

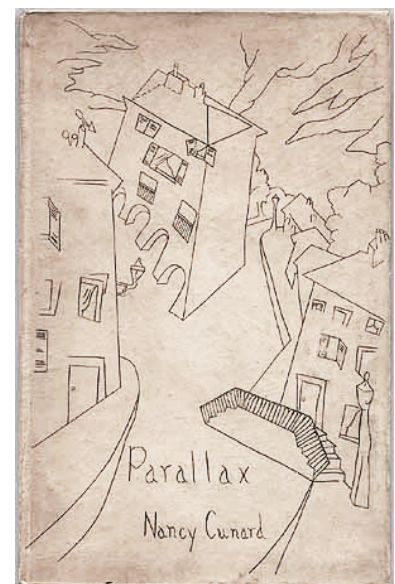
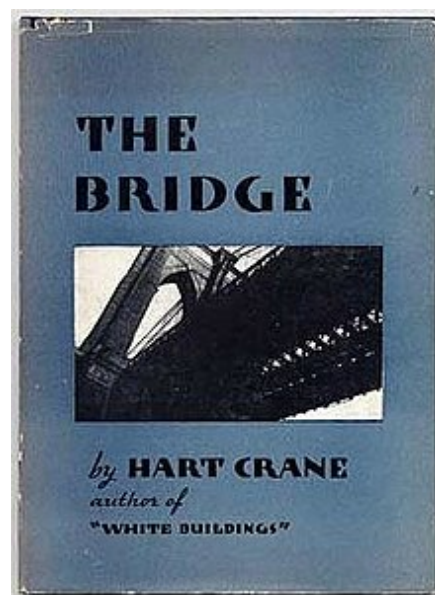
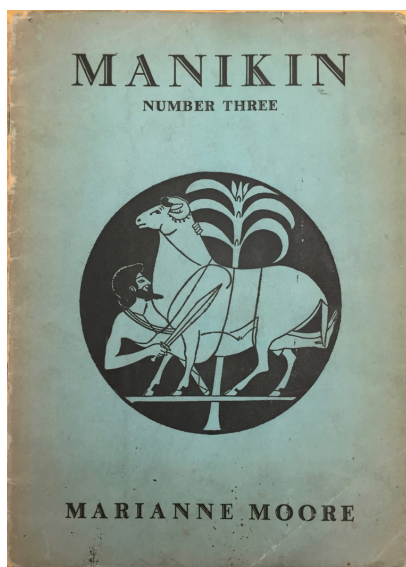
## Myths and Methods: Modernism through the Long Poem

### *COURSE DESCRIPTION*

Perhaps no genre represents modernism better than the long poem: the scope of the form mirrors the movement's ambition; its problems, modernism's paradoxes; and its controversies, modernism's (and modernist studies') discontents. Neither lyric nor narrative, neither song nor epic, the modernist long poem, like much modernist literature, stages both a radical break from its literary past and an intense reformulation of it. Just as it demands new or hybrid methods for its digestion and interpretation, the poem is itself a method, a hermeneutic for interpreting historical and literary pasts and presents. We can read the modernist long poem, but we can also — indeed, we are meant to — read *through* it. Relationships between the past and the present, history and the nation, the nation and the individual, gender and the self, experience and reality, race and literary form — all of these and more are legible through the modernist long poem as it develops throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

This tutorial will use the modernist long poem as an entrée into a literary period (modernism) and field of study (modernist studies, or new modernist studies). As in other tutorials, students will also be introduced to the critical methods and research skills needed to produce their own piece of modernist scholarship on modernist poetry. Throughout the semester, however, we will also be developing and refining our own method — our own sets of questions and practices — for reading and exploring long, seemingly unintelligible avant-garde poetry.

Because the reading for this class will be relatively short (in terms of length), but heavy (by virtue of its density and difficulty), students will need to spend a significant amount of time each week rereading and reflecting critically on the primary texts. To that end, students will be expected to complete **weekly writing assignments** in addition to the regular coursework of the junior tutorial (the short paper, prospectus, annotated bibliography, drafts of the research paper, etc.). These assignments are designed both to further students' comprehension of the week's readings and to give students valuable practice in the different kinds of thinking and writing used in literary criticism.



