




<b>english</b> reading fiction spring 2010 mtwth 9:30-10:20	<b>242</b>	<b>Jentery Sayers</b>  <b>jentery@uw</b>  <b>comm 218D</b>  <b>m/th 10:30-11:30</b>
<b>modernism now: digital platforms for studying fiction</b>		

<http://www.jenterysayers.com/platforms/>

This course is a survey of modernist fiction, with a twist. The content consists primarily of novels published between 1907 and 1953, by authors such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, James Baldwin, John dos Passos, Joseph Conrad, and Aldous Huxley. While reading these texts, we will focus less on giving literary modernism a single definition and more on the divergent ways it can be articulated through aesthetics, history, culture, and place. Since modernism is such a broad topic, we will narrow our attention to three lines of modernist inquiry: an obsession with what's new, depictions of the city and urbanization, and the rise of certain media and technologies in the first half of the 20th century. That said, film, audio recordings, advertisements, and some poetry will supplement modernist novels throughout the quarter.

With a twist. And that twist is this: "Modernism Now" is also an opportunity for undergraduates to gain hands-on competencies in using digital tools and web-based platforms for humanities inquiry, specifically the study of modernist fiction. During one class meeting per week, we will investigate how to produce sustainable digital scholarship through new media and their intersections with several stages of the writing process, including conducting research, gathering evidence, and composing arguments. By the quarter's end, students will gain knowledge in how to use the following for academic purposes: Twitter, the WordPress blogging platform, the Zotero research tool, Flickr's Library of Congress photostream, the Modernist Journals Project, JSTOR's Data for Research visualizations, UbuWeb, and Google Maps. No previous experience with any of these platforms, tools, or archives is required.

Since English 242 is a "W" course, students will be asked to iteratively develop and revise a web-based, ten- to fifteen-page research paper on a topic of their choice (within the domain of modernist fiction). By "iteratively develop," I imply that students will gradually compose their paper as a project over the entirety of the quarter, instead of writing a bulk of it at the end. I will ask them to incorporate an annotated bibliography, an abstract, and plenty of collaboration and conversation into that process.

### Course Materials

This class blends reading modernist novels with contemporary platforms in digital scholarship. First, the required print texts for the course:

James Baldwin, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* [978-0385334570],  
 Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* [978-0141441580],  
 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* [978-0060850524], and  
 Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (Annotated) [978-0156030359].

And the following is recommended:

James Joyce, *Ulysses* [978-0679722762] (we will read one or two chapters).

The balance of possible course material, which will ultimately be determined on a week-by-week or even a class-by-class basis—depending upon our conversations, student interests, and the trajectories of course—will become available on this site. These texts will be digitized, or they will already be digital, and uploaded for access online.

In terms of digital scholarship, we'll be using the following:

Twitter,  
WordPress blogging platform,  
Zotero research tool,  
Flickr's Library of Congress photostream,  
Modernist Journals Project,  
JSTOR's Data for Research visualizations,  
UbuWeb, and  
Google Maps.

## **Outcomes**

By the end of the quarter, students will be expected to produce an academic essay that:

Is web-based,  
Ten to fifteen pages in length,  
Includes at least two media (e.g., film, audio, images, and text),  
Uses at least eight reliable sources for evidence,  
Is based in a persuasive claim and develops a complex argument, and  
Is preceded by an abstract.

Throughout the quarter, students will be expected to:

Chronicle the development of their essay, including the changes they make to it, on a course blog and through other web-based media,  
Share their work with their peers and offer constructive feedback on their work,  
Actively engage in conversations and workshops during class meetings,  
Develop competencies in how to use new media in and for humanities research,  
Gather a strong sense of how to critically interpret and historicize modernist texts, and  
Explain how literary modernism is relevant today.

## **Projects**

When I say, “compose their paper as a project,” I mean students will pursue a quarter-long inquiry into a particular topic, using a certain method, through a piecemeal approach, in a space shared with their peers. This approach allows for feedback, revision, and consistent attention to process.

Here are some of the components of this process:

**Cluster:** Early in the quarter, students will form small clusters (of five people) around a similar interest. Throughout the entire quarter, they will share materials with their cluster and offer feedback on each other's work.

**Collect:** Rather than having me provide students with the materials for their research, they will collectively aggregate those materials within and across their clusters. Those materials will be shared on the class blog, as well as through Twitter and Zotero.

**Change:** People change, and so do projects. For this class, students will be asked to treat their paper as a process, rather than an end-product. In so doing, they'll chronicle those changes.

Here are the components of the project:

**Change Log:** Students will submit at least six "change logs," or blog entries where they will write about what they are reading and how that reading applies to their project, their take on modernism, and their own educational interests.

**Keyword:** Early in the class, students will be asked to select a "keyword" that they want to use as a framing mechanism for their reading, writing, and research throughout the quarter. They will be asked to explain why they are selecting that particular keyword.

**Example:** Here, they will be asked to "mobilize" their keyword by using it as a lens for closely reading and writing about a specific modernist text that interests them.

**Question:** After they've written through one example, they'll pan out and ask a broader research question about modernism. Their final paper will ultimately respond to this research question.

**Annotated Bibliography:** In the middle of the quarter, they'll compile a list of ten texts, with notes, aggregated around their keyword. The texts will vary in medium (e.g., film, image, poem, novel, or audio) and source (e.g., scholarly database, popular site, or university archives).

**Claim:** Before they write their entire paper, they'll be asked to articulate their argument in approximately fifty words.

