

# IS322: Global Modernisms (Spring 2026)

updated 12.2.2025

Seminar Leaders: James Harker, Gilad Nir, Laura Scuriatti  
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Office Hours: By Appointment

## Course Description

Credits: 8 ECTS, 4 U.S. credits

Course Times:

Section A (Gilad) Wednesday & Friday 10:45-12:15  
Section B (Laura) Wednesday & Friday 10:45-12:15,  
Section C (Laura) Wednesday & Friday 14:00-15:30,  
Section D (James) Wednesday & Friday 14:00-15:30

Modernism is generally thought of as a period characterized in literature and art by radical experimentation, by the invention and re-invention of new forms, and by an aesthetic that privileged the present, the modern, the new. As such, it also reacted to and reflected on the process of modernization and different notions of modernity. Modernism was, in fact, a complex constellation of phenomena that saw close interaction among the arts, literature, politics, philosophy, science and economics, and that questioned the most basic categories of aesthetic, political and philosophical thought. The course will focus on three related topics, which will be investigated in relation to each other through a variety of philosophical and theoretical texts, literature, artworks and architecture from across the globe: 1) theories of modernism, modernity and modernization; 2) the role played by cities as increasingly dominant cultural centers, hegemonic forces and subject matter of modernist literature and the arts; 3) the increasing expansion of industry, colonization and global commerce, with a particular focus on literary responses to the perceived dehumanization brought about by technological advancement, bureaucracy and exploitation of the environment.

## Requirements

### Course texts

Students are expected to own or borrow three course texts. Other texts will be uploaded to Brightspace, the course's learning management system.

The syllabus on Google Classroom will be the official, updated version for this course.

The library owns a few copies of the course texts, which can be consulted or borrowed by students. A reserve shelf with relevant texts and suggested readings will be available for study and research connected to the course.

Please make sure you buy or borrow the following texts:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*  
Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*  
Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners*  
Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and active participation in discussions will be an essential part of the course. Participation consists in contributing productively to class discussion in a respectful manner, and in demonstrating a sound knowledge of the texts assigned. Readings should be done in advance of the class for which they are assigned. Participation also requires coming to class with the relevant texts and seminar materials.

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.

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.

### 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.

### Assessment

Students will be assessed on the basis of regular participation and on the basis of written and oral assignments (listed below).

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

### Assignments

- Midterm paper: 2000 words
- In-class quiz: 1500 words
- Final in-class exam: 1500 words

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Assignments 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 assignments that are more than 24 hours late. If an

instructor agrees to accept a late assignment, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline. 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 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%
In-class quiz:	20%
Midterm paper:	30%
Final exam:	20%

## Schedule

### Week 1: Modernity, Modernism, Modernization

Wednesday, January 28

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Friday, January 30

Reading:

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903)  
Robert Musil, *The Man without Qualities* (1930, excerpts)  
Alfred Döblin, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929, excerpt)  
Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (1927-1940, excerpts)  
Sigmund Freud, "A Note Upon The 'Mystic Writing Pad'" (1925),  
Sigmund Freud, excerpt from "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1899)  
Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique" (excerpts, 1917);  
Baudelaire - excerpts from "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863)  
Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910, excerpts),

### Week 2: Foundational Texts and Modernist Manifestos

Wednesday, February 4

Reading:

Continued discussion of Simmel, Musil, Benjamin, Freud, Shklovsky, Rilke, Döblin, Baudelaire

Friday, February 6

Group A: NO CLASS (rescheduled for February 11)

Groups B, C, D: Class is as regularly scheduled

Reading:

Marinetti, F.T. "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" (1909);  
Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto" (1914);  
Tristan Tzara, "Dada Manifesto" (1918);  
Normil G. Sylvain, "La Revue Indigène: Program" (1927);  
Ahmet Haşim, "Some Thoughts about Poetry" (1921)

Week 3: Modernist Manifestos

Wednesday, February 11

Group A: Class meets 10:45-13:45 (double session)

Groups B, C, D: Class is as regularly scheduled

Reading:

Oswald de Andrade, "The Cannibalist Manifesto" (1928);  
Joaquin Torres-Garcia, "Art-Evolution" (1917)

Friday, February 13

Reading:

