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ENG 3808-001: 20th Century British Literature

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Goals
By the end of the semester I hope a number of things will have happened:
1. We will have talked about a number of texts, in the process getting acquainted with the themes and techniques most characteristic of the modern British period;
2. We will have talked about the period itself: what historical events and cultural forces might have contributed to the shaping of these texts and their authors;
3. We will have talked about the theoretical issues raised by these texts: why experiment with style or narrative technique? At what point do new ideas about life demand new literary forms? How relevant is a writer's gender, social class, or race to his or her work? What is the relationship between literature and the sociopolitical context out of which it emerges?

Requirements:
Two papers, one short (2-3 pp), and one long (6-8 pp)
One project (you'll have a range of things to choose from)
Two exams: midterm and final
Reading responses

Reading responses
For almost every reading assignment, I'll ask you to write about some issue for the following class. These responses will then serve as the basis for class discussion. They should be 1-2 pp., legible (if possible typed). Every week or so, I will collect and grade the responses; grades (on a 10-point scale) will be based on completeness, thoughtfulness, and precision. Unless you can give me a good reason for the delay, I will not read responses that are not received in the class at which I collect them. Please keep all your responses in a folder and bring them to each class.

Project
This is largely up to you, though I do need to okay project ideas. You might work in a group or individually. You might present material to the class or hand something in to me. Possibilities
include: dramatic recitation of a poem, performance of a scene from a play, drawing cartoons based on novel, making tape of background music for a poem, presenting information on a text or author or historical event to the class, writing a lesson plan. . . The point is to make some connection between your particular interests and abilities and the course material that allows you to learn and have fun at the same time. Be imaginative.

Policies
I expect students to be in class, to be prepared, and to participate in class discussion. A portion of the grade will reflect your involvement in class discussions and your degree of preparation. You will also be required to keep a reading journal (your collected reading responses), for which assignments will be given in class, and in which there will be occasional in-class writing assignments. Obviously keeping up with the reading and in-class activities is essential.

If you're having problems with a writing or reading assignment, come see me! Stop by my office any time: I'm generally there. If necessary, call me at home (I'm in the phone book), as long as it's before 9 pm.

Grades:
Papers: 35% (15/20)
Exams: 35% (15/20)
Responses/participation: 20%
Project: 10%
Grading scale: 91-100 = A; 81-90 = B; 71-80 = C; 65-70 = D; below 65 = F

Please note that because I use a 100-point grading scale, missing work (which receives a 0) has a major impact on your grade.

Late policies: Plan to hand in papers on time. If you're having problems, come talk to me! --Reading responses will be accepted ONLY at the class for which they are due, not at any other time (except in cases of emergency or by prior arrangement).
--Essays a week or more late will not be accepted at all.

English Department statement on plagiarism:
Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) --has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Tentative Syllabus
January 13: introduction to course
Fri 17: Finish Hardy; begin "Heart of Darkness" in Portable Conrad

Mon 20: no class
Wed 22: Conrad
Fri 24: Conrad

Mon 27: Conrad
Wed 29: Forster, Howards End
Fri 31: Forster

Mon Feb 3: Forster
Wed Feb 5: Forster
Fri Feb 7: Forster

Mon 10: Lawrence, Sons and Lovers
Wed 12: Lawrence
Fri 14: no class

Mon 17: Lawrence
Wed 19: Lawrence

Wed 26: Joyce, Dubliners.
Fri 28: Joyce

Mon March 3: Joyce
Wed 5: Joyce
Fri 7: Joyce

Mon 10: Joyce
Wed 12: midterm

March 17-21: spring break

Fri March 28: Woolf. To the Lighthouse

Mon 31: Woolf
Wed Ap 2: Woolf
Fri Ap 4: Woolf

Fri Ap 11: Beckett

Mon Ap 14: Beckett
Wed Ap 16: Achebe. Things Fall Apart
Fri Ap 18: Achebe

Mon Ap 21: Achebe

Mon Ap 28: Carter "The Courtship of Mr Lyon" and "The Tiger's Bride"
Wed Ap 30: Carter
Fri May 2: review

There will be a final exam during exam week.
Modernism:

