

Figuring Modernism

ENGL 539A-001: STUDIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA | Term 2 Winter 2018-2019



Jacques Lipchitz, The Guitar Player, 1918, Bronze #lacma

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Vital Info

– This course meets on Fridays from 10:00 am to 12:50 pm in BUTO 321

My office hours: W 11:30-1:30 and by appointment

Course Description

“There are two ways of going beyond figuration ... either toward abstract form or toward the Figure. Cézanne gave a simple name to this way of the Figure: sensation. The Figure is the sensible form related to a sensation; it acts immediately upon the nervous system, which is of the flesh, whereas abstract form is addressed to the head and acts through the intermediary of the brain, which is closer to the bone.”—Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (trans. Daniel W. Smith), p. 31.

In 2018, the Modernist Studies Association invited submissions to its conference under the rubric of “Graphic Modernisms.” This not only suggests the growing ascendancy of graphic design during the period (the term itself was coined in Modernism’s *annus mirabilis*, 1922), but also the general pressure which Modernism as an aesthetic and intellectual movement put upon figuration. Arguably, the most important “going beyond” was of the idea of the real itself, as the century took thought about how to manage its own hermeneutic suspicion. In *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* Michael Bell speaks of a “living synthesis of different world conceptions...held together in a ... mutually testing relation” (12). This course explores seminal and recent work on the Figure in Modernist style in relation to its materialisms and politics, its cross and intermedia, its global travels, and its cultural histories, and tries to come to some conclusions about the lasting effects of Modernism’s crisis of representation on consciousness. Perhaps the Figure can even help us to reimagine the Subject.

Book List

You are not required to use these editions, but please do select a scholarly edition. However, in the case of *Ulysses*, you should use this Gabler edition.

Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 9780816643424

“First published in French in 1981, *Francis Bacon* has come to be recognized as one of Deleuze’s most significant texts in aesthetics. Anticipating his work on cinema, the baroque, and literary criticism, the book can be read not only as a study of Bacon’s paintings but also as a crucial text within Deleuze’s broader philosophy of art. In it, Deleuze creates a series of philosophical concepts, each of which relates to a particular aspect of Bacon’s paintings but at the same time finds a place in the “general logic of sensation.”—UMN Press website: <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/francis-bacon>

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 9780872866355

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, any scholarly edition (the new CUP is standard for Conrad journals)

W.B. Yeats, selected poems listed on Canvas

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, 9780199536610

T.S. Eliot, *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, 9780300119947

James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, 9780199536443

James Joyce, *Ulysses*, 9780394743127

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*, 9780811216715

Other materials as supplied on the Canvas course site or offered in class

What You Will Do

- 20% — Present and lead one seminar discussion on an assigned reading. Your presentation should include a handout which summarizes the issues of your presentation, lists key points, and offers one or two specific examples. You are welcome to introduce ideas, research, or cultural productions which we have not studied, but which will add to our discussions.
- 20% — Submit brief written critical reflections on two assigned readings of your choice (10% each).
- 60% — Research/critical essay of 4500-6000 words (15-20 pp) due on April 15, 2019.

Attendance is expected. Please come to class having done the readings, and do participate enthusiastically in seminar conversations. Consider this a safe space to practice for all the situations in which we have to think and speak on our feet in the profession. Talking, listening carefully to colleagues, and thoughtfully responding to new argumentative vectors are all important professional skills. I suggest that you prepare at least one point for discussion or a provocative question from one of the readings for each meeting, and resolve to speak at least once each week in seminar. Please have the day's assigned texts with you in an accessible format (print or electronic) at class meetings.

I am available in office hours or by appointment for individual conferences about your coursework, research, or other profession-related matters as you may wish.

Please know that "Religious observance may preclude attending classes or examinations at certain times. In accordance with the [UBC Policy on Religious Holidays](#), students who wish to be accommodated for religious reasons must notify their instructors in writing at least two weeks in advance, and preferably earlier" (UBC Policy on Academic Concession).

