

Spring 2009 • History and Literature 97
Sophomore Tutorial: America
Tuesdays, 1pm-4pm, Barker 128

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The Trouble with Modernism

The sophomore tutorial is an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American history and literature. Our principal goals are to help you become acquainted with some of the central issues and texts in American history and literature, and to help you develop the skills you will need to do interdisciplinary work in this field.

What is “the trouble” with modernism? In this course we will contest and complicate the received meanings of this complex term, breaking down the traditional notion of a monolithic movement in arts and ideas that thrived during the first few decades of the twentieth century. What we hope to show is that not only were there many modernisms, often in competition with another, or else pursuing completely different cultural agendas, but that the idea of the modern itself has long been a central driving force in shaping American cultural identity at large.

Our weekly readings will pair or alternate canonical texts with lesser known ones in order to provide a more densely textured picture of the historical moment. Interludes placed at crucial turning points in the development of major discursive formations such as race and gender will deepen the connections between modernism as such and “modernism before modernism.” Long viewed as an exclusively elitist movement concerned with radical formalism and a shift to the interior, modernism will emerge as something more rich, more complex, and more strange.

Course Requirements

The primary requirement for this course is active, thoughtful participation. This means more than just doing all the reading. It means reading and reflecting, formulating arguments in advance of class, and arriving prepared to discuss those ideas with us. Our goal is to create an environment in which you can voice your questions, ideas, and theories, and respectfully engage those of your classmates. This tutorial is not a survey of American history and literature, or even a synthetic overview of the early twentieth century. Rather, it is an introduction to the tools of analysis and argumentation that you will use in the concentration. To this end, the writing assignments range from shorter response papers focused on close reading primary sources; to more formal papers that incorporate secondary sources; to the final 3,000-4,000-word research paper, due in May. The course is also designed to develop your oral communication skills. In addition to your regular in-class participation, twice during the term you will present a “provocative source” to the class that you think will complicate our discussion in interesting ways (more on this below). At the end of the semester you will take the sophomore oral exam, which is designed to test your ability to synthesize historical and literary materials, and to speak effectively about texts and ideas.

Grading

25% Participation (including in-class discussion, “provocative source” presentations, response papers, and performance on the sophomore oral exam)

30% Shorter writing assignments: 4-page paper on *Cane*; 4-page paper on Whitman and Holmes; 4-5 page paper on Scopes trial

45% Final Essay (including initial close reading, 250-word description, annotated bibliography, draft, and final paper)

Papers

Be familiar with the *Handbook for Students* policies on plagiarism, double-submission, etc. All papers must be typed and double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Please turn in two hard copies of each written assignment. We will not accept emailed papers.

“Provocative Sources”

Every week, two students will collaborate on finding a “provocative” primary source that they will introduce to the class in a five-minute presentation. We are hoping that you will be as creative as possible in coming up with your source. It can be textual (a short poem, a letter, diary entry, part of an essay, etc.), visual (photograph, advertisement, cartoon), a song, a film clip, and so forth. The key is that it should resonate with the week’s reading, and move our discussion in interesting and unexpected directions. Please email us what your source will be by 5pm the Friday before class.

Sophomore Oral Exam

Each sophomore takes a 30 minute oral exam during the final week of tutorial and in place of the final tutorial meeting. The examination tests your ability to analyze and to discuss texts orally, and is designed to prepare you for the oral component of the junior and senior tutorials. Patrick and Kim will be your examiners. You will need to submit a list of texts to us for review no later than Tuesday, April 14 (in class). The list must consist of six texts from the sophomore tutorial syllabus, chosen by you and organized around a title that expresses a suggested theme or binding category. The list must involve a diverse grouping of primary sources; a list that includes only fiction or only newspaper editorials would not suffice. One or two of the six texts must be a secondary source. Extra-syllabus texts, including texts used for the sophomore essay, are not allowed, but during the exam you are free to discuss texts that are not on your list. You must be prepared to discuss all the texts on the list in a polished manner. You should have not only a command of specific textual and contextual details, but should also be able to speak broadly about the texts in relation to the chosen theme.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Classes Begin Wednesday, Jan. 28

Week 2, Feb 3: Defining Boundaries & Crossing Borders

- Edward Carr, “The Historian and His Facts” from *What Is History?* (1961)
- Terry Eagleton, “What Is Literature” from *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1983)
- Peter Childs, “Answering the Question-What Is Modernism?” (2000)
- Daniel J. Singal, “Toward a Definition of American Modernism,” *American Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1987): 7-26. [JSTOR]

Week 3, Feb 10: High Modernism

- Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)
- Ezra Pound, “In a Station of the Metro” (1913)
- T. S. Eliot, “The Wasteland” (1922)
- Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return* (1934; rev. ed. 1951), pp. 27-80
- excerpt from Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2008) [History & Literature homepage]

Assignment: Response Paper—close reading of a passage (2-3 pages) from *The Sun Also Rises*, chapter 19 (2 pages, due in class 2/10)

Week 4, Feb 17: First Interlude—Darkness Visible & Invisible

- W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)
- Vachel Lindsay, “The Congo” (1904)
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/Lindsay/lindsay.html#congo>
- Countee Cullen, “Yet Do I Marvel” (1925)
- Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (1988), 153-75

Assignment: Response Paper—close reading of a passage (2-3 pages) from *The Souls of Black Folk*, chapter 1, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” (2 pages, due in class 2/17)

