Themes in the Humanities: 
Popular Modernisms

HUM 300 
CRN: 36459 
TR: 2:15-3:45 pm (via Zoom) 
canvas.uoregon.edu 

DESCRIPTION 
This course participates in the recent reassessment of relations between aesthetic modernism and popular culture. Over the past twenty-five years, scholars have expanded their study of modernism's original contexts, reassessing the nature and extent of the movement’s relations with and responses to popular culture. 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 productions of a feminized popular culture, this course studies works of popular culture produced during the modernist moment of the early twentieth century that innovate upon the popular forms and genre conventions they also employ.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Duckstore) 
Loos, Anita. Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1925), Liveright
Mitchell, Gladys. Speedy Death (1929), Thomas & Mercer
Wells, H.G. War of the Worlds (1898), Dover

OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS (Canvas) 
Armstrong, Louis (Jazz and Popular songs, selections)
Herriman, George. Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38 (Fantagraphics; PDF)
Keaton, Buster. Sherlock Junior (1924 film)
Parker, Dorothy. Enough Rope: Poems (Boni & Liveright, 1926; PDF)
Welles, Orson. Mercury Theatre’s War of the Worlds (1938 Radio Broadcast)

INSTRUCTOR 
Prof. Paul Peppis (he/him/his) 
ppeppis@uoregon.edu

Communicating with Me
Outside of our scheduled synchronous (real time) remote class discussions, all announcements and general emails will be made via Canvas. These will be automatically forwarded to your UO email. (Check and adjust your settings under Account > Notifications if you would also like to receive announcements via text.)

Remote Office Hours: W 12:00-3:00 pm via Zoom
Email me at any time to make an appointment for a Zoom call during normal office hours

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES
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.
GRADED ASSIGNMENTS
20% First Paper (3-4 pp)
20% Group Presentation and Reflection
30% Discussion Posts (at least 6)
30% Second paper (5-6 pp)

REMOTE LEARNING PLAN
We will meet live via Zoom during our scheduled class time. Let’s make the most of these live sessions to build community and interaction. I recognize that none of us expected to be in each other’s homes for class. You may see or hear a dog in my space, and please do not worry if you have housemates, family members, children, or pets who make a cameo in yours. You can help make Zoom less awkward for all of us by leaving your camera on whenever possible. I know you may need to turn it off sometimes, but having cameras on goes a long way in establishing trust and engagement. Please leave your microphone on mute when you are not speaking. You are welcome to use the chat function in Zoom to participate in class discussion in addition to turning on your microphone to speak. Our collaborative task, just as it would be in an in-person class, is to make HUM 300 a space for rigorous, respectful study and discussion of course materials.

UO RESOURCES
• Online tutoring will be available Monday-Friday 9am-5pm through UO’s Online Writing Lab (OWL), a free service that allows all UO students to submit work via an online portal and receive detailed feedback within 24 hours. Log in at https://owl.uoregon.edu/.
• UO loaner laptop program for students with limited resources: go to https://is.uoregon.edu/remote and click on loaner laptop request form
• UO’s coronavirus webpage: https://www.uoregon.edu/coronavirus
• UO’s FAQ page for remote learning and coronavirus information: https://www.uoregon.edu/coronavirus-faq
• UO’s Student Conduct Code defines academic misconduct: https://dos.uoregon.edu/conduct. Students may not commit or attempt to commit any act that constitutes academic misconduct. Students should acknowledge and document all sources of information. If there is any question about whether an act constitutes academic misconduct, see me.
• UO’s Basic Needs Resource Guide is the place to go for help with basic needs such as food security, housing security, healthcare, and access to technology: https://blogs.uoregon.edu/basicneeds/
• SAFE is a resource for members of the UO community who experience sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking: https://safe.uoregon.edu. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call the 24-hour hotline 541-346-SAFE to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options and get support.
• The UO Counseling Center offers support for well-being and mental health of students via telehealth and in-person appointments, drop-in hours, and availability of mental health professionals at any time via phone at 541-346-3227: https://counseling.uoregon.edu

ACCESSIBILITY
The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.

