Modernism

Seminar Leaders: Laura Scuriatti and James Harker

Times: Tuesdays, 9.30-11.00 and 11.15-12.45
   Thursdays, 11.00-12.30 and 13.30-15.00

Locations: P98 Seminar Room, P98A, P24

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Course Description

At the turn into the twentieth century, a new movement arose, now primarily identified with literary and aesthetic practices, but which can be said to reach across all the most important developments in the arts and the social and natural sciences. The category of ‘time’ was central to modernist experiment, whether in defining a change in the way human consciousness was conceived and represented, in the relationship between the present and the past, and in the dynamics of historical transformation itself. ‘Newness’ itself was a fundamental value of modernism, guiding the programs of artistic practice and an embrace of the microcosmically complex and the unpredictable in scientific procedure. This core course draws upon one of the monumental works of modernist literature, Robert Musil’s The Man Without Qualities, written between 1930 and 1942, to explore the key developments in modernist epistemology and their connection to philosophical accounts of temporality. We investigate the relationship between modernism and modernity; the emergent accounts of the functioning of human consciousness (in psychoanalysis, the discipline of psychology and philosophy); the meaning of modernism in music and the arts, and the specific characteristics of modernist narrative. Musil’s novel accompanies the readings and topics throughout, providing a record of the main intellectual developments in its time (from politics to criminology) and embodying some of the defining features of the modernist novel: a protagonist adjacent to conventional social identity; a narrative logic which follows the associations of the mind; an open-ended structure which negates the frameworks of form; a reflection on the high-bourgeois European culture that was destroyed by the First World War. We end with a reflection on the legacy of modernism today, and its implications for the experience and representation of everyday life and the definition of the objects and aims of art, philosophy and politics.

Requirements

Attendance at every class is essential, as is full advance preparation of the course readings for each seminar. Participation will be graded as listed below. There will be one response paper of 1000 words to be handed in before class between week 2 and week 5, one presentation essay of about 2000 words, due max. one week after the presentation has taken place, one mid-term essay of about 2500-3000 words (approximately 7-9 pages) and one final essay of 3500-4000 words (approx. 12-15 pages).

Essay deadlines:
Response paper: on the morning of the class dedicated to the chosen text
Mid-term paper: 23:59 hrs on Friday 14th March 2014
Final paper: 23:59 hrs on Friday 16th May 2014
Presentation essay: max. one week after the presentation has taken place
Late essays and response papers will be downgraded according to the policy outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Grade Breakdown**
Response paper: 10%
Presentation: 10%
Presentation essay: 15%
Mid-term essay: 20%
Final essay: 25%
Participation: 20%

**Schedule of Classes**

**Week One: January 27-31**
Extra session:
Mon: Visit to the exhibition “Wien-Berlin. Kunst zweier Metropolen”, Berlinische Galerie, 10-12.30 am

Tue: Introduction to the course and Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
Recommended Reading:
Selected manifestos of the avant-garde.

Thurs: MWQ, chapters 1-16

**Week Two: February 3-7**
Tues: Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life”, pp. 1-41 in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (1964), and “To a Passerby”.
Thurs: MWQ, chapters 17-29

**Week Three: February 10-14**
Thurs: MWQ, chapters 30-42

**Week Four: February 17-21**
Tues: Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, “Fräulein Anna O.”, pp. 21-47 in *Studies on Hysteria*
(1895) and S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920).

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 43-59

**Week Five: February 24-28**


**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 60-71

**Week Six: March 3-7**

**Tues:** Heidegger, *Being and Time* (1927, selection). Guest lecturer: Tracy Colony

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 72-84

**Week Seven: March 10-14**

**Tues:** Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1896), pp. 9-76

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 85-98

**Essay deadline:** Friday 14th March at 23.59 hrs

**Spring Break**

**Week Eight: March 24-28**

**Tues:** Joint session with Prof. Michael Steinberg and students from Brown University

**Attention! Change of schedule:**

**Wed, 3.15-4.45pm:** Session on Bauhaus/Modernism

**Thurs, 11am** Visit to rehearsals of Tannhäuser at the Staatsoper (Schillertheater)

**Week Nine: March 31-April 4**

**Tues:** Marcel Proust, *Overture to Swann’s Way* (1922)

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 99-109

**Week Ten: April 7-11**

**Attention! Change of schedule:**

**Mon, 7.30-9.00 pm:** Modernism and Music (Guest lecturer: Paul Festa)

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 110-116

**Week Eleven: April 14-18**

**Tues:** The Concept of Time in Early Anthropology (Guest lecturer: Dr. Regina Knapp)

**Thurs:** MWQ, chapters 117-123

**Week Twelve: April 21-25**

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

*To the Lighthouse*, continued
Week Thirteen: April 28-May 2
Tues: James Joyce, *Ulysses* chapters 1-4, pp. 1-67
Thurs: Federal holiday

Week Fourteen: May 5-9
Tues: *Ulysses*, chapters 7, 10, (18), pp.112-143, pp. 210-244, 690-732

**Essay deadline: 23:59 hrs, Friday 16th May 2014**