English 5480 • Seminar in Modernism: American Poetry in the “Little Magazines” • Fall 2008

“Use your imagination, and pay attention to language.” Adrienne Rich

Instructor: Dr. Linda Leavell  
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Office hours: MW 2:00-3:30  
F 10:00-11:00  
and by appointment

Class meets: MW 6:45-8:00 pm  
M310

Course Description and Objectives: For students new to the subject of modern American poetry, this course will serve as an introduction. But it will introduce the poets and their works through two emerging critical perspectives: periodical studies and material studies. If students of poetry are accustomed to examining nuances of meaning in language, what more can they learn about a poem from examining it as a physical artifact—an object consisting of ink and paper? Most of the modernist American poetry we now read in anthologies first appeared in experimental “little magazines” published in Chicago, New York, and London. How did these poems appear to the readers who first encountered them there? How do the politics of magazine editing inform these poems and their reception? What do the advertisements and editorials, for instance, tell us about the magazine’s intended readership? How did some of the poets who appeared in these magazines become canonized and others not? The seminar will examine these and other questions as it examines literary history both vertically (e.g., a poet’s oeuvre) and horizontally (e.g., works by various authors in a single magazine issue). Students will develop their expertise as scholars of literature by analyzing primary and secondary sources. For each primary source, summarize how it will be used in your research. For each secondary source, provide an abstract with emphasis upon its relevance to your project. Each annotation should be 100-200 words. Due Oct. 31.

Selected works on reserve in M205 or online through D2L

Modernist Journals Project  

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Requirements and Grades:

- **team-teach 2 classes (10% each):** With a partner, lead the seminar for a day. Your team should provide a historical and theoretical context for the topic and engage the class in discussion. Creativity is encouraged. Research is necessary, but this is not an oral report. Plan your goals and strategies with your partner, so that you really teach. You will be evaluated on your level of preparation and your effectiveness in teaching the class.

- **annotated bibliography (20%):** Carefully select at least 12 sources that are relevant to your conference paper topic. Cumulatively, they should demonstrate a good balance of primary and secondary sources. For each primary source, summarize how it will be used in your research. For each secondary source, provide an abstract with emphasis upon its relevance to your project. Each annotation should be 100-200 words. Due Oct. 31.

- **conference paper proposal (5%):** Write a 250- to 300-word proposal for your conference-length paper. It should define your subject, justify the originality and significance of your approach, state your thesis, and summarize the kinds of evidence you will use. Bring copies for the class. Due Nov. 12.

- **conference-length paper (30%):** Write a conference-length paper with a delivery time of 15 minutes (about 8-10 pages). Present an original argument within a context of secondary sources (see attached Papers for Graduate Seminars). Use MLA style. Present the paper during class Dec. 1 or 3. Final copy due Dec. 5.

- **final examination (25%):** Two-hour essay exam. Dec. 10.

- **course grade:** 0-59 = F; 60-69 = D; 70-79 = C; 80-89 = B; 90-100 = A

**Attendance:** Attendance and promptness are required. Repeated, unexplained absences will result in failure of the course.

**Late and Make-up Work:** I will accept late work or give make-up exams only if students have made prior arrangements with me. Such arrangements must be made as early as possible.

**Drop/Add Policy:** The Course Schedule below includes drop and add dates.

**Academic Integrity:** All members of the Oklahoma State University community are entrusted with academic integrity, which encompasses the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, and responsibility. For information about policies and procedures, see <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu/>.

**Special Accommodations:** If you feel that you have a disability and need special accommodations, I will work with you and the Office of Student Disability Services (315 Student Union) to provide reasonable accommodations so that you have a fair opportunity to perform in this class. Please advise me of any disabilities and the desired accommodations immediately following the first class meeting.
Course Schedule:

M 8/18  Introduction to course and to periodical studies

W 8/20  Introduction to Modernism

Ezra Pound, “A Retrospect”
  http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/pound/retrospect.htm

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

M 8/25  Material Modernism


Last day to add a course (nonrestrictive)
Last day to drop a course with no grade and no fees

W 8/27  Poetry

F 8/29  Last day to add a course (restrictive: with approval of the instructor)
Last day to drop a course with 50% fees

M 9/1  Labor Day Holiday

W 9/3  Poetry, continued

M 9/8  Poetry, continued

W 9/10  Blast

M 9/15  Others

  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 9/17  Others, continued

M 9/22  Little Review

  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 9/24  Contact

  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

M 9/29  The Dial

  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 10/1  The Dial and The Waste Land