**Instances:** With their claim in hand, students will write four "instances," or four paragraphs that articulate possible trajectories for their paper. The point here is to demonstrate how their keyword and texts could be read in different ways, through different approaches. These instances may or may not become part of their final paper.

**Abstract:** To accompany their paper, students will write a humanities abstract, which will concisely explain their paper's topic and its target audiences, stakes, and future.

**Draft:** During the week before exams, they'll circulate a draft of their paper for feedback.

**Final Paper:** The final paper will be web-based and somewhere between ten and fifteen pages in length.

## Evaluation

Final grades (on a 4.0 scale) will be determined using the following percentages and criteria:

### **In-Class Participation (30% of the grade)**

Participation in English 242 is about a network of ideas—sharing thoughts and talking with, supporting, and listening to others. Class time will often be spent in large group conversations and workshops. I think that collaborative learning and collaborative teaching add interest, excitement, and investment to the classroom experience. Each helps students brainstorm for their projects, unpack concepts, learn from others, and develop proficiency in how to constructively critique other people's work. That said, all of these aspects of in-class participation will be included in their participation grade.

### **Final Paper (30% of the grade)**

The final paper will be assessed as the final step of the project. It should meet the learning outcomes.

### **Project Development (30% of the grade)**

Students will be asked to contribute to the blog at least once each week, always in response to a particular prompt or to a peer's entry. Evaluation of the blog entries will include: timeliness, thoughtfulness of questions posed, relevance of the entry to the course material, persuasiveness and complexity of the inquiry, and constructiveness of commentary on peers' posts.

### **Co-Facilitations (10% of the grade)**

Twice during the quarter, each student will be asked to co-facilitate the class with me and a peer (or two). During those co-facilitations, they will be responsible for actively participating in class conversations and relating those conversations to their projects. Each time they co-facilitate, they will also be asked to briefly (in about a minute) address the class at the beginning of our meeting.

## Schedule

The syllabus is subject to change, but below it is in both list and calendar form. The list follows this order: "week": "reading", "tech/media", "assignments/activities due".

Week 1 (29th-1st): *The Secret Agent*, WordPress, Clusters

Week 2 (5th-8th): *The Secret Agent*, Twitter/Zotero, Change Log #1 (heretoeafter “CL”)

Week 3 (12th-15th): Modernist Poetry, Flickr/UbuWeb/Modernist Journals Project, CL#2

Week 4 (19th-22nd): *Ulysses*, Boundary Object Workshop, Keyword

Week 5 (26th-29th): *Go Tell It*, Step Away from the Screen, Example/CL#3

Week 6 (3rd-6th): Choose Your Own, JSTOR, Research Question/Annotated Bib

Week 7 (10th-13th): *U.S.A.* / *Mrs. Dalloway*, YouTube, Claim

Week 8 (17th-20th): *Mrs. Dalloway*, Step Away from the Screen, CL#4/Instances

Week 9 (24th-27th): *Brave New World*, Web-Texting, CL#5/Abstract

Week 10 (1st-3rd): Review, Draft Paper

Week 11 (7th-10th): No Class, Final Paper

### **Participation**

Since conversations are essential to the quality of this class, I expect that we shall work together to create an atmosphere of respect. College level discourse does not shy away from sensitive issues, including questions of race, gender, class, sexuality, politics, and religion, and neither will we. There are going to be differences in opinions, beliefs, and interpretations when we question texts and cultural issues. Students need not agree with the arguments in what we read or with what others have to say—in fact, it is important to think critically and question texts. Still, they must do so intelligently and with respect. Respect for difference is instrumental to creating a classroom in which a variety of ideas can be exchanged and points of view can be explored.

What is crucial to English 242 is that students are enjoying and are comfortable in the course. If, for whatever reason, they are not, then they should visit me during my office hours or by appointment. I understand that some people are more comfortable speaking in front of the class than others. That said, participation in office hours will also improve students’ participation grades.

If students are not comfortable bringing their concerns directly to me or are not satisfied with my response to their inquiries, then I encourage them to contact Professor Gillian Harkins, Director of Undergraduate Programs.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else’s ideas or writing as your own. In writing for this class, students are encouraged to refer to other people’s thoughts and writing—as long as they are cited. As a matter of policy, any student found to have plagiarized any piece of writing in this class will be immediately reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism. It includes:

- A student failing to cite the source of an idea,
- A student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material,
- A student failing to cite courses of specific language and/or passages, and
- A student submitting someone else's work as her or his own.

If students have doubts about whether to cite or acknowledge another person's writing, they should just let me know. Better safe than sorry. And think about it—Google, databases galore, and the fact that I was a student, too, make it really, really easy for me to spot plagiarized work. For more information, students might also refer to UW's Student Conduct Code.

### **Attendance**

While I do not take attendance, attending English 242 will greatly enhance students' chances of submitting a persuasive final project, learning about the material, collaborating with others, and sharing their ideas.

### **Drops**

Students can withdraw from courses during the first two weeks without an entry being made on the transcript. After that time, fees ensue. See the University's withdrawal policy for more information and dates.

### **The DSO**

Students should let me know if they need accommodation of any sort. I can work with the UW Disability Service Office (DSO) to provide what they require. I am very willing to take suggestions specific to this class to meet student needs. The course syllabus and policies are available in large print, as are other class materials.

I will update and revise these policies if the quarter so requires.

### **Contact Me**

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Spring Quarter Office Hours: Monday and Thursday, 10:30-11:30