

ENG 670
PLC 448
F 9-11:50
22276
canvas.uoregon.edu

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PLC 154 (Oregon Humanities Center)
Hours: R 2:00-5:00
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Popular Modernisms

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 five 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 conventions they also employ.

Learning Objectives

Graduate students who complete this course successfully should be able to:

1. read early twentieth-century popular cultural texts with discernment and comprehension and with an understanding of their conventions;
2. draw on relevant cultural and/or historical information to situate these texts within their cultural, political, and historical contexts;
3. perform critical, formal analyses of popular 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 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 early twentieth-century popular 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)

Buster Keaton, *Sherlock Jr.* (1924 film); Jazz by Louis Armstrong (selections); Mercury Theatre's *War of the Worlds*, adapted by Orson Welles (1938 Radio Broadcast)

Class Schedule

- Week 1** F (1/10) Introduction: On Modernism, Popular Culture, & Popular Modernism; Greenberg, “Avant-Garde & Kitsch” (1939); Adorno & Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry” (excerpts) (1944/1949); Huyssen, “Mass Culture as Woman” (1986); Leick, “Popular Modernism” (2008) (pdfs on canvas)
- Week 2** F (1/17) **Science Fiction:** H. G. Wells, *War of the Worlds* (1898);
1st Paper Topics Out; Presentations
- Week 3** F (1/24) **Light Verse in the Roaring 20s:** Dorothy Parker, *The Portable Dorothy Parker*, *Enough Rope* (74-118); Parker: *Sunset Gun* (211-40);
Presentations
- Week 4** F (1/31) **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 a Parker poem or story);
Presentations
- Week 5** F (2/7) **Silent Film Comedy:** Buster Keaton, *Sherlock Jr.* (1924), on canvas;
Presentations
- Week 6** F (2/14) **The Comic Novel:** Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925);
Presentations
- Week 7** F (2/21) **Jazz Modernist:** Louis Armstrong tunes (on canvas); **Presentations**
- Week 8** M (2/24) **Bibliographies due**
F (2/28) **Hard Boiled Detective Fiction:** Dashiell Hammett, *Red Harvest* (1929);
Presentations
- Week 9** M (3/3) **Abstracts due**
F (3/6) **Comics:** George Herriman, *Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38*; **Presentations**
- Week 10** F (3/13) **Radio:** Orson Welles & the Mercury Theatre’s *War of the Worlds* (1938), on canvas; **Presentations**
- Week 11** W (3/18) **Final papers due** (10-12 pp), 4pm

Assessment and Course Policies

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).

Class Participation: Active, engaged, and respectful class participation is expected in graduate seminars. A respectful environment is essential to facilitate discussions and to create a safe space for all participants to share their thoughts. You may find that you don't always agree with views expressed by your classmates or instructor. Part of being an active, engaged, and respectful participant is listening to others' ideas and being constructive with your own comments. Participation makes up 10% of the final grade.

Presentations: Over the term, each seminar participant will give a 10 minute presentation (time enforced) on recent scholarship related to the text/topic under discussion; 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 close analysis of a poem or short story by Parker (3-4 pp), due fourth week (1/31); a conference length research paper (10-12 pp), due eleventh week (3/18). I will provide topics for the first paper; you will design final paper topics; 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 Monday of week eight (2/24); paper abstracts (200-250 words) due Monday of week nine (3/2); final papers due Wednesday of week eleven (3/18). 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 8 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%.

Course Materials: We will read and study popular cultural materials from the early twentieth century that contain representations and ideas that differ from those of our own moment. These representations and ideas may be challenging or even cause offense. Because all course materials are required, please take the time to look over course materials and consider whether this is the right seminar for you.

Academic Integrity: The University of Oregon requires academic honesty. All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented.

Inclusive Learning Environments: This is an inclusive learning environment. Please notify me by the end of week 2 if there are aspects of the instruction or course design that result in accessibility barriers to your participation so that we can address those barriers. Please contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu for additional resources and support.

Title IX Policy and Reporting Responsibilities: UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender-based stalking. If you experience gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff trained to support survivors in navigating campus life including accessing health and counseling services, academic and housing accommodations, legal protective orders, and other help. If you tell us about harassment or assault, we are not required to report this information to anyone unless you request that we do so. If you decide to make a report, we and other UO employees will help you to do so. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available and that you have access to the resources you need. 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 or visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.