Note: If your work with the AEC determines you may need accommodations, please communicate with me within two weeks of meeting with the AEC to discuss details of the accommodations.
ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENT
As UO continues to adjust to teaching and learning remotely in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. I am mindful of the impacts events related to COVID-19 may be having on you. During this time, I encourage you to talk with me about what you are experiencing so we can work together to help you succeed in this course. The course offers a variety of assignments by which your performance is assessed so that your final grade is not dependent upon a single skill or performance. These include live synchronous discussions, discussion posts on class materials, a group presentation, and two papers. Due dates are listed on the course schedule. Late assignments will be docked 1/3 grade for every day they are late. Assignments will not be accepted more than one week past the due date except with prior permission in extreme circumstances. You should expect to devote approximately twelve hours per week to work for this class.

Readings and Class Participation
Please read/review all assigned materials for the day in question prior to signing on for online discussion. For our synchronous (real time) discussions, please be sure to sign in on time, have appropriate materials on hand (course readings, paper and pen for taking notes), and be ready to focus on the day’s discussion. Although I will not be penalizing students for non-attendance of live Zoom sessions, I will continue to reward students who take an active and engaged role in Zoom discussions by contributing respectfully, thoughtfully, and constructively to our in-class dialogue. Remember, participation can take several forms: asking questions, offering your own analyses and insights (based on the evidence of the text), asking others to elaborate further on their own comments or questions. If you miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to keep up with the readings, get notes for that day from a classmate, and then see me in office hours if you have questions about the material you missed. Please bear in mind that non-attendance will likely diminish your understanding of the required materials and compromise your performance on assignments.

Discussion Posts
Over the term, you will post to the discussion board on six of the eight works of popular culture we will study over the term. You can post questions about and reflections on assigned materials, responses to others’ questions about those materials, or reflections on the posts of others. Posts should run between 300-500 words and should avoid plot summary or description. Posts should make arguments or claims about the assigned material, ask questions, and note points of connection and threads running through the materials. As you respond, practice your close reading skills, paying attention to specific details, passages, and techniques, and then reflecting on the effects of those details/passages/techniques. Please also read others’ posts. Posts are due by 5pm the day after we finish discussing the relevant work (due dates are on the schedule). Students who contribute 6 clear and thoughtful posts over the term of at least 300 words will earn a B for your discussion post grade; students who post fewer than 6 times over the term, whose posts are shorter than 300 words and less clear or thoughtful, will earn lower grades; students who post more often, write longer and more analytically probing and ambitious posts will earn grades higher than B for discussion posts (30% of final grade).

Papers
You will write two papers: the first will be a 3-4 page close reading paper on a poem by Dorothy Parker due on F 4/16 by 11:59pm via Canvas (20% of final grade); the second will be a 5-6 page analytical paper on course materials due F 6/5 by 11:59 pm via Canvas (30% of final grade). I will provide topics for both papers, but I will allow alternative topics for the final paper with my approval. All papers must be titled. You should proofread carefully; spelling, punctuation, and grammar count. Late papers lose 1/3 of a grade per day (A to A-, B+ to B, C to C-, etc.) including weekends/holidays. Late papers will not be accepted more than one week past the due date except with prior permission in extreme circumstances.
Extensions
You may ask for an extension if the due date is more than 72 hours (3 days) later, and the earlier the better. When you contact me, please let me know how long an extension you are requesting. In case of a looming or unexpected disaster, consideration will be given if you keep me in the loop and communicate in advance — i.e. even if the assignment is due in less than 3 days. Above all, stay in touch.

Presentations
All students will participate in a group presentation. Each group will consist of 4-5 students who will together give a brief, 10-minute presentation that provides historical/cultural context related to the text/topic under discussion in order to enrich our understanding and discussion of that text/topic. Each group should also explain to the class your reasons for choosing that context. After presenting, all group members will submit via canvas a brief reflection (no more than a page) that explains your individual role in the process and reflects on how the research enriched your understanding of your text/topic. Presentation days are indicated on the class schedule. Groups should meet with me via Zoom during office hours before presenting (20% of final grade).

Grading Scale

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Incomplete Policy
Undergraduate 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."

