

LT335 VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE MODERN IN LITERATURE

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti
Email: l.scuriatti@berlin.bard.edu
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Despite continuing transformations of what is regarded as “canonical” in English-language literature, the work of Virginia Woolf remains a valued point of reference for contemporary readers and writers, whether in translation or in their original language. Woolf’s life and career embodied a number of contradictions: a woman writer rising to prominence in the wake of a Victorian culture dominated by “great men”; a queer subject who had an outwardly conventional upbringing and marriage; a reclusive artist who nevertheless participated, in directly practical ways, in the wider tasks (mentoring, publishing) of the modernist movement; an ostensibly non-aligned political figure who nevertheless commented on the key issues and pressures of her day, contributing to the causes of pacifism and feminism. Above all, however, Woolf was an innovator in literary prose who eschewed the monumental epic narrative forms of her male contemporaries, revolutionizing the portrayal of human consciousness. It is this aspect of her work that constitutes our main focus, though we also examine the more uncomfortable elements of Woolf’s legacy. These include her infamous snobbery, and the role of imperialist and class hierarchies in her narratives. We examine the responses of contemporary writers and critics to these and other themes, as well as the inspiration that Woolf’s aesthetic continues to provide.

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.

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards

of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Students should not attend class when they test positive for COVID-19.

Bard College Berlin may not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assessment

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, 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.

Assignments

Assignments for this course consist in:

- 2 response papers (students can decide which texts they want to respond to. The response papers are due just before class starts, on the day in which the chosen text is discussed). Response papers cannot be written for the texts chosen for the presentation.
- 1 presentation on a chosen assigned text: max 20 minutes. Students should submit their presentation notes after delivering the presentation – circa 1500 words).
- 2 in-class exams

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Should a student be sick during the exam days or on the day of their scheduled presentations, it will be possible to schedule an alternative date for the missed exam.

An unexcused absence on the day of the assigned presentation or exam will result in a F for that assignment.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Participation:	30%
2 Response papers (500 words each: 1000 words in total):	10%
In-class exam (1500 words):	20%
Presentation (20 minutes max., 1000 words):	20%
Final in-class exam (1500 words):	20%

Library and Book Purchase Policies

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, *Three Guineas*

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

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

All other assigned texts will be made available in digital format.

A reserve shelf with critical readings is available in the library.

Schedule

Week 1 – Modernity, Modernism, Literature

Wednesday, 6 September – Modernism

Introductory lecture and discussion.

Susan Stanford Friedman, "Figures of Modernity. Relational Keywords", in *Planetary Modernisms. Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), pp. 143-180; Mark

Wollaeger, "Introduction", in Mark Wollaeger and Matt Eathough (eds), the *Oxford Handbook of Global Modernism* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp. 3-22; Alys Moody and Stephen J. Ross, "Global Modernisms: An Introduction and Ten Theses", in Alys Moody and Stephen J. Ross (eds), *Global Modernists on Modernism. An Anthology* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), pp. 1-25.

Friday, 8 September – NO CLASS (due to conference attendance). Make-up class scheduled during completion week

Week 2 - Modernist Literature, Modern Life, Modern Characters

Wednesday, 13 September

Readings: V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction"

Friday, 15 September

Readings: V. Woolf, "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown"

Weeks 3-4 - *Mrs Dalloway*, the Modernist Novel, Consciousness and the City

Wednesday, 20 September

Readings: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (selection)

Friday, 22 September

Readings: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (selection)

Ann Banfield, *Unspeakable Sentences. Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (selection)

Wednesday, 27 September

Readings: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (selection)

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"

Friday, 29 September

Readings: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (selection)

Mark S. Micale, "The Modernist Mind. A Map", and "The Modernist Mind. A Timeline", in Mark S. Micale (ed.), *The Mind of Modernism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 1-21 and pp. 22-68;

Optional extra reading: J. Hillis Miller, "*Mrs Dalloway*: Repetition and the Rising from the Dead"

Week 5 – Woolf's Modernist Short Stories

Wednesday, 4 October

Readings: V. Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall"

Friday, 6 October

Readings: V. Woolf, “Kew Gardens” and “Solid Objects”

Weeks 6-8 - *To the Lighthouse* and Modernist Aesthetics

Wednesday, 11 October:

Readings: V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (“The Window”)

Friday, 13 October

Readings: V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (“Time Passes”)

Wednesday, 18 October

Readings: V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (“The Lighthouse”)

Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis* (selection)

Friday, 20 October: IN-CLASS EXAM

MIDTERM BREAK

Wednesday, 1 November

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

Friday, 3 November

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”

Weeks 9-11 Woolf’s Political Works – Feminism and the Political Role of Literature

Wednesday, 8 November and Friday, 10 November

Readings: *A Room of One’s Own*

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

Wednesday, 15 November

Readings: V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, Part One

Friday, 17 November

Readings: V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, Part Two

Melba Cuddy-Keane, “Virginia Woolf and the Public Sphere”

Wednesday, 22 November – SHARED CLASS with Ulrike Wagner’s course *Feminism and Community*

(OSUN Network Collaborative Course) – THREE GUINEAS, FEMINISM AND COMMUNITY

Readings: V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, Part Three

Extra optional readings: V. Woolf, “Why Art Today Follows Politics”; “Thoughts on Peace During an Air Raid”.

Friday, 24 November –

DANCING WOOLF - GUEST LECTURE: Dr. ELISA BOLCHI (UNIVERSITY OF FERRARA)

Readings: Elisa Bolchi, “Dancing Virginia Woolf Back to Life: Woolf Works as Critical and Artistic Recycling”, in Monica Latham, Caroline Marie and Anne-Laure Rigeade (eds), *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 121-133.

Week 12 – Recycling, Rewriting and Critique

Wednesday, 29 November

Sonita Sarker, “Virginia Woolf. Forever (Becoming) English”, in *Women Writing Race, Nation and History. N/native* (Oxford: OUP, 2022), pp. 111-135.

Friday, 1 December

Readings: Kabe Wilson and Susan Stanford Friedman, “Of Words, Worlds and Woolf: Recycling *A Room of One’s Own* into *Of One Woman or So*”, in Monica Latham, Caroline Marie and Anne-Laure Rigeade (eds), *Recycling Virginia Woolf in Contemporary Art and Literature* (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 55-85; Valérie Favre, “Recycling/Upcycling the Iconic Woolf? Negotiating Virginia Woolf as a Literary and Feminist Icon in Kabe Wilson’s *Of One Woman or So*”, in Monica Latham et al, *Recycling Woolf*, pp. 86-99.

Weeks 13-15 – Rethinking Modernist Biography: *Orlando* and *Flush*

Wednesday, 6 December

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

Friday, 8 December EXAM

Wednesday, 13 December and Friday, 15 December

Readings: Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (selection)

Completion week

Wednesday, 15 December (make-up class)

Readings: Virginia Woolf, *Flush* (selection)