

Digital Modernism

Fall 2012

Professor Robert L. Zamsky

Office Hours: Thursday, 9:30 – 10:30 or by appointment

Course Meets T/F: 1 – 2:20, in ACE 217

One of the most exciting aspects of literary studies over the last several years has been the proliferation of digital archives of previously rare material. It is now possible to easily access the small journals, magazines and other publications where many of the most important modernist literary works first appeared. This gives us an opportunity to see these sometimes wildly different texts side by side, to explore the editorial practices that fueled modernist innovation, and to see how avant-garde literature bumped up against the practical demands of advertising and commerce. The explosion of digitally available material has also fueled the emergence of a new strain in scholarly studies, referred to as “digital humanities,” which seeks to broaden our understanding of literary and cultural movements by taking advantage of advances in computing and information technology. The course will serve as both an exploration of the wealth of material available via digital archives, and as an introduction to the field of digital humanities.

Our primary resource for this course is *The Modernist Journals Project*, a joint initiative by Brown University and the University of Tulsa. The homepage for the site is located at: <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/mjp/> We will use this site extensively throughout the semester, and I encourage you to become familiar with it as soon as possible.

We will also be reading Franco Moretti’s book, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History*, available in the campus bookstore. There will also be occasional reading materials posted on the course Newdle Page.

This is a writing-intensive course and part of New College's Seminars in Critical Thinking; it is recommended to students who want to improve their critical thinking and writing skills. This class is limited to 15 students with preference to first or second year or recent transfer students.

Enrollment is limited to 15 students.

Requirements

Attendance and Participation

As a seminar, this course functions only with the active participation of each member. I will expect you to come to class well prepared and eager to contribute to class conversation. This does not mean that I expect you to have all the answers; rather, I want you to engage with the material, asking questions, pursuing hunches, sharing insights, and interacting with your peers. *Any more than two absences will automatically jeopardize your ability to “sat” this course.*

Writing

As a seminar in Critical Thinking, this class will devote a good deal of time and attention to student writing. The writing assignments described below are designed to help students develop the skills and habits necessary to succeed in the college's writing intensive atmosphere.

Detailed assignment sheets will follow, but your writing for the course will fall into the following categories:

Course Wiki

You will make weekly contributions to the course wiki. These can be brief, but they should give a clear sense of your reactions to and thoughts about the course reading. The wiki posts are due by 5pm each Wednesday; they should give you the chance to both reflect on and extend past course discussions and raise issues related to the reading for the next class meeting.

Response Papers

You will write three informal Response Papers. No more than three pages in length, the response papers give you the chance to use your writing as a means of engaging with and understanding the course material. While the Response Papers are informal, they are more than merely journals. They should propose and develop a thesis regarding the course reading.

Perfect Paragraphs

Over the course of the semester you will write three "perfect paragraphs." These short assignments will treat a topic raised in your Response Papers or on the course wiki; in contrast to the Response Papers and the course wiki, these assignments foreground the craft of writing. They may be revised if necessary.

Annotated Bibliography

Writing an annotated bibliography is a habit and a skill that will serve you not only in your subsequent coursework, but also, ultimately, in your thesis. The annotated bibliography forces you to distill your reactions to a resource into no more than a few sentences, and it allows you to track the development of your research. Staff from the Writing Resource Center will conduct a workshop on the effective use of an annotated bibliography. The final bibliography is due Tuesday, December 11.

Final Paper

Your final paper in the course will be a research-based argument focusing on an issue related to modernism as studied in the course. You will first write a proposal for the final paper, including a précis and a bibliography. You will then workshop the paper in class on Friday, November 16. The final, revised version of the paper is due Tuesday, December 11.