

**ENGL 242: Modernism and Postmodernism**  
**Spring 2012**  
**T/Th 3:30-4:45**  
**Fisk 313**

**Professor:** John Pedro Schwartz  
**Office:** Fisk Hall 227  
**Phone:** 4121  
**E-mail:** [js34@aub.edu.lb](mailto:js34@aub.edu.lb)  
**Office hours:** T/Th 2-3:30

**Course Description:** A course that exposes students to some of the classic works of twentieth-century modernism and postmodernism and considers them against social, cultural, and historical backgrounds.

**Aims and Objectives:**

- To explore the formal and thematic elements of modernism and postmodernism.
- To foreground the significance of social, cultural, and historical contexts in modernist and postmodernist literature.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students should be able to:

- To engage with and interrogate theoretical models and reflect upon their application to modernist and postmodernist texts.
- To display in written and oral work a detailed knowledge and sophisticated understanding of a range of formal and thematic elements of modernist and postmodernist poetry and fiction.
- To demonstrate precise and confident close reading skills in the exposition of textual meaning and the formal properties of complex texts.
- To use critically and reflectively an appropriate scholarly discourse.
- To recognize and communicate the significance of social, cultural, and historical contexts in shaping these texts and their critical reception.

**Required Texts:**

*Nightwood*, Djuna Barnes  
*Geography and Plays*, Gertrude Stein  
*The Bridge*, Hart Crane  
*At Swim-Two-Birds*, Flann O'Brien  
*The Book of Disquiet*, Fernando Pessoa  
Course Packets I and II (CP)

## Grading

Class participation	10%
Class presentation (see below)	20%
Midterm 5-page essay (see below)	30%
Final 5-page essay (see below)	40%

## Course Policies

You are expected to use the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (by Joseph Gibaldi) for writing and documenting your research papers.

Bring all handouts to class in a folder.

For definitions of cheating and plagiarism as well as the consequences of such, see the AUB “Student Code of Conduct” as found in the *Student Handbook* and on the AUB website: <http://pnp.aub.edu.lb/general/conductcode/158010081.html>. At minimum, anyone caught in violation of academic integrity will receive, as per the “Student Code of Conduct,” a failing grade of forty points for the assignment in question.

## Class Participation

Five of the ten points for class participation come from actual participation in discussion. This is a literature class, so group discussion is essential to the success of the class. I could always make you keep reading journals, but I prefer to engage the whole class in conversation about the day’s readings. You will get a zero if you never or hardly ever talk. Bring questions/comments/passages for analysis to class beforehand if you’re shy about jumping into the discussion.

The remaining five points for class participation come from attendance and punctuality. Three late arrivals equal one absence. Three absences will not affect your grade. Every absence after that will result in the lowering of one point. Nine absences total will result in a failing grade. ***No distinctions will be made between excused and unexcused absences. Since both are treated the same, please do not give me any doctor’s notes or approach me or email me to notify me of upcoming absences. Life is short; wasting my time with unnecessities will incur my wrath.***

## Class Presentation

Analyze any text in its social, political, cultural, or economic context (see Recommended Readings or *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* for possible contexts). Your presentation should last around ten minutes. You are required to engage at least one theoretical text on modernism and postmodernism: How is or is not the text modernist or postmodernist (define first)? How does your analysis confirm, refute, modify, challenge, or extend the theory? You are required to use at least one scholarly source, a contextual rather than critical one, in addition to the theoretical source.

You may read your presentation either from a paper (roughly five pages, double-spaced) or from notes prepared beforehand. But be sure to make plenty of eye contact with the audience. Be sure to read and analyze relevant passages in the text and ask the class to open their books and turn to those passages as you read and analyze them. Conclude your presentation by placing your topic in a broader context, with a view to stimulating discussion.

A brief handout to class is required. The handout should be written in the form of an introductory paragraph or paragraphs to an essay. The introduction should identify the primary text (author/date), topic, method (relevant textual passages plus theoretical apparatus plus context), goal (the knowledge you seek to produce), and thesis (claim plus reasons). You should also include block quotes from your contextual source. Finally, the handout should contain a Works Cited. The handout should not contain any material besides this. The handout must be MLA-formatted (see *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, by Joseph Gibaldi). The handout is a major part of your presentation grade.

