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## ENG 5006-600 Studies in Twentieth Century British Literature

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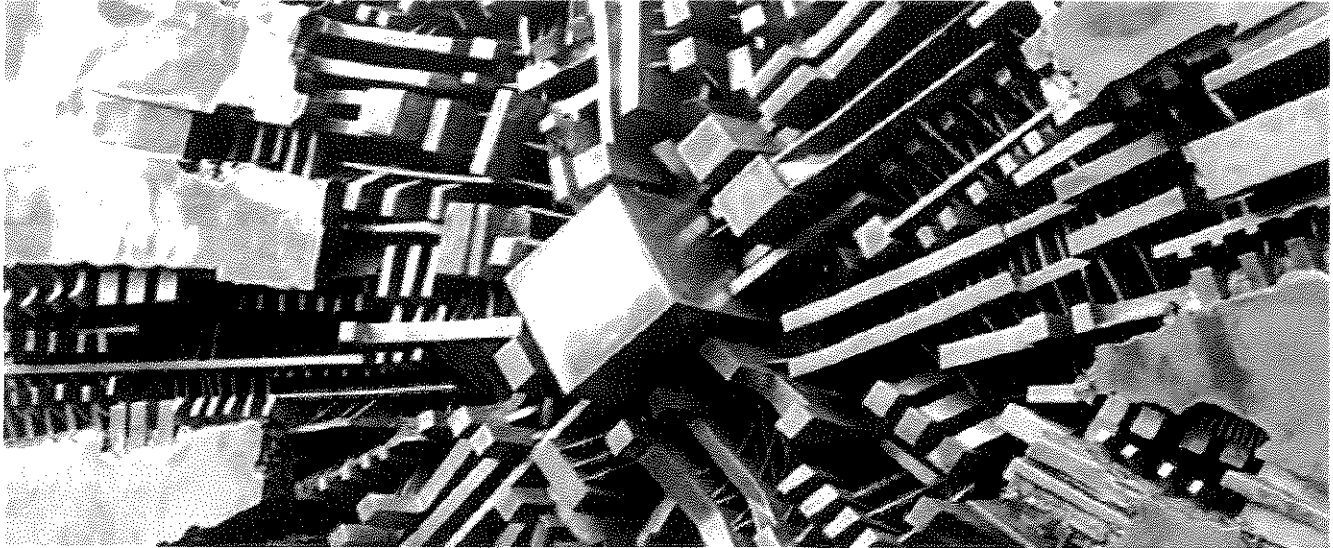
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# ENG 5006: "Those with Elsewhere in Their Blood": Modernism's Afterlife in Contemporary Fiction

spring 2022 / Section 600

Dr. Chris Wixson



## course philosophy

Scholars usually stake out the territory of British literary Modernism between the first and second world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when writers responded innovatively to a crisis of representation spawned by various spatial, temporal, psychological, socio-political, technological, and existential dislocations. Recent works of fiction, however, challenge such traditional periodized definitions as a new generation of authors seeks to dialogically reconfigure and repurpose Modernist tropes to represent the lived experience of "those with elsewhere in their blood."

This course will stage a quick review of literary Modernism within the context of two short stories by Virginia Woolf, a 1945 story by Anna Kavan, Rebecca West's 1918 novella *The Return of the Soldier*, and a seminal early novel by Dominican writer Jean Rhys entitled *Voyage in the Dark* before turning to four contemporary works of fiction. Throughout, we will pay particular (although not exclusive) attention to Modernism's legacy in the work of 21<sup>st</sup> century black British writers as they tackle subjects such as migration, identity formation, desire, legacy, violence, and the construction of racial, gender, class, and sexual difference.

Infused by the spectrality of British imperialism and sociopolitical discrimination, the broadly-scoped reading list is largely comprised of the work of first- and second- generation Londoners as well as authors from nations that are former British colonies, all written in English. Fiction by Oyinkan Braithwaite, Guy Gunaratne, Mohsin Hamid, Anna Kavan, Helen Oyeyemi, Jean Rhys, Ali Smith, Rebecca West, and Virginia Woolf will be supplemented by secondary readings in criticism and theory.

As scholar Maria Helena Lima reminds us, "while Black in the US refers mostly to peoples of African descent—whatever their countries of origin—in Britain, it is a political category grounded on shared ex-colonial origins and/or social marginalization. The writers [we will study] have embraced 'Blackness' as a process of becoming, when their 'otherness' creates a conscious coalition, a self-consciously constructed space, where identity is inscribed by political kinship and not by any 'natural' identification."

## Learning Outcomes

1. To provide strategies for reading and appreciating the works of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century British fiction in context and in dialogue.
2. To allow each member of the class to engage the significant issues and questions raised by the texts through writing and Forum discussion.
3. To assist in the development of skills of critical reading, analytical thinking, and argumentative writing.

## course texts

*My Sister, the Serial Killer*, Oyinkan Braithwaite; *In Our Mad and Furious City*, Guy Gunaratne; *Exit West*, Mohsin Hamid; *Voyage in the Dark*, Jean Rhys; *Hotel World*, Ali Smith; *The Return of the Solider*, Rebecca West; and short stories by Anna Kavan, Helen Oyeyemi, and Virginia Woolf.

