

# Popular Modernisms

ENG 410/510  
Course Website: blackboard  
307 Volcanology  
MWF 11-11:50  
CRNs: 16774/16777

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PLC 522  
MW 1:00-2:30pm  
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## Description

This course participates in the current reassessment of relations between aesthetic modernism and popular culture. The rise of "New Modernist studies" over the past twenty years, with its expansive historical orientation and interest in modernism's original cultural contexts, has led to a serious re-examination of the nature and extent of modernism's relations with and responses to the popular. Questioning both new critical views of modernism as a mode of radical formal experimentation detached from and superior to the crass productions of popular culture and postmodern views of modernism as a mode of neurotic fear and disgust in response to the feminized and feminizing productions of popular culture, this course studies works of popular culture produced during the modernist moment of the early twentieth century that innovate upon the popular genre conventions they also employ.

## Learning Objectives

*Undergraduate students who complete this course successfully should be able to:*

1. read literary and cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. perform critical, formal analyses of literary and other cultural texts;
4. write focused, analytical essays in clear, grammatical prose;
5. employ logic, creativity, and interpretive skills to produce thoughtful, persuasive arguments;
6. employ primary and/or secondary sources, with proper acknowledgment and citation, as they contribute to a critical essay's thesis.

*In addition to the above, graduate students who complete this course successfully should:*

- be able to undertake original research with assistance from faculty by (a) identifying new scholarly problems or fields or building on existing ones; (b) locating and assessing current scholarly work in their subject area; (c) framing their own arguments clearly, cogently, and logically, offering convincing evidentiary support for their claims; and (d) explaining how their claims build on, refute, or add to existing scholarly debate and knowledge.
- be acquainted with a variety of methodologies with which to interpret and analyze literary and cultural texts.

## Texts (at UO Bookstore)

Hammett, Dashiell. *Red Harvest* (1929), Vintage  
Herriman, George. *Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38*, Fantagraphics  
Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925), Liveright  
Parker, Dorothy. *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, Penguin Classics Deluxe  
Wells, H.G. *War of the Worlds* (1898), Dover

## Other Primary Materials (to be provided by Peppis)

Marx Brothers, *Duck Soup* (1933 film); Jazz by Louis Armstrong (selections); Mercury Theatre's *War of the Worlds*, adapted by Orson Welles (1938 Radio Broadcast)

## Class Schedule

- Week 1 M (9/29) Introduction: On Modernism, the Popular, & Popular Modernism  
 W (10/1) **Science Fiction:** Wells, *War of the Worlds* (1898), Book 1, Chapters 1-10  
 F (10/3) Wells, Book 1, Chapters 11-15
- Week 2 M (10/6) Wells, Book 1, Chapter 16-Book 2, Chapter 3  
 W (10/8) Wells, Book 2, Chapter 4-Epilogue  
 F (10/10) **Writing for Magazines in the Roaring 20s:** Parker, *The Portable Dorothy*  
 “Such a Pretty Little Picture” (371-81), “Too Bad” (170-81), “Mr. Durant” (35-46),  
 “The Wonderful Old Gentleman” (52-64), “The Last Tea” (182-86), “Little Curtis” (338-51)  
**1<sup>st</sup> Paper Topics Distributed**
- Week 3 M (10/13) Parker: *Enough Rope* (74-118)  
 W (10/15) Parker: “The Sexes” (24-28), “Arrangement in Black and White” (19-23), “A  
 Telephone Call” (119-24), “Just a Little One” (241-45), “The Garter” (556-59), “New York to  
 Detroit” (291-94), “Big Blonde” (187-210), “You Were Perfectly Fine” (151-54)  
 F (10/17) Parker: *Sunset Gun* (211-40)
- Week 4 \*M (10/20) **The Comic Novel:** Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925), Chapters 1 & 2  
 W (10/22) Loos, Chapters 3 & 4  
 F (10/24) Loos, Chapters 5 & 6; **1<sup>st</sup> PAPERS DUE in class, 3-5 pp**
- Week 5 \*M (10/27) **Jazz Modernist:** Louis Armstrong  
 W (10/29) Armstrong  
 F (10/31) Armstrong
- Week 6 \*M (11/3) **Hard Boiled Detective Fiction:** Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929), Chapters 1-6  
 W (11/5) Hammett, Chapters 7-13  
 F (11/7) No Class (work on Bibliographies!)
- Week 7 M (11/10) Hammett, Chapters 14-20  
 W (11/12) Hammett, Chapters 21-27; **BIBLIOGRAPHIES DUE**  
 \*F (11/14) **Film Comedy:** The Marx Brothers, *Duck Soup* (1933); Screening: TBA
- Week 8 M (11/17) Marx Brothers  
 W (11/19) Marx Brothers; **PAPER PROPOSALS AND ABSTRACTS DUE**  
 F (11/21) *Literature of WW I: A Centenary Symposium* (Gerlinger Lounge)
- Week 9 \*M(11/24) **Comics:** Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38, 12-47*  
 W (11/26) Herriman, 48-85  
 F (11/28) **NO CLASS;** Thanksgiving Holiday
- Week 10 M (12/1) Herriman, 86-117  
 W (12/3) **Radio:** Orson Welles & the Mercury Theatre’s *War of the Worlds* (1938)  
 F (12/5) Orson Welles **FINAL PAPERS DUE in class (undergraduates, 6-8 pp)**
- Week 11 R (12/11) **Final Exam Date: No exam;** Make Up Class: Conclusion  
 F (12/12) **FINAL PAPERS DUE (graduate students, 10-12 pp, PLC 522)**

## Expectations and Requirements

**Attendance.** At the start of every class, you must sign the attendance sheet (if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to make sure the sheet is signed). I consider attendance in your final grade: **for every absence beyond two, your final grade will be reduced by a third of a grade.**

**Assigned readings.** The reading for this course is required, sometimes heavy, but always interesting. Ideally, you should reread the assigned passages.

