



Abrahams-Curiel Department of Foreign Literatures & Linguistics

Academic year 2023-24 (תשפ"ג)

Course title (English): Survey of 20th-Century Literature

Course title (Hebrew): סקירת הספרות האנגלו-אמריקאית של המאה ה-20

Course number: 132.1.0299

Course slot (semester/s, weekday/s, hours): Yearly (Semester A+B), Mondays 12:00-14:00

Lecturer: Dr. Ruth Wenske

Lecturer's conference hour and contact details: Mondays 14:00-16:00 (by email appointment, noruthie@gmail.com)

Course description & objectives:

Twentieth-century literature in English captures a seminal development in the era of globalization: the transition from the British Empire to the empire of English. In the 20th century, English-language literature grew to be a global phenomenon in dialogue with key historical events, including the world wars, the Cold War, the fall and rise of empires, and the appearance of world-spanning media and communication. In this course, we will read influential works of Anglo-American literature in the 20th century, taking the modernist and post-modernist movements as our primary lens for interrogating the historical and global positionality of texts. Reading poetry, short stories, novels, and drama, we will ask how literary works' generic conventions and aesthetic choices register the central political and ethical questions of their times. The first semester will focus on works from the first half of the 20th century, following influential writers and poets such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and Nella Larsen. The second semester will be more global in its scope, moving between English-speaking metropolises and the so-called margins of the Anglophone world, with texts by authors including Toni Morrison, Samuel Beckett, Wole Soyinka, and Jamaica Kincaid. We will ask: how are modernist and postmodernist styles and epistemologies expressed through different genres? What were the possible motivations propelling modernist and postmodernist aesthetics as these spread throughout the world? And how do issues of race, gender, and class make themselves felt in these works?

Course requirements:

Mandatory attendance (with up to three unexcused absences during the semester). Classes will be recorded for those who cannot make it due to the situation, following the university's guidelines.

Participation and writing assignments on Moodle*	20%
Midyear essay (3-4 pages) or class presentation (15 min)	20%
One quizzes (second semester)	10%
Final paper (5-7 pages) or class presentation (20 min)	50%
Total	100%

* Every semester, there will be six writing assignments called “transcription notes” on Moodle. In the transcription notes, you are asked to bring three quotes from that week’s text, and explain why you found the quotes central to your reading. Three out of the six assignments are mandatory, and they are not graded. If you do all six assignments, the relative weight of the assignments goes up to 30% of your grade, so that the final paper will only account for 40% of your grade.

TOPICS & BIBLIOGRAPHY (subject to change)

Fall Semester | First Half of the 20th Century

1. **1 January: Introduction Class:** Jorge Luis Borges, “Boast of Quietness” (1925)
Background reading: Pericles Lewis, “Introduction,” in *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, pp. 1-33

Section One: Poems

2. **8 January:** W. B. Yeats, selected poems: “The Second Coming,” “A Dialogue of Self and Soul” | **ASSIGNMENT**
3. **15 January:** T.S. Eliot, “The Waste Land” (1922) | **ASSIGNMENT** (three out of six each semester)
4. **22 January:** T.S. Eliot, “The Waste Land” (continued) + William Carlos Williams, “This is Just to Say” (1923), “The Red Wheelbarrow” (1934)
5. **29 January:** Langston Hughes, selected poems from *Collected Poems*: “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “I, Too,” “The Weary Blues,” “Dream Boogie,” “Deferred,” “Likewise,” and “Harlem [2]” | **ASSIGNMENT**
+ NEED TO DECIDE WHETHER YOU DO A PAPER OR A PRESENTATION AS YOUR END-OF-SEMESTER ASSIGNMENT

Section Two: Short Stories

6. **5 February:** Franz Kafka, “The Metamorphosis” (1915) | **ASSIGNMENT**
7. **12 February:** William Faulkner, “Barn Burning” (1938)

Section Three: Novels

8. **19 February:** Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928) | **ASSIGNMENT**
9. **26 February:** Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)
10. **4 March:** *Passing* (1929) – film screening
11. **11 March:** *Passing* (1929) discussion & concluding class | **ASSIGNMENT**

15.4 Midyear essay due

Spring Semester | Second Half of the 20th Century

1. **6 May:** Introduction: Postmodernism, empire, and the Cold War.

Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize acceptance speech | **ASSIGNMENT**

Background reading: Steven Connor, "Postmodernist Literature" in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* |

Section One: Poems

2. **13 May (Yom Hazikaron – might be online or cancelled):** Seamus Heaney, "Digging," "Death of a Naturalist," "Blackberry-Picking," "Mid-Term Break," and "Storm on the Island," from *Death of a Naturalist* (1966) | **ASSIGNMENT**

3. **20 May:** Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), "Ka 'Ba" & "Black Art" (1969); Derek Walcott, "The Sea Is History" (1979); Linton Kwesi Johnson, "If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet" (1996)

Section two: Short Stories

4. **27 May:** Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (1948)

5. **3 June:** Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl" (1978) & "Biography of a Dress" | **ASSIGNMENT**

6. **10 June:** Jorge Luis Borges, "Shakespeare's Memory" (1983) & "Everything and Nothing"

Section three: Novel

7. **17 June:** James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1957) | **ASSIGNMENT**

8. **25 June:** quiz + James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (continued)

Section four: Drama

9. **1 July:** Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (1952) | 20.5

10. **8 July:** Wole Soyinka, *Death and the King's Horseman* (1975) | **ASSIGNMENT**

11. **15 July:** Concluding class

22 July: **MANDATORY ASSIGNMENT** (choosing topic for your final paper)

Final paper due 8 August