Victoria Ocampo, "Woman and Her Expression" (selection, 1935);  
Lu Xun, "Some Thoughts on Our New Literature" (1929);  
Mulk Raj Anand, "Manifesto of the Indian Progressive Writers' Association" (1936)

Suggested reading: Lu Xun - "Diary of a Madman"

Sunday, February 15: museum visit, Neue Nationalgalerie, Brancusi exhibition

Meeting Time TBA

Week 4: Modernist Poetry

Wednesday, February 18

Reading:

Poems by Charles Baudelaire, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Tucholsky, Ezra Pound

Friday, February 20

Reading:

Poems by Mina Loy, Rabindranath Tagore, Eugenio Montale.

Extra reading:

Calligrammes, words in freedom and modernist poetry, typography, concrete poetry.

Week 5: Critical Perspectives on Global Modernism

Wednesday, February 25

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Reading:

Moody, Alys and J. Ross Stephen "Introduction" in *Global Modernists on Modernism: An Anthology* (2020). (Focus on pp. 1-8)

Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms. Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018) (Focus on pp. 167-178)

Warwick Research Collective, "World-Literature in the Context of Combined and Uneven Development" (2015) (Focus on pp. 10-15)

Friday, February 27

In-Class Exam

Week 6: Mrs. Dalloway

Wednesday, March 4

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Lecture by James Harker

Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (pages 1-55 [Oxford World's classics]/1-70 [Penguin]/1-64 [Harcourt]/ until "It was over. He went away that night. He never saw her again")

Friday, March 6

Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (up to p. 128 [Oxford Classics]/165 [Penguin]/151 [Harcourt]/until "So that was Dr. Holmes")

Week 7: Mrs. Dalloway

Wednesday, March 11

Reading:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (to the end)

Friday, March 13:

Groups B,C,D: No Class

Group A:

Reading:

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, pp. 1-73

Saturday, March 15: Midterm Essay Due at 23:39

Week 8: South Asian Modernisms

Wednesday, March 18

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Special Guest Lecture by Saskya Jain

Chaudhuri, Supriya, "Modernisms in India", in *The Oxford Handbook of Modernisms*, ed. Peter Brooker, Andrzej Gąsiorek, Deborah Longworth, and Andrew Thacker (Oxford: OUP, 2010)

Friday, March 20

Group A: NO CLASS

Groups B,C,D:

Reading:

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, pp. 1-73

Week 9: *Untouchable* / The Problem of Tradition

Wednesday, March 25

Reading:

Mulk Raj Anand, *Untouchable*, pp. 73-end

Suggested reading: Anand, “The Sources of Protest in My Novels” and “On the Genesis of Untouchable:

Friday, March 27

Reading:

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, “Modern Arabic Literature and the West,”

T.S Eliot, “Tradition and the Individual Talent (1919),”

Jorge Luis Borges, “The Argentine Writer and Tradition” (1951)

Suggested reading: Borges, “The South”, “Pierre Menard”

Spring Break

Week 10: The Regional and The Global: *The Lonely Londoners*, Sam Selvon

Wednesday, April 8

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Lecture by Laura Scuriatti on the Windrush Generation

Friday, April 10

Reading:

Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* - pp. 1-75 (Penguin edition)

Week 11: The Regional and The Global: Sam Selvon and Zora Neale Hurston.

Wednesday, April 15

Reading:

Sam Selvon, *The Lonely Londoners* - pp. 76-end (Penguin edition)

Friday, April 17

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 12: The Regional and The Global: *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora Neale Hurston

Wednesday, April 22

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Friday, April 24

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 13:

Wednesday, April 29

Special Joint Session of ALL GROUPS in the Lecture Hall (12:30-13:30)

Lecture on modernist architecture

Friday, May 1 (Federal Holiday): no class

Week 14: Modernism and Architecture

Wednesday, May 6:

Final exam

Friday, 9 May: NO CLASS (rescheduled for weekend trip)

Saturday, May 10

Tour of the Hufeisensiedlung. Meet at U-Bahnhof Blaschkoallee at 14:00

Recommended readings:

Helmut Geisert, "Models for the Reform of Urban Housing" (2000); Manfred Speidel, "Bruno Taut and Berlin Architecture" (2000)