grades:

NOTE: For valuable information regarding the term "formal/scholarly" writing, please consult The Little, Brown Compact Handbook or similar text.

"A" -- Papers in the "A" range distinguish themselves by including some fresh or original approaches and insights to assigned topics and by developing them in well-written formal/scholarly prose.

"B" -- Papers in the "B" range satisfy assignment requirements in an effective manner, both in building and supporting primary assertions/arguments and in formal/scholarly writing performance.

"C" -- Papers in the "C" range are adequate in terms of satisfying assignment requirements, but they have demonstrable weaknesses in formulating primary assertions/arguments, developing and providing adequate support for assertions/arguments, or in formal/scholarly written expression.

"D" -- Papers in the "D" range are barely adequate in terms of satisfying assignment requirements. Such papers often contain flustered ideas and/or inadequate argumentation and support, and they frequently include prominent writing misfirings that interfere with clear expression of main ideas and assertions.

"F" -- Papers in the "F" range usually reveal some significant lapse in argumentation and/or support. Such papers often illustrate incomplete work, a misinterpretation of the assignment and its requirements, or writing which departs too dramatically from the expectations of formal/scholarly prose.

3. For an account of the expected "academic honesty," see the University of Waterloo Undergraduate Calendar (re: plagiarism).

NOTE: Grades of C+ and above require the following: [i] general clarity in writing, [ii] a substantial degree of accuracy in matters of style and use, [iii] some recognizable logic in the presentation and development of assertions/arguments, [iv] some interpretive—not solely descriptive—account of the assigned material, and [v] some level of conformity to scholarly conventions (MLA Style, for example).
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-- Issue/Response Cards: Explanation and Criteria --

Explanation:

1. You are asked to compose a one-page "Issue/Response Card" for 4 novels we'll examine this term.

2. Each "Issue/Response Card" is worth 5% (maximum) of your final grade. I'll keep on file a copy of each card submitted, and, at the end of the term, I'll assign a numeric grade out of 20 based on the collective quality of all five cards.

Criteria:

You must observe the following criteria to receive any credit (a possible 5% per card) for any "Issue/Response Card." Meeting these criteria does not guarantee full marks on any/all cards.

1. Each one-page "Issue/Response Card" must be typed and double spaced (or single-spaced if necessary). Please submit two copies of each "Issue/Response Card." I'll keep one copy for my files and return the other copy to you with some brief comments.

2. Each "Issue/Response Card" is due at the beginning of the designated class session. No cards will be accepted after the appointed due date.

3. Each "Issue/Response Card" must consist of three clearly-defined sections:

   [i] A one or two paragraph summary of the primary elements of the novel (I don't expect a complete outline of the novel's entire goings-on, but I expect you to provide some details which illustrate your knowledge of the novel's plot and character).

   [ii] A one paragraph account of some issue/concern that relates the text to an issue/theme/concern addressed in the course (I encourage you to isolate a notable character's thoughts/behavior, a noteworthy plot point, a significant authorial technique or virtually anything within the work that relates to your evolving perception of "Modern" literature).

   [iii] Two questions about the novel as it relates (perhaps for better or worse) to the issues/themes/concerns addressed in the course. These questions may address the style of a particular writer, the primary character's point of view, the novel's secondary characters, and/or the novel's relation to other works on the reading list. I offer these points of interest only as possible suggestions; I encourage you to devise questions about the novels that you feel are particularly important to your understanding of the course and its texts!!