

Global Modernism (ENGL 4425)

Prof. Shaj Mathew | Spring 2025



"Young Emir Studying," Osman Hamdi Bey (1878) in the Louvre Abu Dhabi

Modernism was a global literary movement, even within its origins in Europe. This seminar canvasses literature, cinema, and philosophy from around the world to rethink the meaning of modernism once we include its genealogies and afterlives in the non-European world. Is the mantra "make it new" equally applicable to modernist literature from the Global South? How can we reconcile the strange antiquity of these expressions of modernity? Can "realist" representations of modernity help us understand modernism? We will pose these questions by looking to writers such as Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Adunis, Anton Chekhov, Marcel Proust, Ahmet Hamdi Tanpinar, Andrei Bely, Octavio Paz, Rabindranath Tagore, Sadeq Hedayat, Clarice Lispector, Charles Baudelaire, and Walter Benjamin.

Required Texts

1. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*
2. Ahmet Midhat, *Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi*
3. Adunis, *Selected Poems* (translated by Khaled Mattawa)
4. Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to GH*
5. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*
6. Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*

7. Henrik Ibsen, *Four Major Plays*
8. Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*
9. Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*

Requirements

1. Attendance and active participation (25%)
2. 2-3-page close reading (20%)
3. 4-5-page midterm essay (25%)
4. 8-10-page final essay (30%)

Course Schedule

Unit One: The Beginnings of European Modernism

1/15: Introduction

1/22: T. S. Eliot, *The Wasteland* (excerpt)
T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent"
T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth"
James Joyce, excerpt from *Ulysses* ([chapter 8: Lestrygonians](#))
Homer, excerpt from *The Odyssey* (trans. Emily Wilson)
Joyce, "non serviam" scene from *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
Franco Moretti, excerpt from *The Way of the World*
Gertrude Stein, "Melanctha" from *Three Lives*

1/29: Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" & selected poems
Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life"

Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire"

Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the 19th Century"

Scenes of music from

Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

Andrei Bely, *Petersburg*

Watch a few minutes of Dziga Vertov, *The Man with a Movie Camera* (film)

Cf. Ja'far Panahi, *Taxi*

1/31: 2-3-page close reading essay due to Canvas before midnight

Unit Two: Modernism and Capitalism

- 2/5 : Karl Marx, excerpts from the *Marx-Engels Reader*
Max Weber, "Science as Vocation"
Charles Taylor, introduction to *A Secular Age*
Eugene McCarragher, introduction to *The Enchantments of Mammon*
Vivek Chibber, "The Flight from Materialism" (excerpt + highlighted definition)

- 2/12: Lu Xun, *Diary of a Madman*
Xun, "On the Power of Mara Poetry"
Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism"
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*
Dariush Mehrjui, *The Cow* (film)

Unit Three: Middle Eastern Modernism

- 2/19: Ahmet Midhat, *Felatun Bey and Rakim Efendi*
Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar, "Neither Am I Inside Time" (poem)
Tanpınar, "Time in Bursa" (poem)
Tanpınar, "Bursa" chapter from *Five Cities*
Optional:
Zeynep Celik, excerpt from *Europe Knows Nothing about the Orient*
Avner Wishnitzer, excerpt from *Reading Clocks, alla turca*
Atabaki, "Time, Labor-Discipline & Modernization in Turkey & Iran"
Nergis Ertürk, "Modernism Disfigured"

- 2/26: Dostoevsky, excerpt from *The Brothers Karamazov*
Jalal Al-e Ahmad, *Occidentosis*
Ali Shariati, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*
Octavio Paz, "Mexican Masks" + excerpt from *The Children of the Mire*
Brief excerpt from Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time*
W. E. B. Du Bois, "Souls of the Black Folk" + "Criteria of Negro Art"
Cf. Alain Locke, "Art or Propaganda?"
Excerpt from Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*

- 3/5: Forough Farrokhzad, "Let Us Believe in the Coming of the Cold Season"
Farrokhzad, "Another Birth"
Farrokhzad, "The Wind Will Carry Us"
Farrokhzad, "Earthly Verses"
Farrokhzad, "Mechanical Doll"
Farrokhzad, *The House is Black* (film)
Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect"

3/5: 4-5-page midterm essay due to Canvas before midnight

- 3/19: Adunis, *Songs of Mihyar the Damascene*
Adunis, "Poetics and Modernity"
Optional, Robyn Creswell, excerpt from *City of Beginnings*
Eric Hobsbawm, introduction to *The Invention of Tradition*
Svetlana Boym, excerpt from *The Future of Nostalgia*
Raymond Williams, "When Was Modernism?"

(Mini-)Unit Four: The Drama of Modernism

- 3/26: Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabbler*
Ibsen, *A Doll's House*
Anton Chekhov, *The Cherry Orchard*
George Bernard Shaw, *Pygmalion*
Raymond Williams, "From Hero to Victim"

Unit Five: The Modernist Novel

- 4/2: Virginia Woolf, "A Sketch of the Past" in *Moments of Being*
Woolf, "Reminiscences," in *Moments of Being*
Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*
Leslie Stephen, "What is Materialism?"
Bertrand Russell, excerpt from *Our Knowledge of the External World*
Optional excerpt from Ann Banfield, *The Phantom Table*

- 4/9: Clarice Lispector, *The Passion According to GH*
Lispector, *Agua Viva*
Excerpts from Spinoza and the *Upanishads*
Excerpt from Bertrand Russell, *Analysis of Mind*

Unit Six: Modernist Poetry in Conversation

- 4/16: Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (read introduction by WB Yeats)
Selections from the *Upanishads*
Tagore, "World Literature"
Tagore, triptych of essays on nationalism (US, Japan, China)
- 4/23: W. B. Yeats, *Collected Poems* + "Brahma"
Edward Said, "Yeats and Decolonization"

Olufemi Taiwo, Introduction to *Against Decolonization*
Laura Doyle, excerpt from *Inter-Imperiality*
Edward Said, introduction to *Orientalism*
Gauri Viswanathan, “In Search of Madame Blavatsky”
Leela Gandhi, excerpt from *Affective Communities*

Unit Seven: Postmodernism

4/30: Jorge Luis Borges, “The Congress”
Borges, “Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*”
Borges, “On Exactitude in Science”
John Barth, “The Literature of Exhaustion”
Abbas Kiarostami, *Certified Copy* (film)
Kiarostami, *Close-Up* (film)
Kiarostami, *Rug* (film)
Timothy Mitchell, Introduction to *Colonising Egypt*

4/30: Students each deliver brief presentation on a modernist not on our syllabus:

Aby Warburg, Sigmund Freud, Bertolt Brecht, Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, Rubén Darío, Mulk Raj Anand, Naguib Mahfouz, Langston Hughes, Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto*, Andrei Bely, Surrealist Manifesto, Symbolist Movement, Andre Breton, Derek Walcott, H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), Fernando Pessoa, Dziga Vertov, Tayeb Salih, Italo Svevo, Rebecca West, Octavio Paz, Sadeq Hedayat

5/4: 8-10-page final essay due to Canvas before midnight

Extra Credit Opportunities:

- (1) Check out Aby Warburg’s “[Mnemosyne Atlas](#)” from Coates Library and write a 2-page report OR deliver a 15-minute presentation on its content, significance, and connection to modernism.
- (2) Visit the [Ransom Center](#) at the University of Texas, Austin, and write a 2-page report OR deliver a 15-minute presentation on a (preferably modernist) document or author from its archive. You will need to prepare for your visit beforehand by making an account on the Center’s website and identifying sources that you want to look at via the [finding aid](#).