

Comparative Studies 660:

MODERNISM: ITS ORIGIN AND  
DEVELOPMENT IN 20TH CENTURY CULTURE AND POLITICS  
Autumn 1994

Professor Jon Erickson  
Denney 532 Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30 and by appt.

This class will examine the attractions of and reactions to the development of the modern world as expressed by artists, composers, poets, novelists and philosophers.

In this secularized universe, advances in technology, the growth of great cities, the development of mass production and markets, and political struggles for individual freedom and collective identity created complex problems for the maintenance of values that once seemed self-evident; this even called for the creation of new values altogether.

Out of this environment arose a proliferation of artistic and philosophical styles that demonstrated the complexity of human thought and feelings in their attempts to create a new, modern sense of being, one relevant to new historical conditions.

As we are the inheritors of these issues--even as they have grown more severe--an understanding of our own situation rests on an understanding of what our predecessors had faced. We will look at these issues from historical, political, psychological, aesthetic, and philosophical perspectives.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Three sets of reading notes will be collected throughout the quarter. These notes should be summary/response/critical questions pertaining to the texts read. If one is responding to authors with multiple texts (such as Freud or Marx/Engels), response need not deal with every text, but should nonetheless demonstrate engagement with larger issues that the texts may have in common. These notes will be typed.

A typed, double-spaced final paper, 10-12 pages in length, will be due on Tuesday of final exam week. It can be in relation to any text covered in this course, as long as it pertains to the issues, questions, problems, dilemmas, etc. raised by the concepts of modernism or modernity.

**GRADE BREAKDOWN:** The three sets of reading notes will comprise 50% of the grade; the other 50% will be the final paper.

## TEXTS:

Walter Benjamin, Illuminations  
 Lewis Feuer, ed. Marx & Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and  
 Philosophy.  
 Renato Poggioli: Theory of the Avant-Garde  
 Christopher Butler: Early Modernism  
 Fedor Dostoyevsky: Notes from Underground  
 Friedrich Nietzsche: The Genealogy of Morals  
 Peter Gay, ed.: The Freud Reader  
 Virginia Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway  
 Franz Kafka: The Trial  
 Georg Büchner: Danton's Death, Woyzeck, Leonce and Lena  
 Bertolt Brecht: Mother Courage and Her Children

A Class Reader from Cop-EZ, located in the basement of Bricker Hall.

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 CALENDAR
 

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\* Indicates Essays in Class Reader

Sept. 21 Introduction

Week One

Sept. 26 \*Kant, \*Hegel, \*Darwin  
 Sept. 28 Marx and Engels: "Manifesto of the Communist Party,"  
 "A Contribution to the Critique of Political  
 Economy," "On Historical Materialism." Excerpts from  
Capital, "The Fetishism of Commodities" [handout]

Week Two

Oct. 3 Marx and Engels: "Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of  
 Classical German Philosophy," "Theses on Feuerbach,"  
 Excerpts from The German Ideology, Excerpts from Toward  
 the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right, Excerpts  
 from Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in  
 Science of the ("Anti-Duhring"). Excerpt from The Origin  
 Family, Private Property and the State.

Oct. 5 \*Baudelaire essays, \*Paris Spleen, \*Simmel, \*Poe  
 stories, Benjamin: "Motifs in Baudelaire," Early  
 Modernism: Chapter 4.

Week Three

Oct. 10 Büchner: Danton's Death, Woyzeck  
 Oct. 12# Nietzsche: \*"On Truth and Lies," Genealogy of  
 Morals: Preface and First Essay. READING NOTEBOOK  
 DUE (1)

Week Four

- Oct. 17 Nietzsche: Genealogy, (finish)  
 Oct. 19 Dostoyevsky, Notes From Underground

Week Five

- Oct. 24 Freud: "The Aetiology of Hysteria," "The Interpretation of Dreams," "On Dreams," "Dora," "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality"  
 Oct. 26 Freud: "On Narcissism," "Repression," "The Unconscious," "Mourning and Melancholia," "Negation," "Civilization and Its Discontents."

Week Six

- Oct. 31 Kafka: The Trial, Benjamin: "Franz Kafka," "Some Reflections on Kafka."  
 Nov. 2. Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway

Week Seven

- Nov. 7# Early Modernism: Chapter 5. Poetry (handouts). \*Mallarmé, \*Gertrude Stein, \*Eliot: "Tradition and the Individual Talent" **READING NOTEBOOK DUE (2)**  
 Nov. 9 Brecht: Mother Courage and \*Essays. Benjamin: "What is Epic Theatre?"

Week Eight

- Nov. 14 \*Adorno/Horkheimer, Benjamin: "Work of Art"  
 Nov. 16 Early Modernism: Chapters 2 and 3.

Week Nine

- Nov. 21 Poggioli: Chapters 1-6  
 Nov. 23 Poggioli: finish; \*Bürger, \*Mann.

Week Ten

- Nov. 28 \*Lyotard, \*Habermas, \*Giddens, \*Bürger, Jameson  
 Nov. 30# Summary. **READING NOTEBOOK DUE.(3)**

Finals Week

Final Paper Due: Tuesday, Dec. 6, 4:00 pm.