

ENG 670
PLC 253
T 9-11:50
12165
canvas.uoregon.edu

Paul Peppis
PLC 154 (Oregon Humanities Center)
Hours: T 12:30-3:30
346-7017
ppeppis@uoregon.edu

Popular Modernisms

Description

This seminar 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

Graduate 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.
7. be able to undertake original research by (a) identifying new scholarly problems 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.
8. be acquainted with a variety of methodologies with which to interpret and analyze literary and cultural texts.

Texts (at Duck Store)

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** T (9/29) Introduction: On Modernism, the Popular, & Popular Modernism; Essays by Clement Greenberg & Andreas Huyssen (pdf; canvas)
- Week 2** T (10/6) **Science Fiction:** Wells, *War of the Worlds* (1898); **1st Paper Topics Out**
- Week 3** T (10/13) **Light Verse in the Roaring 20s:** Parker, *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, *Enough Rope* (74-118); Parker: *Sunset Gun* (211-40)
- Week 4** T (10/20) **Short Fiction in the Roaring 20s:** Parker, *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, “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), “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); **first papers due** (3-4 pp; on Parker poem or story)
- Week 5** T (10/27) **The Comic Novel:** Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925)
- Week 6** T (11/3) **Jazz Modernist:** Louis Armstrong (selection of tunes on canvas)
- Week 7** T (11/10) **Hard Boiled Detective Fiction:** Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929); **bibliographies due**
- Week 8** T (11/17) **Film Comedy:** The Marx Brothers, *Duck Soup* (1933); Screening: TBA
- Week 9** T (11/24) **Comics:** Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38*; **abstracts due**
- Week 10** T (12/1) **Radio:** Orson Welles & the Mercury Theatre’s *War of the Worlds* (1938) Recording on canvas
- Week 11** T (12/8) **Final papers due** (10-12 pp), 4pm, 154 PLC

Expectations and Requirements

ASSIGNED READINGS AND MATERIALS: While the reading, listening, and viewing assignments for this course will be entertaining, please read, listen, and view with care and attention.

COURSE WEBSITE (canvas.uoregon.edu): You will need to access the site periodically throughout the class. The syllabus, paper topics, and other course-related materials will be posted.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Regular and productive class participation is expected in graduate seminars; participation makes up 10% of the final grade.

ATTENDANCE: At the start of every class, you should sign the attendance sheet (if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to make sure the sheet is signed). Missing more than one session will result in a lowered final grade (1 quarter grade for each absence beyond 1).

OFFICE HOURS: T 12:30-3:30, and by appointment (hours open to change).

PRESENTATIONS: Over the term, each seminar participant will give a brief, 5-10 minute presentation (time strictly enforced) on recent scholarship related to the text/topic under discussion (the MLA bibliography should be your principal source for this scholarship); one or two presentations per class session (10% of final grade). I'll provide additional information on presentations. Please come talk to me during office hours before presenting.

PAPERS: You will write two papers: a concise close analysis of a poem or short story by Parker (3-4 pp), due fourth week (10/20); a conference length research paper (10-12 pp), due eleventh week (12/8). I will provide topics for the close analysis paper; you will design final paper topics in consultation with me; final papers must draw on research. As part of the final paper writing process, you will produce an annotated bibliography and a paper abstract. Bibliographies due seventh week (11/10); paper abstracts (200-250 words) due ninth week (11/24). 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. I'll deduct a third of a grade for each day papers are late (weekends count as two days). After a week, I will not accept late papers.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: Each seminar participant will research, compile, and annotate a bibliography of 10 pieces of recent scholarship related to your final paper topic (20% of final grade); these critical texts will serve as basic research for your final paper. Your primary resource for this research should be recent scholarly journals or books indexed in the MLA bibliography.

GRADING: Participation, 10 %; presentation, 10%; 1st paper 20 %; bibliography, 20%; final paper, 40%.

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.*

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.

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>).