

LT141 Virginia Woolf and the New Century

Course Instructor: Laura Scuriatti

Course Times: Mondays and Wednesdays 14:00-15:30

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Laura's Office Hours: Tuesdays 13:30-15:30

Course Description

Virginia Woolf (1822-1941) famously invented a description for the atmosphere of the modern in art, society, and behavior: “on or about December 1910, human character changed.” In this course, we examine the relationship between Woolf’s writings and her historical moment. Although modernist literature is often considered removed from politics and from mass culture, Woolf was a writer who engaged closely with the practical, material pressures of her day. Working across a variety of forms—the novel, lyric prose, pamphlet, short story, essay—and producing new versions of each of them, Woolf sought to create as well as represent the consciousness that she heralded as typical of the new age. As a publisher and associate of many of the leading figures of modernism, she was also, despite her reclusive life, at the center of a movement, and signals the crucial role of collaboration, and a complex dynamics of inspiration, in the production of art. The course links Woolf’s style with the historical developments she confronted, and connects her oeuvre with the wider trends of modernism.

Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes, to come to class prepared and with the relevant materials and textbooks. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned.

Please note that in seminars we will work on printed texts: NO COMPUTERS OR TABLETS allowed in class. Texts which are made available in digital format should be printed for use in class.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Students are asked to buy or borrow from the library the following texts:

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*

Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

(Recommended editions are: Penguin Classics, Vintage and Oxford University Press)

All other texts will be made available in digital format.

Attendance

Please note that attendance at ALL classes is expected. More than two absences (that is absences

from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the participation grade for the course.

Please consult the Student Handbook for regulations governing periods of illness or leaves of absence.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown

Participation:	20%
Quiz (500 words):	10%
Exam (1000 words):	20%
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1000 words):	20%
Final Essay (2000 words):	30%

Schedule

Week 1 – Modernity, Modernism, Literature

Monday, January 28 - Modernism

Readings: Raymond Williams, “When Was Modernism?”; “Metropolitan Perceptions and the Emergence of Modernism”; Michael Levenson; “Modernism in and out of War”; Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (selection)

Wednesday, January 30 – Modernist Literature

Readings: Virginia Woolf, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”; “Modern Fiction”

Weeks 2-5 – The Politics of the New Century and the Role of the Arts

Monday, February 4 – Monday February 11

Readings: V. Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*

Optional extra reading: V. Woolf, “Women and Fiction”.

Wednesday, February 13 – Wednesday February 20

Readings: V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 20: QUIZ

Monday, February 25

Readings: V. Woolf, “Professions for Women”; “Memories of a Working Women’s Guild”; “The Modern Essay”

Wednesday, February 27

Readings: V. Woolf, “Why Art Today Follows Politics”; “Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid”
Melba Cuddy-Keane, “Virginia Woolf and the Public Sphere”

Weeks 6-7 – The Modernist Novel, Consciousness and the City

Monday, March 4 – Wednesday March 13

Readings: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*

Ann Bansfield, *Unspeakable Sentences. Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (selection); Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”

Weeks 8-10 – *To the Lighthouse* and Modernist Aesthetics

Monday, March 18– Wednesday March 27

Readings: V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Dorrit Cohn, *Transparent Minds. Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* (selection)

Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis* (selection)

Monday, April 1

Readings: Roger Fry, *Vision and Design* (selection); Clive Bell, *Art* (selection)

Diane Gillespie, “Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and Painting”

Optional extra reading: Carolyn Heilbrun, “The Bloomsbury Group”

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3: EXAM

Weeks 11-13 – Modernist Biography and Autobiography

Monday, April 8

Readings: V. Woolf, “The New Biography”, “The Art of Biography”

Wednesday, April 10

Readings: V. Woolf, *Orlando*

Spring Break

Monday, April 22 – Wednesday, April 24

Readings: V. Woolf, *Orlando*

Rachel Bowlby, “Orlando’s Vacillation”

Weeks 13-14 – The Waves

Monday, April 29 – Wednesday, May 8

Readings: V. Woolf, *The Waves*

Christine Froula, “A Fin in the Waste of Water”

Week 15: Completion Week

FINAL ESSAY DEADLINE: May 17, 23: 59 hrs