### Essays

One essay on a modernist text, the other on a postmodernist text. One essay can be an expansion of your class presentation. You are required to analyze the text in its social, political, cultural, or economic context (see Recommended Readings or *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents* for possible contexts). You are required to engage at least one theoretical text on modernism and postmodernism: How is or is not the text modernist or postmodernist (define first)? How does your analysis confirm, refute, modify, challenge, or extend the theory? You are required to use at least three additional scholarly sources, preferably contextual rather than critical, retrieved from the library or database. The introduction should identify the primary text (author/date), topic, method (relevant textual passages plus theoretical apparatus plus context), goal (the knowledge you seek to produce), and thesis (claim plus reasons). The essays must be MLA-formatted, with Works Cited (see *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, by Joseph Gibaldi).

### Schedule

Week	Date	Activities	Assignments
1	2/14	no classes	
	2/16	Discuss course syllabus; Discuss Modernism	Read Pierce; Nietzsche; Weber; Daniel Bell (CP)  Recommended: Berman; Michael Bell (CP)
2	2/21	Discuss Pierce; Nietzsche; Weber; Daniel Bell	Read <i>Nightwood</i> , 1-40  Recommended: <i>Djuna Barnes' New York</i> (CP)
	2/23		
3	2/28	Discuss <i>Nightwood</i>	Read <i>Nightwood</i> , 41-90
	3/1	Conference, no classes	
4	3/6	Discuss <i>Nightwood</i>	Read <i>Nightwood</i> , 91-130

	3/8	Discuss <i>Nightwood</i>	Read <i>Nightwood</i> , 131-170  Recommended: McGurl; Benstock (CP)
5	3/13	Discuss <i>Nightwood</i>	Read <i>Geography and Plays</i> , 14, 141, 201, 157, 27, 134, 144
	3/15	<b>Discuss Essay</b> ; Discuss <i>Geography and Plays</i>	<b>Begin essay</b> ; Read <i>Geography and Plays</i> , 202, 210, 178, 154, 23, 254, 405
6	3/20	Discuss <i>Geography and Plays</i>	Read Stein, "Composition as Explanation"; Stein, "How Writing Is Written" (CP)
	3/22	Discuss Stein	Read Marinetti, "The Foundation and Manifesto of Futurism" Read Antonio Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," "Marinetti the Revolutionary," "Theatre and Cinema"; Lewis Mumford, "Machinery and the Modern Style"; Hart Crane, "Chaplinesque" (CP)
7	3/27	Discuss Gramsci; Mumford; Crane	<b>Complete rough draft</b> ; Read <i>The Bridge</i> , Parts I-III
	3/29	<b>Peer-review rough drafts</b>	<b>Complete essay</b> ; Read <i>The Bridge</i> , Parts IV-VI
8	4/3	<b>Essay due</b> ; Discuss <i>The Bridge</i>	Read <i>The Bridge</i> , Parts VII-VIII
	4/5	Class canceled; I'm sick yanni!	
9	4/10	Discuss <i>The Bridge</i>	
	4/12	Discuss <i>The Bridge</i>	Read Lyotard; Putnam; Rorty ("Solidarity or Objectivity?")  Recommended: Derrida; McHale; Jameson; Habermas ("An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject"); Habermas ("Modernity: An Incomplete Project"); Rorty ("The Contingency of Language")
10	4/17	Discuss Lyotard; Rorty; Putnam	Read <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>
	4/19	Discuss <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>	Read <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>
11	4/24	Discuss <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>	Read <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>  Recommended: Borges
	4/26	Discuss <i>At Swim-Two-Birds</i>	
12	5/1	Labor Day, no classes	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>

	5/3	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>
13	5/8	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>
	5/10	<b>Discuss final essay;</b> Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	<b>Begin final essay;</b> Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>
14	5/15	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>
	5/17	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>
15	5/22	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	Read <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>  Recommended: Pessoa
	5/24	Discuss <i>The Book of Disquiet</i>	