

## **ENGL 674-M01: Studies in American Modernism**

**Prof. Anne Dewey**

**Fall 2015**

**3 credits**

**Office: San Ignacio Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Office 4**

**Office Hours: MWF, 9:30-11:00, Monday and Wednesday, 14:00-15:00**

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### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines varieties of American modernism: the flowering of stylistic experimentation rejecting naturalism and realism, the women's sentimental tradition and its politicization, the Harlem Renaissance, and the politically conflicted literature of the 1930s. Emphasizing the dialogue between these literary subcultures of modernism, we analyze how the cosmopolitan horizons of many modernist writers transform the American tradition, create new genres, and lay the foundations for literary postmodernism. Special attention to representation, abstraction, and modernist experimentation; and to the construction of race.

The City: Highly cosmopolitan, modernism seeks to imagine the city and the new identities it provides: class mobility and stratification, poverty and fashion, immigration and rootlessness, anonymity and alienation, the course of history based on this dramatically new social being. The influx of people of diverse origins into the city provide a rich plurality of traditions on which Modernist artists draw. While not all the works we read will be urban, the contrast between urban and rural informs most representation of either.

Gender relations: The New Woman, flappers, suffragettes, bluestockings. The invention of the typewriter, greater job options, admission to universities increase women's independence, allowing them to imagine freedom from Victorian domestic roles. The struggle for suffrage politicizes, while access to education begins women's investigation into their contributions to history, politics, and letters. Men, often on the defensive, develop their own images of the New Woman.

Race Relations: The South in shambles after failed or nonexistent Reconstruction pushes African Americans to migrate to the cities by the thousands. While black intellectuals attempt to understand and direct the process of reconstruction, Harlem Renaissance writers articulate a new racial and cultural consciousness born from the unprecedentedly large black urban community. White writers struggle to redefine white identity and their portrayals of blacks in the absence of the institution of slavery.

Historical and intellectual crisis: Darwin, Marx, Freud, Nietzsche challenge the foundations of the Christian and Victorian world views. World War I, the Russian Revolution, the Depression, the Spanish Civil War, and finally World War II intensify this crisis of Western culture, demanding new analysis of the problem and new answers. In the U.S., the nouveau riche continues to displace an older political, social, and intellectual elite from power, driving many American writers into exile and closer contact with the European tradition.

Isms, etc.: Modernism in elite culture sees the birth of the avant-garde, each group coining its own style, little magazine, name (imagism, vorticism, objectivism, fauvism, cubism). Scholars are just beginning to place other subcultures such as the Harlem Renaissance, the women's sentimental tradition, and the Communist literature of the 30s in dialogue with this "High Modernism" in fascinating ways.

## REQUIRED READINGS

- James, Henry. *The Portrait of a Lady*. 1882.  
Cather, Willa. *My Antonia*. 1918.  
Eliot, T.S. *The Waste Land*. 1922.  
Stein, Gertrude. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. 1933.  
    Selected portraits (Matisse, Cezanne, Picasso), 1912.  
    *Tender Buttons*. ?? 1914.  
    *Patriarchal Poetry*. 1927.  
Hughes, Langston. *The Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*. 1920s-30s.  
Hemingway, Ernest. *The Sun Also Rises*. 1926.  
    *The Old Man in the Sea*. 1951.  
Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*. 1934.  
Faulkner, William. *Absalom! Absalom!* 1936. ??  
Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. 1937.

## COURSE POLICIES

**Requirements:** Class attendance and participation; completion of reading assignments; completion of class exercises; completion of all papers and presentations. Graduate class discussion should be driven by lively participation in scholarly dialogue, airing original insights and questions, sharing scholarly knowledge, and listening constructively to fellow students. Being a good listener is crucial to being a good colleague. It should go without saying that attendance is essential. Three "unexcused" absences signals that the student has chosen to withdraw from (or fail) the course. (Please let me know if you are going to miss class.)

**Academic Integrity:** Please inform yourselves of SLU's Academic Standards (in Graduate Education catalogue, especially those regarding Academic Integrity/Ethical Behavior (link to Graduate Education in on the SLU Madrid MA in English webpage). The *MLA Handbook* also has an excellent section on plagiarism, both scholarly standards and how to avoid plagiarism including unintentional or unconscious plagiarism through good note-taking practice.

**Students with Disabilities:** In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:  
    Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Academic Dean's Office (San Ignacio Hall) or by going to [http://spain.slu.edu/academics/learning\\_resources.html](http://spain.slu.edu/academics/learning_resources.html).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at +34 915 54 58 58, ext. 204, send an e-mail to [counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu](mailto:counselingcenter-madrid@slu.edu), or to visit the Counseling Office (San Ignacio Hall). Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

**Grading policy:** Course will be graded 40% preparation for discussion, 60% written work. Written work includes one 2-3 page response paper per literary work, a bibliography of 10-15 sources for the term paper, and a 15-20 page term paper.

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS

**Week 1**      September 1  
Introduction

**Week 2**      **September 7**  
Henry James. *The Portrait of a Lady*. 1882.

**Week 3**      **September 14**  
Monday, September 14      **Last day to DROP a class and not receive a grade of "W" and/or to add a class**  
Henry James. *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1882

**Week 4**      **September 21**  
Secondary work on Henry James:  
Jessica Berman, *Modernist Fiction, Cosmopolitanism, and the Politics of Community*, Chapters 1 and 2  
Martha Banta, "Men, Women, and the American Way" (in Cambridge Companion to Modernism)

Jessica Berman,  
Willa Cather, *My Antonia*, 1918  
Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America*, selections  
Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity*, selections  
Cather article to be determined

**Week 5**      **September 28**  
T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, 1922  
Marjorie Perloff, Introduction to *21<sup>st</sup>-Century Modernism*

**Week 6**      **October 5**  
Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 1933

**Week 7      October 12**

Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 1933, continued  
Gertrude Stein, selected portraits (Matisse, Cezanne, Picasso), 1912  
*Tender Buttons*.?? 1914  
*Patriarchal Poetry*. 1927  
“Among Negroes: Gertrude Stein and African America” in *Race and the Modern Artist*

**Week 8      October 19**

Langston Hughes, selected poems, 1920s-30s  
Houston A. Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*  
Chapters from Nathan Huggins, *The Harlem Renaissance*

**Week 9      October 26**

Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, 1926  
*The Old Man in the Sea*, 1951

**Thursday, October 29      Last day to drop a class and receive grade of W**

**Week 10      November 2**

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender is the Night*, 1934

**Week 11      November 9**

William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!* 1936

**Week 12      November 16**

William Faulkner, *Absalom! Absalom!* 1936

**Week 13      November 23**

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, 1937

**Week 14      November 30**

Work on research paper

**Week 15      December 7**

Work on research paper

**Week 16      December 13**

**Final paper due**