## COURSE GOALS

**General Goals:** To enter into the discipline and practice of English literary studies at an upper-division level and to craft a 20–25-page research paper in preparation for an honors thesis. You will be able to:

- \* Design a research question
- \* Develop a critical bibliography around that question, including diverse methods and viewpoints
- \* Put secondary criticism in conversation with your own ideas and with other criticism
- \* Write with greater clarity and precision

**Course-specific Goals:** To think critically about the concept of genre and poetic form; to discover and understand the phenomenon known as “literary modernism”; to develop a set of approaches and tools for understanding complex works both within and outside of their literary period. You will be able to:

- \* Articulate the historical, formal, social, aesthetic, and political parameters of literary modernism while...
- \* Articulating the issues at stake in any given definition of this movement or period
- \* Place a long poem of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in its literary historical context
- \* Approach a seemingly incomprehensible work of avant-garde poetry with confidence, knowing that understanding is within your grasp!

## THE FINE PRINT

### Required Texts

Most of our readings will be available on canvas or on databases accessible through Hollis. You will, however, need a few physical books for this course:

Auden, W. H. *The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare's The Tempest* (ed. Arthur C. Kirsch)

Crane, Hart. *The Bridge: The Annotated Edition*. (Ed. Lawrence Kramer)

Eliot, T. S.: EITHER

*Poems* (vol. 1), eds. Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue

OR: *Collected Poems (1909-1962)*

Tolson, Melvin B. “*Harlem Gallery*” and *Other Poems of Melvin B. Tolson*.

Vendler, Helen. *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems*

I would also be happy to recommend editions for the authors whose works are excerpted in our syllabus, including Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, Langston Hughes, Hope Mirrlees, and Nancy Cunard.

### Grading

Weekly writing assignments: 15%

Class participation: 10%

First short paper: 15%

Final paper: 60%

Prospectus: 2.5%

Annotated bibliography: 2.5%

First 10 pages or Complete Outline: 7.5%

First draft: 7.5%

Final draft: 40%

## Requirements

- ⇒ **First short paper:** 1500-2000 words, focused on a primary source
- ⇒ **Prospectus:** ~500 words
- ⇒ **Annotated bibliography:** 2 pages
- ⇒ **First 10 pages or Complete Outline** (a sample outline will be distributed before the deadline)
- ⇒ **Final draft:** 20 -25 pages
- ⇒ **Weekly writing assignments:** Maximum 2 pages each. **Due 5:00 pm the day before class.**
- ⇒ **Peer-review session:** You will read your peers' papers and prepare substantive feedback on both the argument and the craft of each essay.
- ⇒ **Regular, enthusiastic participation!**

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS

\* a required reading

+ not required, but strongly recommended

**NOTE:** You will notice that the readings for the first few weeks of class are perhaps a little heavy! You would be well served to spend part of your winter break getting a head start on some of our texts; doing so would also help you with your first assignment, a one-page double-spaced conjectural definition of the modernist long poem.

**ALSO NOTE:** This syllabus is a flexible document, and is open to amendment based on the interests and tastes of our class!

## I. MAKING MYTHS

### Week 1      **Introduction: How to Read a Modernist Long Poem**

Please come **having already read:**

- \* T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
- \* T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Ulysses, Order, and Myth" (pdf)
- \* Leonard Diepeveen, from *Changing Voices*: "Poetic Voice in the Quoting Poem" (pdf) [genre, formalism]
- + Any good introduction to *The Waste Land*. See Canvas for examples

- from Kermode and Rainey.  
+ Notes to *The Waste Land* by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue (pdf)

**Assignment:** one-page double-spaced conjectural definition of the modernist long poem

*Handout:* first pages of each long poem on our syllabus.

## Week 2

### Paris, Capital of...

Reading:

- \* Hope Mirrlees, *Paris* (pdf)
- \* Julia Briggs, from *The Gender of Modernism: New Geographies, Complex Intersections*: “Hope Mirrlees and Continental Modernism” plus commentary for *Paris* (pdf)
- \* Walter Benjamin, “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century” (pdf)
- \* “Paris Peace Conference” in the *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*
  
- \* Jahan Ramazani, “Modernist Bricolage, Postcolonial Hybridity” [Post-Colonial criticism, New Modernist Studies]
- \* Rita Felski, selections from “Imagined Pleasures: The Erotics and Aesthetics of Consumption” in *The Gender of Modernity* (pdf) [Feminist criticism, Marxist criticism]
  
- + Jonathan P. Eburne and Jeremy Braddock, “Introduction: Paris, Capital of the Black Atlantic,” *Modern Fiction Studies* (51.4, Winter 2005)

**Assignment:** using the method we developed in our first class for reading an avant-garde long poem, choose a general category of inquiry and attempt to answer its questions about *Paris*.

