

E 580: US Modernisms (32786D)
T, 5-7:20 PM (Zoom)
Rowe, Spring 2022 (Office Hours: by appointment)
johnrowe@usc.edu

Texts (in course sequence):

John Carlos Rowe. "Other Modernisms." *A Concise Companion to American Fiction 1900-1950*. Eds. Peter Stoneley and Cindy Weinstein. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Pp. 275-294. (Distributed via Blackboard)

W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Penguin Classics pb. ISBN: 978-0140189988

Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems*. New Directions pb. ISBN: 0811201627

T. S. Eliot. *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. 2nd Ed. Norton Critical Edition. W. W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-97499-7

Gertrude Stein. *Three Lives*. Penguin Classics. pb. ISBN: 978-0140181845

José Clemente Orozco, "The Epic of American Civilization" (1932-1934), frescoes in Baker Library Reserve Room, Dartmouth College (images screened in class).

Muriel Rukeyser, *Out of Silence: Selected Poems*. TriQuarterly Press pb. ISBN: 0916384071

John Neihardt and Nicholas Black Elk. *Black Elk Speaks*. Univ. of Nebraska Press pb. ISBN: 0803283598

Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*. University of Washington Press. ISBN: 978-0295993546

Ann Charters, ed., *The Portable Beat Reader*. Penguin Classics. ISBN: 978-0142437537

James Baldwin, *Another Country*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0-679-74471-9

Course Description:

This seminar will provide a broad view of the different U.S. cultural responses to the modernization process, which will be our working definition of cultural modernism. It is not necessarily an avant-garde cultural medium but can include modes of realism intended to challenge the "fantastic" qualities of modern life between roughly 1890 and 1960. In the first half of the seminar, we will consider several versions of U.S. literary modernism: aesthetic or so-called "high" modernism (Ezra Pound [*Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*], T.S. Eliot [*The Waste Land*], and Gertrude Stein [*Three Lives*]); the Harlem Renaissance (W. E. B. DuBois [*The Souls of Black Folk*]); Left culture of the CPUSA (Rukeyser [*The Book of the Dead*]) and Mexican Marxism (José Clemente Orozco's frescoes [*The Epic of American Civilization*]). In the second

half of the seminar, we will consider some “afterlives” of modernism (decidedly *not* postmodernism or posthumanism, but this can be debated!): the social criticism and cultural expression of the pan-Indian movement of the 1930s (*Black Elk Speaks*); resistance to the so-called “internment” of Japanese-Americans during World War II (Miné Okubo’s *Citizen 13660*), the Beats’ counter-culture (Ginsberg’s *Howl*, Diane di Prima, and a variety of lesser known Beats), and African American modernism after the Harlem Renaissance (James Baldwin, *Another Country*). We will try to assess the complementarity and conflict among these different backgrounds and versions of U.S. literary modernism, as well as consider their respective influences on subsequent political and cultural movements. **Note:** Depending on the size of the seminar and the number of seminar presentations (see below), we may choose as a group to cut one or more of the titles above.

Requirements:

Seminar Leader: Each member of the seminar will lead a seminar discussion at least once during the semester. In some cases, two members of the seminar may work together to lead the discussion. The discussion will last about the final hour of the seminar. Seminar leaders may respond to what I did in the first half of the seminar, introduce other scholarly perspectives, or raise their own questions about the author/text treated that week. The seminar leader should not prepare a paper, report, or any other kind of formal presentation. The seminar leader’s responsibility is to stimulate discussion by all seminar participants. A sign-up sheet will be distributed in the first seminar. Participants should be prepared at that time to choose their weeks.

Seminar Proposal, Update, and Essay: Each member of the seminar will present a proposal for a seminar project in the 6th or 7th week of the semester. Sign ups will occur in the first seminar. The presentation should be about 10 minutes long and include, if possible, a PPTx or other visual complement. The presentation should identify primary text(s) and some scholarship crucial to the project. The project will in many cases be a standard scholarly essay, but other projects are possible and encouraged. Lit/CW graduate students might wish to combine their creative and critical work in some way (in part, because they will have to do that in their final dissertations). Graduate students with interests in the Digital Humanities might take this opportunity to complete a digital project, using a platform like USC’s Scalar or the USC/UCLA Hypercities. Although a wiki or the equivalent can often result in a mere collection of stuff, the challenge to create an analytical/interpretive site of some sort is well worth the effort. In the final seminar on **April 26, T**, each member of the seminar will provide an update on their project – a 5-10 minute informal account, followed by 5 minutes or so of responses. The idea of this discussion will be to focus on problems, so that the group can offer useful advice. The final essay should be about 20-25 pages, include substantial evidence, both from primary and secondary texts, and make an argument in keeping with scholarly protocols. You should follow the *Modern Language Association* system of citation. Projects other than scholarly essays can use these guidelines as analogies. The seminar project is due by email (attached file) on **May 9, W, no later than 5 PM.**

Grading: There will be no discrete percentages for the different assignments. In fact, the seminar proposal and seminar leader role won’t be graded as separate items, but taken into

account in my evaluation of the seminar essay. My written comments (electronically sent) on your seminar essay will include comments on your participation in the seminar. These comments will be the same as those I submit to the Department in evaluation of your performance.