## an online course in practice

The online experience is a change from traditional face-to-face learning but especially enhances creativity, self-direction, and articulate expression in writing, all **essential skills** in the professional world. This course may well involve *slightly* more reading than you expect but *certainly* more writing than you may be used to, even in graduate courses. The time and labor investment is the same, but their expressions will “look” different and feel more independent, as will our course schedule.

Each week of the term will have a set of readings along with prompts for varied remote course activities in response that must be completed and submitted via D2L. All course materials (except for novels sent to you by TRS) will be located on D2L. We may seek opportunities *if possible* for synchronous interaction, though *never* if it will disadvantage students who do not have reliable devices/access to strong Wifi signals or who have difficult schedules related to jobs or child/elder care. As we all navigate the challenging contours of online study, let's work together to make the course a meaningful, inclusive experience for us all.

## contact information

Dr. Chris Wixson

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**\*\*I check email very frequently so please don't hesitate to contact me with questions. However, I tend to go to sleep around 9:00 PM CST. As such, if you have a question that needs answering that night, get it to me by 8:30; otherwise, your answer will be in your mailbox around 6:30 AM CST the following morning.**

## office hours

For those who are on campus, I am available to meet with you in-person (masked and distanced) in DFAC 1351. For those who are remote learning, I am available to meet with you via Zoom. I am generally free mornings M-F CST so let me know if/when you would like to schedule a time. **Email too can be a good, convenient, and safe way to get questions answered, feedback on your drafts, and guidance during the process of assignments.**

## reading assignments

Needless to say, this course has a demanding reading schedule. While none of the novels are excessively long, their complexities of language (the source of their energy, wonder, and richness) **require** extra time and dedicated attention. In addition, each week, I will also provide some Notes to read (what I would ordinarily share at the beginning of in-person class sessions). As such, success in this course **demand**s strong time-management and rigor in reading, writing, and thinking. Trust that these enormously brilliant authors will reward the investment.

## writing assignments

This course requires writing of different kinds. The latest research and thinking in Humanities pedagogy is that committed, regular writing is essential to meaningful growth in courses in literature, especially at advanced levels. As such, we will *regularly* be writing as well as sharing *in* writing in order to deepen engagement with these texts. Doing so will enable you to move forward from the experience of this course a better reader and writer, more confident and proficient in organizing and constructing strong interpretive arguments. The tasks will include:

- \*Short pieces of writing for a midterm Lab session that provides an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of and engagement with the texts through close reading and interpretive analysis
- \*An Academic Book Review of a scholarly essay that is engaged, engaging, original, and articulate
- \*Substantive, Insightful, and Respectful Participation via Forum posts — equivalent to regular contributions to class discussion
- \*A Final Synthesis Assignment

**\*\*WARNING:** The intellectual pre-writing work for these assignments will be challenging and time-consuming. The prompts are available so that you may (and should) start early. In addition, because these are demanding texts, it is expected that you will be working closely with me during your writing process for each. **The goal for all of them is to demonstrate your understanding of the course readings and your adeptness at applying/synthesizing that knowledge in new ways.**

## final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Midterm Lab	20%
Twenty-Two Discussion Forum Posts	30%
Academic Book Review	20%
Final Synthesis Assignment	30%

(Written feedback on the Lab, Review, and Synthesis drafts will be sent via email.)

## class participation

Participation in an inquiry-based, graduate seminar means careful, full preparation of the reading, insightful contributions to Forum threads, and risk-taking in writing and thinking. Discussion is the **heart and soul** of any graduate literature course, *your* space to animate. Saying you are "frustrated" with the reading and thus have nothing to contribute is intellectually lazy and irresponsible. While there will be struggle with the complexity of these novels at times, this course understands that complexity as part of the challenge to which we aspire to rise during the semester.

## late assignments

These are no fun for me to keep track of and only put you further behind. For each day beyond the scheduled due date, late labs/essays will be penalized a third of a letter grade. **After a week, I will no longer accept them, and the grade becomes a "0."** If you become ill or the victim of emergency circumstances, please email me as soon as possible and stay in touch.

### **academic integrity**

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

### **special needs and situations**

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

### **tech support**

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact me.

# ENG 5006: Modernism's Afterlife

## course calendar

Dr. Chris Wixson

\*\*Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you access it frequently on D2L so as to note any revisions. Please get into the habit of *regularly* checking email and the D2L calendar.

\*\*These writers extend to their readers unique and often profound experiences that will be *seriously* undermined by introductory essays, book cover blurbs, Wikipedia entries, Google searches, and Sparknote resources. Consider this statement a formal Spoiler Alert.

\*\*Be prepared for the fact that most of the works of fiction in this course employ strong language, racial/misogynist/homophobic slurs, and depictions of sex and violence. The writers make these choices not out of callow sensationalism or glorification but as part of their aesthetic and thematic vision.