1. Questions whether there is a preexisting order or meaning to the world.
   
   "Agnosticism has taken away Providence as death takes away the mother from the child and leaves us forlorn of protection and love."—Mark Pattison

2. Questions power of reason, the validity of absolute moral values, the existence of progress, the superiority of English culture

3. Questions whether we can know ourselves or understand others

4. Questions effectiveness of language

5. Anti-Victorianism

In literary terms this leads to:

1. Use of symbols to depict inner, psychological world rather than "realistic" detail to depict physical world.

2. Alogical structure or Frank's "spatial form": move away from chronology, continuity.

3. Sense of consciousness as fluid, "stream of consciousness"

4. Self is seen as layered, complex, with irrational, unconscious element

5. Interest in shared forces (Freud, Jung, myth) shaping behavior


7. Emphasis on solipsism: inability of self to get outside itself:
   "Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world."—Pater, conclusion to The Renaissance (1868)

   "The world of each is peculiar and private to that soul."
   --F. H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality (1893)

   "Another man's truth is only a dismal lie to me."
   —Conrad, letter, 1895.

   "We live as we dream--alone." —Conrad, Heart of Darkness

8. Mixed diction, concrete imagery, formal experimentation, sexual explicitness

9. Artist as hero

10. Art as separate realm offering an order unavailable in life, not to be limited by moral pressures. Art as autonomous.

11. Anti-Aristotelian emphasis on character rather than plot.

12. Artist alienated/exiled, with problematic relation to audience and to story

13. Quest for alternative belief systems or kinds of coherence: Unity of Being, epiphany, moment of vision, spiritualism, social meliorism
Modernists on Victorianism:

Virginia Woolf in Orlando: Rugs appeared; beards were grown; trousers were fastened tight under the instep. The chill which he felt in his legs the country gentleman soon transferred to his house; furniture was muffled; walls and tables were covered; nothing was left bare. Then a change of diet became essential. The muffin was intervented and the crumpet. Coffee supplanted the after-dinner port, and, as coffee led to a drawing-room in which to drink it, and a drawing-room to glass cases, and glass cases to artificial flowers, and artificial flowers to mantelpieces, and mantelpieces to pianofortes, and pianofortes to drawing-room ballads, and drawing-room ballads (skipping a stage or two) to innumerable little dogs, mats, and china ornaments, the home—which had become extremely important—was completely altered.

... Love, birth, and death were all swaddled in a variety of fine phrases. The sexes drew further and further apart. No pen conversation was tolerated. Evasions and concealments were sedulously practised on both sides. (1928)

Lytton Strachey in Biographical Essays: Victorian era was a time "when gas-jets struggled feebly through the circumambient fog, when the hour of dinner might be at any moment between two and six, when the doses of rhubarb were periodic and gigantic... when an antimacassar was on every chair, and the baths were minute tin circles and the beds were full of bugs and disasters."

E.M. Forster 1920: The English are "the people who have built up an Empire with a Bible in one hand, a pistol in the other, and financial concessions in both pockets" — Abinger Harvest

Anti-Victorianism

When in the grim, grey, rainy January days of 1901 Queen Victoria lay dying, we already felt that we were living in an era of incipient revolt and that we ourselves were mortally involved in this revolt against a social system and code of conduct and morality which, for convenience sake, may be referred to as bourgeois Victorianism. We did not initiate this revolt. When we went up to Cambridge, its protagonists were Swinburne, Bernard Shaw, Samuel Butler in The Way of All Flesh, and to some extent Hardy and Wells. We were passionately on the side of these champions of freedom of speech and freedom of thought, of common-sense and reason. We felt that, with them as our leaders, we were struggling against a religious and moral code of cant and hypocrisy.

— Leonard Woolf
Nature's Questioning

When I look forth at dawning, pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree
All seem to gaze at me
Like chastened children sitting silent in a school;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,
As though the master's ways
Through the long teaching days
Had cowed them till their early zest was overborne.

Upon them stirs in lippings mere
(As if once clear in call,
But now scarce breathed at all)--
"We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

"Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains? ...
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

"Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood
Of Evil stormed by Good
We the forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?"

Thus things around. No answerer I. . . .
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,
And Earth's old glooms and pains
Are still the same, and Life and Death are neighbours nigh.