Syllabus

Week 1 (1/11):

Introduction to the seminar. Sign up as a seminar leader. Read: Rowe, "Other Modernisms." *A Concise Companion to American Fiction 1900-1950*. Eds. Peter Stoneley and Cindy Weinstein. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Pp. 275-294. (Distributed via Blackboard)

Week 2 (1/18):

Read: W. E. B. Du Bois. *The Souls of Black Folk*

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 3 (1/25):

Read: Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, parts I and II (in *Selected Poems*). Also read "Notes to *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*," posted on Blackboard. Browse this anthology of Pound's earlier Imagist poems (or any others you choose) in order to understand Pound's use of short Imagist poetry to compose a long poem, such as *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*: "Cino," "Blandula, Tenella, Vagula," "In a Station of the Metro," "The Jewel Stairs' Grievance," "House of Splendour."

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 4 (2/1):

Read: T. S. Eliot. *The Waste Land*.

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 5 (2/8):

Read: Gertrude Stein. *Three Lives*.

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 6 (2/15): Seminar Projects, Part 1

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Week 7 (2/22): Seminar Projects, Part 2

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Week 8 (3/1):

Read: Muriel Rukeyser, *The Book of the Dead*.

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 9 (3/8): View: José Clemente Orozco, “The Epic of American Civilization” (1932-1934), frescoes in Baker Library Reserve Room, Dartmouth College (images screened in class). Prepare at home by exploring the links on this site:

(<https://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/explore/collection/featured-collections/orozcos-epic>)

Seminar Leaders: _____

3/13 – 3/20: SPRING BREAK

Week 10 (3/22):

Read: John Neihardt and Nicholas Black Elk. *Black Elk Speaks*

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 11 (3/29):

Read: Miné Okubo, *Citizen 13660*.

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 12 (4/5):

Read: A selection of the Beats' writing, chosen by the seminar members and with special priority given to the seminar leaders for this seminar, from: Ann Charters, ed., *The Portable Beat Reader*.

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 13 (4/12):

Read: James Baldwin, *Another Country*, Book I (to page 179)

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 14 (4/19):

Read: James Baldwin, *Another Country*, Books II and III

Seminar Leaders: _____

Week 15 (4/26):

Seminar Project updates.

May 9, W, 5:00 PM: SEMINAR ESSAYS DUE ELECTRONICALLY (as email attachment to johnrowe@usc.edu).

Further Readings

Baker, Houston A. *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance*. PS 153.N5B25 1987

Bradbury, Malcolm and McFarlane, James, eds. *Modernism: 1890-1930*. PN56 .M54 M6

Eliot, Valerie, ed. *"The Waste Land": A Facsimile and Transcript of Original Drafts, including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*. PS 3509 .L43 W 3 1971

Glaude, Eddie S., Jr. *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own*. Online (USC Library)

Huggins, Nathan. *The Harlem Renaissance*. NX 512.3 .N5 H8

Kalaidjian, Walter. *American Culture between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique*. NX 180 .S6 K32 1993

Kenner, Hugh. *The Pound Era*. PS 3531 .o82 Z712

Lemke, Sieglinde. *Primitivist Modernism: Black Culture and the Origins of Transatlantic Modernism*. NX 542 .L48 1998

Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. PS 173 .N4 M67 1992

Nelson, Cary, *Repression and Recovery: Modern American Poetry and the Politics of Cultural Memory*. PS 310 .M57 N45 1989

North, Michael. *The Dialect of Modernism*. PS 153 .N5 N67 1994

Rampersad, Arnold. *The Art and Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois*. PS 3507 .U147 Z85 1990

Rowe, John Carlos. *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature*. PS 217 .P64 R69 1997

_____. *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II*. PS 169 .I45 R69 2000

_____. *The New American Studies*. PS 221 .R68 2002x

Sundquist, Eric, ed. *The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois Reader*. E 185.97 .D73 A26 1996