## TUTORIAL PROGRAM GENERAL MEETING (TBD)

## Week 3

### Constructing *The Bridge* with Hart Crane

Reading:

- \* Hart Crane, *The Bridge*
- \* Georg Lukács, “Epic and the Novel” (pdf) [Marxist literary theory]
  
- + Langdon Hammer, from *Janus-Faced Modernism: Hart Crane and Allen Tate*, “The Floating Singer of *The Bridge*” (pdf)
- + Sunny Stalter, “Subway Ride and Subway System in Hart Crane's ‘The Tunnel,’” *Journal of Modern Literature* (33.2, Winter 2010)

(hollis) [new historicism]

**Assignment:** Select three key terms from Lukács essay to define, then write a short summary (5-7 sentences) of his argument. (Also, flag a favorite passage or page in *The Bridge* for discussion, and be prepared to speak about it in class.)

#### Week 4

#### ***Parallax*: Modernist Self-Mythologies**

Reading:

- \* Nancy Cunard, *Parallax* (pdf)
- \* Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production, or, the Economic World Reversed,” excerpted in *The Broadview Reader in Book History* (pdf) [sociology of culture]

**Assignments:**

1. Assemble a narrative of *Parallax*. Who are the characters? What story is being told? Who is telling the story? Does the poem tell the story chronologically, or does it skip around? (250 - 500 words)
2. Create 10 annotations for the poem: 5 tracing connections to *The Waste Land*, and 5 explaining other allusions (literary or non-literary)
3. Based on our reading so far, name three critical fields that might intersect fruitfully with Cunard’s poem, and (briefly!) identify the nodes of these intersections.

**TUTORIAL PROGRAM GENERAL MEETING (TBD)**

**FIRST SHORT PAPER DUE FRIDAY**

## II. MAKING MEANING

#### Week 5

#### **Conversations with Marianne Moore**

10/05

Reading:

- \* “Marriage” and “The Octopus” (pdf)
  - \* Evan Kindley, “Picking and Choosing: Marianne Moore Among the Agonists” (hollis) [book history, literary history]
  - \* T. S. Eliot, Introduction to Marianne Moore’s *Selected Poems* (1935) (pdf)
- + Patricia C. Willis, “The Road to Paradise: First Notes

on Marianne Moore's 'An Octopus.'" (pdf)

**Assignment:** Find a critical or theoretical article or chapter that relates to (or that you can relate to) the week's readings. Write a one paragraph summary of your article's or chapter's argument, a second paragraph that anticipates challenges to said argument, and a third paragraph that uses the article to think about our Moore readings.

## Week 6

### Library Visit

Student presentations of preliminary paper proposals. You will select one primary or secondary source to assign to the whole class, which you will present in relation to your thinking around the prospectus. After a **TIMED** 5-minute presentation, you will lead a 10-15 minute discussion of your chosen text.

**Assignment: Preliminary Paper Proposal + Research Question (for the session)**

**TUTORIAL PROGRAM GENERAL MEETING (TBD)**

**PROSPECTUS (FIRST DRAFT) DUE FRIDAY**

## Week 7

### The Maker's Rage For Order: Wallace Stevens

Reading:

- \* Wallace Stevens, "Sunday Morning," "The Comedian as the Letter C" and *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction* (pdf)
- \* Helen Vendler, from *On Extended Wings*: "Fugal Requiems" and "The Amassing Harmony" [new criticism, formalism]

**Assignment:** Identify a critical move or question that Helen Vendler performs on or asks of Wallace Stevens. Apply that move or question to 1) another poem by Stevens, or part of the same poem and 2) a primary text from your own research paper.

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE FRIDAY**

**SPRING BREAK!!!!**

**Week 8**

**In My End is My Beginning: T. S. Eliot Revisits the Long Poem**

Reading:

- \* T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*
- \* Jed Esty, from *A Shrinking Island*: “Insular Time: T. S. Eliot and Modernism’s English End” (hollis) [post-colonial criticism]

**Assignment: TBD**

\*\*\* HOUGHTON VISIT DATE/TIME TBD \*\*\*

**Week 9**

**Auden’s Retrospectives**

11/02

Reading:

- \* Auden, *The Sea and the Mirror*
- \* Appendix to *The Sea and the Mirror*, “Auden’s Criticism of the Tempest”

**Assignment:** Write 1-2 pages of a verse response to a text you’re working on. Be prepared to discuss in class the affordances and limitations of the verse response in comparison to a work of prose criticism.

