



**The Exeter College Summer Programme  
at Exeter College in the University of Oxford**

**Literatures of Modernism: The Modernist Novel in English**

**Course Description**

The course examines the relationship between modernity and narrative as explored in the works of ten 'Modernist' writers (in the period 1896 -1940). How did these narratives present life experienced as what Hardy called 'the ache of the modern'? How was narrative transformed under the pressures of express adequately such experience? How did the 'modernist' novel both transmit and contest 'modernity' as elaborated in contemporary philosophy, psychology, sociology?

**Course Objectives**

The aim of the course is to develop students' understanding of

- the principal political, philosophical, psychological dynamics affecting the development of Anglophone narrative fiction in the period;
- the literary strategies developed by these novelists in the context of 'modernity';
- the extent to which 'modernist' narratives extend and/or contest earlier ideas of 'realism' in literature;
- the strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical claims to a distinctively 'modernist' novel and of 'modernism' more generally as a distinctive literary phenomenon.

The course is designed to be multidisciplinary and is suitable for students of all disciplines who have a strong interest in the novel, narrative methods, and the history of modernity. There are no prerequisites and no previous knowledge of modernism or literary analysis is required, but would be an advantage.

**Teaching Methodology and Assessment**

12 x 1.25hr Lectures (15hrs)

6 x 1.25hr Seminars (7.5hrs)

4 x 1.25hr Tutorials (5hrs)

Introductory lectures will suggest possible relationships that might exist between fiction and modernity, politics and narrative production, subjectivity and its 'others,' as well as outline the broader contexts of 'modernism(s).'

Subsequent lectures will address the work of specific writers and their own theories of fiction and narrative. Students will be expected to have read the texts, including the supplementary essays, before the relevant lecture. Mid-term and Final lectures will reconsider the questions raised by the introductory lectures in light of the narratives read.

Seminars and Tutorials (8 in total) will allow for further discussion of the novels, of the theories of modernity, and of narrative addressed in the lectures. In addition, students will be expected to

give a short oral presentation on one of the novels in the context of the broader questions of modernity raised in the lectures.

**Assessment:** A final essay of no more than 3,000 words (40%), a final three-hour written examination (40%), an oral presentation (10%), and participation in seminar discussion (10%).

Note: When seeking copies of texts, especially the primary texts, look first for the recommended edition (if any). In every case, be sure to obtain a scholarly, reliable edition of the text (e.g. Oxford University Press, Vintage, etc.). Internet sources can be dubious, and the introductions and notes of scholarly editions will be useful. Norton Critical Editions, where available, are excellent in this regard.

### **Lecture 1: Modernism, Modernity, and Narrative Fiction**

Required reading:

- Pericles Lewis, 'Introduction,' *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 1-35.

Suggested further reading:

- Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Modern Life,' in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010);
- Sigmund Freud, excerpts from *Civilization and its Discontents* (tr. James Strachey, 1930);
- Franco Moretti, introductory chapter of *Signs Taken for Wonders* (tr. Susan Fischer, David Forgacs, David Miller; London: Verso, 1983).

### **Lecture 2: Reality and 'Realism' in the Modernist Novel**

Required reading:

- George Eliot, 'The Natural History of German Life' and Review of John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 3 (both in *Selected Essays of George Eliot*, ed. A.S. Byatt)
- Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' (in *Selected Essays*, ed. David Bradshaw; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008);
- Pericles Lewis, 'The Avant-Garde and High Modernism' in *Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*.

### **Lecture 3: Joseph Conrad**

Required reading:

- Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897)
- *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

### **Lecture 4: Narrative and Knowledge**

Required reading:

- Sigmund Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria' (1905 [1901]) (either in *The Psychology of Love*, ed. Jeri Johnson, London: Penguin, 2007 or in *Standard Edition*, ed. James Strachey, London: Vintage, 2001 [1953])
- Henry James, 'The Figure in the Carpet' (1896)

### **Lecture 5: Ford Madox Ford**

Required reading:

- 'On Impressionism' (1914)
- *The Good Soldier* (1915)

### **Lecture 6: James Joyce**

Required reading:

- 'A Portrait of the Artist' (1904)
- *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)

Highly recommended:

- 'The Dead' (1914, in *Dubliners*)

### **Lecture 7: Modernism's Modes: What Happens to History?**

### **Lecture 8: Popular Fiction, Modernism, and Modernity**

Required reading:

- John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915)
- Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Valley of Fear* (1915)

### **Lecture 9: Virginia Woolf**

Required reading:

- 'Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown' (1923)
- *To the Lighthouse* (1927)
- 'The Leaning Tower' (1940)

### **Lecture 10: Nella Larsen**

Required reading:

- *Quicksand* (1928)
- *Passing* (1929)

### **Lecture 11: Djuna Barnes**

Required reading:

- 'James Joyce' (1922)
- *Nightwood* (1936)

### **Lecture 12: Final Reckoning**