Course Content
The materials we will study this term are works of popular culture from a fairly distant historical period that contain beliefs and opinions different from our own. The ability to encounter unfamiliar and even challenging ideas with an attitude of critical distance is fundamental to the work of humanistic study. I do not expect you to like everything you read, watch, or listen to (indeed, I hope for more complicated responses than that). But you must be willing to approach these materials with an open mind, even if you ultimately decide that you do not agree with or share the values they sometimes express. I believe that the cultivation of such open-mindedness is good practice not merely for scholars of works of literature and popular culture; it can also help prepare students to live as tolerant, ethically-minded members of a diverse and inclusive society.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS, GUIDANCE, AND BEST PRACTICES
The primary platforms that we will be using for this online course are Canvas and Zoom. If you have questions about accessing and using Canvas, go to: the Canvas support page. Students experiencing low connectivity on Zoom should consider turning their video off.

If you face Internet access challenges: computer labs are currently open for students at the Eugene campus. Some companies are offering free access during this challenging time. To learn more about options visit Information Services’ web page on going remote.
SCHEDULE
Due to the experimental nature of these adaptations to the remote format, the following schedule may be subject to revision; I will announce all changes as far as possible ahead of time via Canvas.

MODULE 1 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION
T (3/30) On Modernism, the Popular, & Popular Modernism
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

MODULE 2 SCIENCE FICTION: H. G. Wells, War of the Worlds
R (4/1) Read: Wells, Book I, Chapters 1-11 (pp. 1-41)
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
T (4/6) Read: Wells, Book I, Chapters 12-17 (pp. 41-90)
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
R (4/8) Read: Wells, Book II, Chapters 1-10 (pp. 91-145)
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
F (4/9) Discussion Board Posts on War of the Worlds due by 5pm

MODULE 3 LIGHT VERSE IN THE ROARING 20S: Dorothy Parker, Enough Rope (Canvas)
T (4/13) Read: Parker, pp. 11-60 (pdf)
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
Group Presentation on Context for Parker
R (4/15) Read: Parker, pp. 61-110 (pdf)
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
F (4/16) First Papers Due by 11:59pm via Canvas (3-4pp)

MODULE 4 SILENT FILM COMEDY: Buster Keaton, Sherlock Junior (Canvas)
T (4/20) View: Keaton, Sherlock Junior
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
Group Presentation on Context for Keaton
R (4/22) Re-View: Keaton, Sherlock Junior
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
F (4/23) Discussion Board Posts on Sherlock Junior due by 5pm

MODULE 5 THE COMIC NOVEL: Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes
T (4/27) Read: Loos, Chapters 1 & 2 pp. 1-32
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
Group Presentation on Context for Loos
R (4/29) Read: Loos, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 33-74
Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
T (5/4)  Read: Loos, Chapters 5 & 6, pp. 75-131
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

W (5/5)  Discussion Board Posts on Gentlemen Prefer Blondes due by 5pm

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MODULE 6  JAZZ AND POPULAR SONGS: Louis Armstrong’s Tunes (Canvas)

R (5/6)  Listen: Selection of New Orleans Jazz & Armstrong’s versions of New Orleans Jazz
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
        Group Presentation on Context for Armstrong

T (5/11) Listen: Selection of 1920s & 30s Pop Music, Armstrong’s versions of 20s & 30s Pop &
         Armstrong’s Songs on Race
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

W (5/12) Discussion Board Posts on Armstrong’s Jazz and popular music due by 5pm

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MODULE 7  GOLDEN-AGE DETECTIVE FICTION: Gladys Mitchell, Speedy Death

R (5/13) Read: Mitchell, Chapters 1-7, pp. 1-74
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
        Group Presentation on Context for Mitchell

T (5/18) Read: Mitchell, Chapters 8-15, pp. 75-178
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

R (5/20) Read: Mitchell, Chapters 16-22, pp. 179-266
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

F (5/21) Discussion Board Posts on Speedy Death due by 5pm

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MODULE 8  NEWSPAPER COMICS: George Herriman, Krazy & Ignatz: 1937-38 (Canvas)

T (5/25) Read: Herriman, pp. 12-64 (pdf)
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
        Group Presentation on Context for Herriman

        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm

F (5/28) Discussion Board Posts on Krazy & Ignatz due by 5pm

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MODULE 9  RADIO PLAYS: Orson Welles & the Mercury Theatre’s War of the Worlds (Canvas)

T (6/1)  Listen: War of the Worlds Radio Play
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
        Group Presentation on Context for Welles

R (6/3)  Re-Listen: War of the Worlds Radio Play
        Live Zoom Meeting at 2:15pm
        Course Conclusion

F (6/4)  Second Papers due by 11:59 pm via Canvas (5-6pp)