

Readings in Twentieth-Century British Literature

College of the Holy Cross, Spring 2008

WF 12:30-1:45 pm, Stein 307

Instructor: Paige Reynolds
Office Hours: Fenwick 228, W 10:30-11:30 am, 4:00-5:00 pm; F 9:30-10:30 am, and by appointment
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Texts: *The Longman Anthology of British Literature*, vol. 2C (3rd ed.)
Virginia Woolf, *Between the Acts* (Harcourt Brace)
Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (Anchor)

Objectives: In this course, we will survey twentieth-century British literature, beginning with the dawn of the twentieth century and the advent of literary modernism. We will focus not only on representative texts from the modern and contemporary periods, but also on the historical and cultural contexts that helped to shape those literary texts. As we do so, we'll develop a sense of the key characteristics of this century and its culture and then work to complicate those definitions with our own critical understanding of the works at hand. We will end the class by reading together a recent, twenty-first century British novel that has received widespread critical acclaim. In our discussion of this novel, we will trace the ways in which it may have been influenced by twentieth-century texts, as well as explore salient concerns such as literary value and canonicity.

Expectations:

Participation and Preparation: Come to class with questions, puzzles, observations, and other responses to the text we've read. Work to weave your responses to an individual text into ideas about the other texts that we'll read this semester. Obviously, this means you must read closely and critically. If it becomes clear that you have not read and cannot enter into the discussion, this will bode ill for your grade. You will also be responsible for starting class discussion on one text during the semester.

Absences: Come to class. Any unexcused absence will lower your final grade. If you have a genuine emergency or you discuss the absence with me in advance, we will explore your options.

Short Papers: You will be required to develop original theses and to write three short, analytical papers – one on a text of your choice, one on *Between the Acts*, and one on *Atonement*. Each assignment demands different critical skills, and we will discuss them in more detail as the paper deadlines approach. If you do not already own a stylebook, I recommend that you purchase one. The English Department recommends *Writing Essentials* by Dawn Rodrigues and Myron C. Tuman, which is available at the bookstore.

Final Exam: There will be a final, cumulative exam. The in-class exam will ask you to identify and analyze key passages that we've read during the course.

Final Grade: Your final grade will be composed of the following: three short papers (the first is 20%, the subsequent two 25% each; 70%), final exam (20%), class participation and attendance (10%).

Basic Ground Rules:

- Plan to meet with me during office hours at least once this semester. Also, please feel free to talk with me about reading or writing during office hours.
- Be prepared for a few changes in the syllabus, if we see that the class needs demand those changes.
- Don't plagiarize. If you're confused about what constitutes plagiarism, see the English Department website on "Academic Honesty," or ask me questions. Any plagiarized work receives a zero, and I report it to the Dean.
- The material in this course is challenging. Nonetheless, it is absolutely crucial that you learn to work your way through the fear and frustration that sometimes attends reading work as (deliberately)

alienating as some of the literature produced during the twentieth-century literature. I urge you to avoid study guide sites on the web, such as Sparknotes. Their material is reductive, and it interrupts your own critical and creative engagement with the text.

- Late papers are penalized 1/3 of a grade for each date they are late, including weekends. So Friday's A- is Monday's B-.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

W 1/16 Introduction; Hardy (2297-2307)

F 1/18 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ch. 1

W 1/23 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, chs. 2-3

F 1/25 **No class (MLK makeup)**

W 1/30 Shaw, *Pygmalion* (2251-2282)

F 2/1 *Blast*: Lewis and Pound (2308-2324), West (2325-2340)

W 2/6 WWI Poets: Brooke (2341-2343), Sassoon (2343-2345), Owen (2345-2349); Hamilton (2373-2374); Cannan (2374-2376); Barrington (2376-2377); Dircks (2377); Trotter (2378); Hooley (2378-2379)

F 2/8 Speeches on Irish Independence (2379-2389); Yeats (2393-2399)

M 2/11 **Paper 1 Due**

W 2/13 Yeats (2399-2419); Joyce, "Araby"

F 2/15 Joyce, "Eveline," "Clay," "The Dead"

W 2/20 Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (2509-2512); *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (2544-2549)

F 2/22 Eliot, *The Waste Land* (2519-2531)

W 2/27 Woolf, from *A Room of One's Own* (2660-2695); Woolf, *Between the Acts* (3-76)

F 2/29 Woolf, *Between the Acts* (76-219)

W 3/5 **Spring Break**

F 3/7 **Spring Break**

W 3/12 Woolf, *Between the Acts*

F 3/14 Mansfield, "Daughters of the Late Colonel" (2725-2738); Lawrence, "Snake" (2744-2745); Forster, "The Life to Come" (2420-2430)

M 3/17 **Paper 2 Due**

W 3/19 Churchill, Spender, Bowen (2797-2817), Orwell (2836-2848)

F 3/21 Thomas (2850-2853); Auden (2903-2913)

W 3/26 Beckett, *Endgame* (2856-2890)

F 3/28 Smith, "The New Age" (2918); Larkin, "MCMXIV" (2922); Hughes, "Relic" (2924)

W 4/2 Kureishi (2942-2987)

W 4/2 **Screening:** *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1986, dir. Stephen Frears)

F 4/4 Rushdie (2998-3030)

W 4/9 Thiong'o (3036-3039); Gordimer (3040-3046); Walcott (3047-3056)

F 4/11 Heaney (3057-3063); Boland (3073-3078); Muldoon (3086-3094); Ní Dhomhnaill (3095-3108)

M 4/14 **Paper 3 Due**

W 4/16 Thanksgiving Break, no class

F 4/18 McEwan, *Atonement*

W 4/23 McEwan, *Atonement*

F 4/25 Coetzee, "What Is a Classic?" (handout); review for Final Exam

W 4/30 Study Period

Th 5/8 (8:30 am) **Final Exam.**