\*\*Prompts for written assignments and Discussion Forum posts can all be found on D2L.

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### Week One (January 10) – Course Contexts (Modernism and Black British Fiction)

Read: "Course Contexts" / "Definitions of Modernism" (D2L)  
"Reading and Responding to Modernist Texts" /  
"Modernism and Enlightenment Thought" (D2L)  
Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall" and "Kew Gardens" / Notes 1 (D2L)  
Anna Kavan's "Glorious Boys" (1945) (D2L)  
[Ignore the excerpts from "Our City" that follow the story in the pdf.]  
Helen Oyeyemi's "if a book is locked there's probably a good  
reason for that don't you think" (2016) (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #1 Due by Friday, January 14 at 11:59 PM

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### Week Two (January 17) – Jean Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark* (1911 through 1934)

Read: *Voyage in the Dark* Part One (Chapters 1-5) / Notes 2 (D2L)  
"Discussion Forum Guide" (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #2 Due by Tuesday, January 18 at 11:59 PM

Read: *Voyage in the Dark* Part One (Chapters 6-9)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #3 Due by Friday, January 21 at 11:59 PM

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### Week Three (January 24) – Rhys' *Voyage in the Dark*

Read: *Voyage in the Dark* Parts Two and Three / Notes 3 (D2L)

Write: Discussion Forum Post #4 Due by Tuesday, January 25 at 11:59 PM

Read: *Voyage in the Dark* Part Four (revised) AND Part Four (original) [D2L]

Write: Discussion Forum Post #5 Due by Friday, January 28 at 11:59 PM

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**Week Four (January 31) – Academic Book Review**

Read: Academic Book Review Assignment Sheet / Essays (D2L)  
Write: **Academic Book Review Due Friday, February 4 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Five (February 7) – Oyinkan Braithwaite's *My Sister, the Serial Killer* (2018)**

Read: *My Sister, the Serial Killer* pp. 1-130 / Notes (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #6 Due by Tuesday, February 8 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *My Sister, the Serial Killer* pp. 131-226  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #7 Due by Friday, February 11 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Six (February 14) – Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918)**

Read: *The Return of the Soldier* pp. 1-59 (Chapters 1-4)  
Notes (D2L) / Discussion Forum Posting Guide (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #8 Due by Tuesday, February 15 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *The Return of the Soldier* pp. 61-90 (Chapters 5-6)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #9 Due by Friday, February 18 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Seven (February 21) – Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017)**

Read: *Exit West* Chapters 1-4 / “Exit West Guide” (D2L)  
“Now I Have to Burn Everything I Have Achieved” (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #10 Due by Tuesday, February 22 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *Exit West* Chapters 5-6  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #11 Due by Friday, February 25 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Eight (February 28) – Hamid's *Exit West***

Read: *Exit West* Chapters 7-10 / “Exit West Guide” (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #12 Due by Tuesday, March 1 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *Exit West* Chapters 11-12  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #13 Due by Friday, March 4 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Nine (March 7) – Lab Week**

Read: Lab Assignment Sheet (D2L)  
Write: **Lab Due by Friday, March 11 at 11:59 PM**

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**WEEK OF MARCH 14 — HAPPY SPRING BREAK!!!! (Start Reading *Hotel World*)**

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**Week Ten (March 21) – Ali Smith’s *Hotel World* (2001)**

Read: *Hotel World* Chapters 1-3 / “*Hotel World* Notes” (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #14 Due by Tuesday, March 22 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *Hotel World* Chapter 4  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #15 Due by Friday, March 25 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Eleven (March 28) – Smith’s *Hotel World***

Read: *Hotel World* Chapters 5-6  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #16 Due by Tuesday, March 29 at 11:59 PM**

Read: “*Hotel World* Paratext Notes” (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #17 Due by Friday, April 1 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Twelve (April 4) – Guy Gunaratne’s *In Our Mad and Furious City* (2018)**

Read: *In Our Mad and Furious City* “Prologue” and Part One / Notes  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #18 Due by Tuesday, April 5 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *In Our Mad and Furious City* Part Two pp. 115-149  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #19 Due by Friday, April 8 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Thirteen (April 11) – Gunaratne’s *In Our Mad and Furious City***

Read: *In Our Mad and Furious City* Part Two pp. 150-218 and Part Three  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #20 Due by Tuesday, April 12 at 11:59 PM**

Read: *In Our Mad and Furious City* “Epilogue” and reread the “Prologue”  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #21 Due by Friday, April 15 at 11:59 PM**

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**Week Fourteen (April 18) – Final Synthesis Assignment *Reading* Week**

Read: Final Synthesis Assignment Sheet / Essays (D2L)  
Write: **Topic/Sources Summary due Wednesday 4/20 by 11:59 PM**

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**Week Fifteen (April 25) – Final Synthesis Assignment *Writing* Week**

Read: Final Synthesis Assignment Sheet / Essays (D2L)  
Write: **Discussion Forum Post #22 (Synthesis Abstract) Due Friday, April 29 by 11:59 PM**

**\*Final Paper Due to D2L Dropbox by Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> 11:59 PM\***