**Class participation.** Class participation is required; if you do not participate, your participation grade will be a C. *Graduate student participation includes four additional meetings in which you will present and we will discuss recent criticism on course texts/topics.*

### **Presentations.**

*Undergraduates.* Undergraduates will all participate in a group presentation; each group will consist of 2-3 students who will together give a brief, 10-minute presentation that will provide historical/cultural context related to the text/topic under discussion. Classes marked \* on the class schedule are presentation days. More details on presentations to follow. Groups should come talk to me during office hours before presenting.

*Graduate Students.* During the additional graduate student meetings, each student will give a brief, 10-minute presentation on a recent scholarly article related to the text/topic under discussion. You will need to distribute a pdf of your article to the other graduate students via blackboard prior to your presentation date. More details on presentations to follow. Please come talk to me during office hours before presenting.

### **Papers.**

*Undergraduates* will write 2 papers: a concise close analysis of a short story or poem by Dorothy Parker (3-5 pp), due Friday 10/24; a research paper on a topic of your own design (6-8 pp), due Friday 12/5. Final papers must draw on research and include an annotated bibliography (see below). Bibliographies are due Wed. 11/12; proposals due Wed. 11/19.

*Graduate students* will write 2 papers: a concise close analysis of a short story or poem by Dorothy Parker (3-5 pp), due Friday 10/24; a conference length research paper on a topic of your own design (10-12 pp), due Friday 12/12. Final papers must draw on research and include an annotated bibliography (see below). Bibliographies are due Wed. 11/12; abstracts due Wed. 11/19.

*Paper Format.* Papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides. Your name, date, and course number (ENG 410/510) should be typed on the first page in the upper right hand corner. After page one, type last name and page number at upper right-hand corner of every page. Staple all pages. All papers must be titled. You must proof-read carefully; spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. **Titles of novels, films, songs, radio broadcasts, and volumes of poems and comics are italicized or underlined; titles of short stories and poems take quotation marks.**

**Late Papers.** As a rule, I do not give extensions. If you have a good reason for an extension, you must contact me before the paper is due (the night before is not adequate notice). I'll deduct a third of a grade for each day papers are late (weekends count as two days): if you turn a B paper in one day late it will receive a B-; two days late, it will get a C+. After two class periods, papers will earn a failing grade (F). **In order to pass the course, you must turn in both papers.**

**Annotated Bibliographies.** All students will research, compile, and annotate a bibliography of 10 pieces of recent criticism related to your final paper topic; these critical texts will serve as the research for your final paper. Your primary resource for this research should be recent scholarly journals or chapters of scholarly monographs; additional information on bibliographies to come. Bibliographies due Wed. 11/12.

**Grading.** *A final grade of C or better for the course is required for English major credit. No incompletes will be granted, except in case of documented emergency.*

*Undergraduates:* participation, 10%; group presentation, 10%; 1<sup>st</sup> paper, 20%; bibliography, 20%; final paper, 40%.

*Graduate Students:* participation, 10%; presentation, 10%; 1<sup>st</sup> paper, 20%; bibliography, 20%; final paper, 40%.

**Incomplete Policy:** Students have one calendar year to make up an incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Failure to make up the Incomplete at the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of "I" automatically changing to a grade of "F" or "N." *No incompletes will be granted, except in case of medical or personal emergency.*

**Students Needing Accommodation.** *UO strives to create inclusive learning environments. If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations, please notify me and the Accessible Education Center (164 Oregon Hall; <http://aec.uoregon.edu>), so we can make appropriate arrangements.*

**Use of Electronic Devices.** Laptops and tablets for note taking are permitted, but cell-phone use during class is forbidden. Texting or surfing the web during class time is distracting and disrespectful to your instructor and your classmates. Students who violate this policy will be asked to leave class and marked as “absent (unexcused)”; final grades will be negatively impacted.

**Mandatory Reporting Policy.** The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. Any UO employee who becomes aware that such behavior is occurring must report that information to the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity: (<http://aaeo.uoregon.edu/>). *The University Health Center and University Counseling and Testing Center provide assistance to students in such cases and have a greater ability to work confidentially.* If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO’s 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at: <http://safe.uoregon.edu/>

**Academic Integrity.** Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in this course or at this university. All work submitted must be your own and written exclusively for this course. The use of sources—ideas, quotations, paraphrases; from papers, articles, books, or websites—must be properly acknowledged and documented. If you have any doubts or questions about plagiarism or the University's policy on it, come talk to me or see UO's *Student Conduct Code*: (<http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabid/69/Default.aspx>).

In accordance with English Department policy, cases of clearly established plagiarism or cheating will result in a final course grade of “F,” and all incidents will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct, as required by University Policy. In cases of a second offense, plagiarism or cheating can result in dismissal from the University.

**Inclement Weather.** In the event of inclement weather, a banner will appear on the UO homepage (<http://www.uoregon.edu/>) displaying information about delay, cancellation or closure decisions for the Eugene campus. The [UO Alerts blog](#) will be updated with the latest updates and bulletins. Local television and radio stations will also broadcast delay and cancellation information. I will use blackboard to communicate information specific to the course. For more information on UO inclement weather policies see: <https://hr.uoregon.edu/policies-leaves/inclement-weather>