Week 5, Feb 24: Urban Pastoral

- Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)
- Alain Locke, “The New Negro,” in *The New Negro*, Alain Locke, ed. (1925).
- Emmett J. Scott, “More Letters of Negro Migrants of 1916-1918,” *Journal of Negro History* 4 (October 1919): 412-65. [JSTOR]
- Houston A. Baker, Jr., “Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance,” *American Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1987): 84-97. [JSTOR]

Assignment: Would Houston Baker view *Cane* as a modernist text? Why? (4 pages, due in class 2/24)

Week 6, Mar 3: Second Interlude—Dreaming of Apocalypse

- Walt Whitman, “Vigil Strange Kept I On The Field One Night” (1865),
<http://www.whitmanarchive.org/published/LG/1871/poems/134>
- Stephen Crane, *Red Badge of Courage* (1895)
- Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. on the Civil War, from *Touched with Fire: Civil War Letters and Diary of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., 1861-1864*, Mark De Wolfe Howe, ed. (2000), pp. 1-42
- Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (2008), excerpt

Assignment: Do Whitman and Holmes figure manhood in similar terms? What do their similarities and/or differences tell us about the meaning of manhood in the context of the Civil War? (4 pages, due in class 3/3)

Week 7, Mar 10: The Past Isn't Past

Research Workshop with Joe Bourneuf—Meet in Widener Library lobby at 1pm

- Allen Tate, "Ode to The Confederate Dead" (1926-1930)
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15303>
- Scopes Trial transcripts (1925), pp. 74-87 (Darrow's Speech); pp 170-82 (Bryan's Speech)
<http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezpl.harvard.edu/servlet/MOML?af=RN&ae=F152466201&srchtp=a&ste=14>
- Daniel Singal, *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919-1945* (1982), Chapter 7
- Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (1997), Chaps. 4-5.
- Stanley Kramer, dir., *Inherit The Wind* (1960) [clip in class]

Assignment: Find two newspaper articles that covered the Scopes Trial—at least one must be from microfilm, and you may not use the *New York Times*. How do the sources you have found confirm and/or complicate Larson's assessment of modernism in the South? (4 pages, plus articles appended, due in class 3/10)

Screening of *Siren of the Tropics*, Friday, March 13, 3:00-4:30pm in Barker 128

Week 8, Mar 17: All That Jazz?

- Josephine Baker film, *Siren of the Tropics* (1927)
- J.A. Rogers, "Jazz at Home," *The New Negro*, Alaine Locke, ed. (1925)
- Hiram Walker Evans, "The Klan's Fight for Americanism," *No Am Rev* 223 (March 1926): 33-63. [American Periodical Series]
- Karen C. C. Dalton and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Josephine Baker and Paul Colin: African American Dance Seen Through Parisian Eyes," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Summer 1998): 903-34.
- Paul Colin lithographs [in class]

Assignment: From the list provided, choose a person, briefly identify them, and write a 3-5 page close reading of something they have written (due Friday, March 20 by 4:30pm)

SPRING BREAK – March 23 to 27

Week 9, Mar 31: Third Interlude—The New Before The New

- Emily Dickinson, "I'm wife" #199, "The Soul selects" #303, "After great pain" #341, "My life had stood" #754 (1860-1863)
- Seneca Falls "Declaration of Sentiments" (1848)
<http://www.alexanderstreet6.com.ezpl.harvard.edu/wasm/wasmrestricted/doctext/S10010301-D0006.002.htm>
- James Schouler, *Treatise on the Law of Domestic Relations* (1882), pp. 58-74 (secs. 33-47)
<http://galenet.galegroup.com.ezpl.harvard.edu/servlet/MOML?af=RN&ae=F3700689675&srchtp=a&ste=14>
- Amy Dru Stanley, "Home Life and the Morality of the Market," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800-1880*, Stokes and Conway, eds. (1996), 74-96

- Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* (1985) excerpts
- Cheryl Walker, “Dickinson in Context: Nineteenth-Century American Women Poets”
- Headnote on Dickinson in *Norton Anthology* [optional]

Assignment: 250-word description of final paper (due Friday, April 3 by 4:30pm)

Week 10, Apr 7: Girl Trouble

- Djuna Barnes, *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915)
- Jessie Fauset, *Plum Bun* (1929)
- Christina Simmons, “‘Modern Marriage’ for African Americans, 1920-1940,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 30 (Winter 2000): 273-300.
<http://ezp1.harvard.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=4365723&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

Assignment: Annotated bibliography – at least 5 primary and 10 secondary sources (due Friday, April 10 by 4:30pm)

Week 11, Apr 14: Give Me Your Masses

- Muriel Rukeyser, “To Be a Jew in the 20th Century” (1944)
- Mike Gold, *Jews Without Money* (1930)
- Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (1997), Chapter 6

Assignment: Orals topic list (due in class, 4/14)

Friday, April 17—Draft of Final Paper due by 4:30pm

Screening of *Modern Times*, Friday, April 17, 3:00-4:30pm in Barker 128

Week 12, Apr 21:

- Charlie Chaplin film, *Modern Times* (1936)
- Charles J. Maland, *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (1989), chapt. 5

Week 13, Apr 28: ORALS

READING PERIOD—FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY, MAY 8 BY 4:30 PM