Graduate paper dates aim to accommodate your marking schedule, if applicable; please meet the term paper deadline. Kindly enclose a word count in brackets at the end of the main body of your term essay (just count the words in the body of the paper, not the Works Cited pages). Use

MLA or Chicago style for citations. For information on graduate academic concession and deferred standing, see <https://www.grad.ubc.ca/faculty-staff/policies-procedures/academic-concession>. I do not accept computer breakdowns or accidental file deletions as excusing emergencies—you should frequently back up your work to a cloud account or flash drive, so that you can upload it to the assignment page on time from any connected device. 😊

The course adheres to the university's strict rule against plagiarism. *If you represent the words, productions or ideas of anyone else as your own, you become subject to the disciplinary processes of the university concerning plagiarism.*

Course Schedule

Aesthetics in Modernity

Jan 4 – Course Introduction. Franz Kafka “Odradek” [supplied in class]; various poems [supplied in class]

Jan 11 – Plato’s *Republic* Book X. Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*; excerpt from Walter Pater [supplied in class]

Ways of Seeing

Jan 18– Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Levenson “Modernism”; Friedman “Definitional Excursions”; Henry Adams “The Dynamo and the Virgin”

Jan 25 – T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*; other poems by Eliot on Canvas; Levinas “Reality and Its Shadow”

Ways of Feeling

Feb 1 – W.B. Yeats, selected poems; Deleuze and Guattari “Percept, Affect, and Concept”

Feb 8 – Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*

The Machine Age

Feb 15 - Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*; Heather Fielding “How the Taxi-Driver Reads: Wyndham Lewis and the Novel As Machine”; Breton and Diego “Manifesto: Towards a Free Revolutionary Art”

Feb 22 – NO CLASS MEETING in Reading Week

Ways of Knowing

Mar 1 – James Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; Jean-Luc Nancy “Art, a Fragment”; Bachelard “The Dialectics of Outside and Inside”; Merleau-Ponty “Cézanne's Doubt”

Modernist Style

Mar 8 - James Joyce, *Ulysses*, “Telemachus,” “Nestor,” “Proteus ” “Calypso,” “Hades”; Benjamin “The Artwork in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility”; Adorno and Horkheimer “The Culture Industry”

Mar 15 - James Joyce, *Ulysses*, “Aeolus,” “Lystrogonians,” “Nausicaa ”; Adorno “Towards a Theory of the Artwork”; Lyotard “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde”

Modernist Carnavalesque

Mar 22 - James Joyce, *Ulysses*, “Circe,” “Ithaca,” “Penelope”; Freud “The Relation of Wit to Dreams and to the Unconscious”; Lacan “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious”

Mar 29 - Djuna Barnes *Nightwood*; Teresa de Lauretis “The Queerness of the Drive,” “*Nightwood* and the Terror of Uncertain Signs”; Kristeva “Psychoanalysis and the Polis”

Term Paper due April 12, 2019

Please Also Know

Our classroom space is intended to be welcoming, respectful, inclusive, sensitive, and collaborative, and I request that you self-monitor your own words and actions for civility (including off-topic phone or computer use). Readings, discussions, and lecture materials may reference mature themes, violence, sexuality, potentially challenging or controversial subject matter. If you feel you do not wish to read one of the assigned texts because it may significantly distress you, please see me well in advance of the assigned reading's due date to request a substitute reading assignment; if we cannot agree on an appropriate substitution, you may be obliged to follow the original schedule of readings to complete the course.

Anyone with a documented disability is gently encouraged to contact the Access and Diversity Office in Brock Hall, 1203- 1874 East Mall (tel. 604.822.5844) for accommodations and support services. Other helpful programs are the academic services described at <http://students.ubc.ca/success>, and UBC Counselling Services tel. 604.822.3811 or, after hours, for anyone in distress, the Vancouver Crisis Line, tel. 800.784.2433. I am a resource person with UBC's Positive Space Campaign. As its website announces, "the Positive Space Campaign is an initiative intended to help make UBC more receptive to and welcoming of its lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* (transgender, transsexual, trans-identified), two-spirit, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGBT*TQIA+) communities, individuals and issues of sexual and gender diversity on campus." If you would like more information about this campaign, or to be put in touch with campus resources, please feel free to talk to me, or to contact the Equity and Inclusion Office in Brock Hall, tel. 604.822.6353.