**FIRST 10 PAGES -or- COMPLETE OUTLINE due FRIDAY**

III. RE-MAKING

**Week 10**

**Pastiche as Critique: Langston Hughes’s *Ask Your Mama***

Reading:

- \* Langston Hughes, *Ask Your Mama* (pdf)
- \* John Lowney from *Jazz Internationalism*, “Cultural Exchange: Cold War Jazz and the Political Aesthetics of Langston Hughes’s Long Poems” [new historicism]

**Assignment: TBD**

**Week 11**

**New Perspectives in *Harlem Gallery***

Reading:

- \* Melvin B. Tolson, *Harlem Gallery*
- \* Matthew Hart, from *Nations of Nothing But Poetry*: “Transnational Anthems and the Ship of State: Harryette Mullen, Melvin B. Tolson, and the Politics of Afro-Modernism” (hollis) [global literary studies]

**Assignment: TBD**

***FULL FIRST DRAFT DUE FRIDAY NO EXCEPTIONS***

**Week 12**      **What Comes After (Student Choice!)**

Student choice of a mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century long poem. Possibilities include:

- \* Allen Ginsberg, *Howl* (1956)
- \* (Excerpts from) James Merrill, *The Book of Ephraim* (1976)
- \* Anne Carson, *The Autobiography of Red* (1998)
- \* Keston Sutherland, “Hot White Andy” (2008)
- \* Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)

And for fun, we will also read:

- \* Patricia Lockwood, “The Hypno-Domme Speaks, and Speaks and Speaks” (2013) (pdf)

**Week 13**      **Peer Review Session**

Students will prepare positive feedback, critical questions, and constructive criticism of each other’s papers.

**TUTORIAL CONFERENCE**

**&**

**FINAL PAPER DEADLINE**

**(BOTH MANDATORY!)**

**TBA**

## *POLICIES*

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism is the use of another person's ideas or writing without giving them proper credit. Consequences of plagiarism can range from failure on the paper to dismissal from the course to yet more serious action. You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Harvard FAS's Honor Code: "Members of the Harvard College community commit themselves to producing academic work of integrity — that is, work that adheres to scholarly and intellectual standards of accurate attribution of the contribution of others to their ideas, discoveries, interpretations, and conclusions. Cheating on exams or problem sets, plagiarizing or misrepresenting the ideas or language of someone else as one's own, falsifying data, or any other instance of academic dishonesty violates the standards of our community, as well as the standards of the wider world of learning and affairs."

### **Attendance:**

Your attendance in tutorial is vital to your own success as well as to the success of the class as a whole; so is your attendance in Junior Tutorial General Meetings and at other required events. I will allow each student a "free" tutorial absence to be used in case of sickness, travel, etc: no explanation necessary. Missing more than one class will decrease your participation grade, and excessive absence could result in failing the course. Also, being late really disrupts the work we're doing together, so I consider 2 lates as equivalent to 1 absence. If you anticipate extenuating circumstances affect your timely arrival, you must communicate them to me early in the semester so that we can develop a plan to deal with it.

### **Computers and tablets:**

Because it will be easiest to circulate some texts digitally, laptop computers or tablets will be allowed in seminar while we're discussing those texts. Still, feel free to print out these materials if you prefer. Please turn off your wi-fi on these devices while we're in discussion: in such a small group, it will be pretty obvious to all of us if you're being distracted by something else. I'll also expect digital devices to be put away when we're discussing books or other paper materials, so please bring a physical notebook.

### **Due Dates & Late Grades:**

Unless otherwise specified, assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date listed in the schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 letter grade per day late, except for the final paper, which must be turned in before the due date. Students failing to turn in a final paper, or turning it in late without an official excuse, will fail the tutorial. If, well in advance of an assignment, you expect you will need an extension, please talk with me.

### **Email:**

I'll use email to distribute important info throughout the semester—from emailing you handouts to adjusting assignments and deadlines. You are responsible for checking your email on a daily basis. If you have a question that you need to ask me by email, be sure to give me at least 24 hours, or you may not get a response until it's too late. Also, please let me know if you'd like to use a non-Harvard email address.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** "Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the Accessible Education Office (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term, (9/16). Failure to do so may result in the Course Head's inability to respond in a

timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.”