HL 2006: Modernism
Course guide subject to change
Please print only when necessary

Dr Richard Barlow
HSS-03-77
rbarlow@ntu.edu.sg
HL2006: Modernism

This course surveys European and American Modernist literature. The historical events and social/cultural transformations of the late 19th/early 20th centuries (the theories of Darwin, Nietzsche, Marx, Freud; advances in science and technology; increased urbanisation; the rise of extreme right and left-wing politics; the horrors of the First World War; the breaking up of empires), led to widespread feelings of anxiety, disillusionment, and disorientation in many societies. However, these social and cultural factors also led to attempts at cultural revival, renewal, and renovation. Reflecting the profound transitions of the period, Modernist writers offered radical new formal experiments and innovations, pushed the boundaries of what was considered acceptable subject matter, and reflected the new political realities of the era. By studying some of the key texts and writers of Modernist literature, we will seek to understand the main concerns and characteristics of this multi-faceted phenomenon.

Texts

Texts will be made available on Edventure/Blackboard.

Course Assessment

Class participation: 15%

Essay (2500 words): 35%.

Exam: 50%
Seminar Schedule (subject to minor changes)

**Week one: Introduction – modernist aesthetics and historical/cultural contexts**

**Week two: Make it New**
Fillippo Tommaso Marinetti, ‘The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism’ (1909)
Virginia Woolf, ‘Modern Fiction’ (1919)
Eugene Jolas, ‘Manifesto: The Revolution of the Word’ (1929)

**Week three: Yeats – Romantic or Modernist?**
Selection of Yeats’s poetry

**Week four: Scrupulous meanness**
Joyce, ‘The Sisters’, ‘Eveline’, and ‘Two Gallants’ from *Dubliners* (1914)

**Week five: Horror and misfortune**
Franz Kafka, ‘The Metamorphosis’ (1915) ‘Before the Law’ (1916), and ‘An Imperial Message’ (1919)

**Week six: “a heap of dung, crawling with worms, photographed by a cinema camera through a microscope”**
James Joyce, ‘Wandering Rocks’ from *Ulysses* (1922)

**Week seven: Reading week**

**Week eight: Poetry and myth**
T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922) and ‘Ulysses, Order, and Myth’ (1922)

**Week nine: Decadence and decay**
Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1924)

**Week ten: Modernism and Feminism**
Mina Loy, ‘Feminist Manifesto’ (1914) and Virginia Woolf, ‘A Room of One’s Own’ (1929)

**Week eleven: Imagism**
Poetry by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams.
Week twelve: The Supreme Fiction
Poetry by Wallace Stevens

Week thirteen: Modernism/Postmodernism

Suggested Reading

**General:**


Beckett:


Eliot:


**Joyce:**


**Kafka**


**Mann:**


**Williams, Stevens, etc:**


**Woolf:**


**Yeats:**