M 10/8  *The Dial*, continued

M 10/13  Ezra Pound and the magazines
  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 10/15  Pound, continued

M 10/20  T. S. Eliot and the magazines
  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 10/22  Eliot, continued

M 10/27  William Carlos Williams and the magazines
  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 10/29  Williams, continued

F 10/31  Annotated bibliography due by 1:30 p.m. in M205

M 11/3  Marianne Moore and the magazines
  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 11/5  Moore, continued

F 11/7  Last day to drop a course (grade of “W”) except by petition
Last day to withdraw from all courses with automatic grades of “W”

M 11/10  Wallace Stevens and the magazines
  Team teachers:________________________ _______________________

W 11/12  Stevens, continued

  Conference paper proposals due in class. Bring copies.

M 11/17  Discussion of proposals

W 11/19  Sara Teasdale, Elinor Wylie, Edna St. Vincent Millay and the magazines

F 11/21  Last day to withdraw from all courses with assigned grades of “W” or “F”

M 11/24  The Harlem Renaissance and its magazines

W 11/26  Thanksgiving Holiday

M 12/1  Paper presentations: ___________________  ___________________

  ___________________  ___________________  ___________________

W 12/3  Paper presentations: ___________________  ___________________

  ___________________  ___________________  ___________________

F 12/5  Conference Paper Due by 1:30 p.m. in M205

W 12/10  Final Examination, 6:00-7:45 p.m.
Writing Papers for Graduate Seminars:

My standards approximate as nearly as possible those currently held by American scholars in the field of literature. These standards are highly conventionalized and thus, like other conventions, must be learned. Only by “speaking the language” of the profession can one gain an audience and hence make one’s own contribution to the professional community. The expectations for a scholarly/critical article, the prototype for most seminar papers, are summarized in The MLA Style Manual:

Current usage blurs the sharp distinction that was once observed between “scholarly,” or factually based, articles and “critical,” or theoretically based, articles. Either type requires the scholar to demonstrate familiarity with the previous scholarship on the topic, suggest an original thesis, present supporting evidence, and point to the significance of the proposition advanced. The best scholarly articles incorporate all four aspects in a proportion appropriate to the subject and audience. Failure to cover each adequately is probably the most frequent reason that journals reject articles for publication. [emphasis added]

To demonstrate familiarity with the previous scholarship on a topic, the scholar must, of course, be certain to acquire that familiarity. . . . After locating the pertinent materials, the scholar assimilates them and relates them to the new thesis. The clearer the connections between the two, the more cogent the article. Long paragraphs—or even pages—that do little more than list the previous scholarship usually reveal that the author has not adequately assimilated it.

The thesis proposed in a scholarly article should be significant—not a refutation of another scholar’s minor thesis or a trivial application of a tired theory to a work of literature. The statement of the thesis should have a prominent place in the article, and the wording should be as lucid and concise as possible. Theses that resist clear and concise statements often have flaws and need rethinking.

After stating the thesis, the scholar should present the supporting evidence. It is often wise to begin by reviewing the categories of evidence for each aspect of the thesis, thus giving readers a sense of what will follow, and then to take up each category of evidence seriatim, making certain that the evidence is both valid and relevant to the thesis. Once all the evidence has been presented, it usually helps—except in very brief articles—to summarize the ways that the evidence supports the thesis.

Scholars often neglect the final part of the scholarly article—the significance of the thesis; yet it is this feature that ultimately commends the article to readers. The author should devote as much effort to considering and expressing the significance of the thesis as to supporting it, even though this concluding section may occupy only the final paragraph or two of the article.

Assuming minimal expectations are met, grades reflect primarily the significance of the thesis. Thus, according to the procedures above, the writer must convince me, the skeptical reader, that the thesis is original and significant. Fluid, well-edited prose is expected. Students should consult the second edition of The MLA Style Manual on matters of style and documentation.

For additional clarification, students should consult Modernism/Modernity, Twentieth-Century Literature, and other reputable journals to find examples of scholarly articles. Also, students are encouraged to seek my advice at any or all stages of the writing process, including finding a topic, compiling the bibliography, clarifying the thesis, organizing the supporting evidence, and revising the rough draft. Given enough time and sufficient motivation on the part of the student, I will help each student to understand the expectations for the assignment. (This applies to assignments other than papers, too.) A student desiring individualized help should therefore seek it as early as possible.

Suggested Reading:


