**Modernist Thought and Culture, 1880-1945**

***Group Studies X194***

Instructors: Stephen Kern (History) and Brian McHale (English

***DESCRIPTION:***

This course surveys one of the richest and most dynamic spans of Western cultural history, which witnessed a spectrum of revolutionary developments in physics, genetics, philosophy, psychiatry, visual art, architecture, music, dance, and literature. The team-teaching format ensures that students will have the opportunity to approach modernist ideas and forms of expression from more than one disciplinary perspective. They will engage with modernist culture from the perspectives of intellectual history as well as literature and fine-arts criticism. They will acquire valuable experience not only in reading, thinking, talking and writing about great works of modernist culture, but also in *hearing, seeing* and *experiencing* them.

The three pillars on which this course rests are three of the major thinkers of the modern period: Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud and Jean-Paul Sartre. Literary works will include short novels or stories by Joseph Conrad, Franz Kafka, and Virginia Woolf, as well as excerpts from James Joyce’s *Ulysses*; poems by Guillaume Apollinaire, Blaise Cendrars and T.S. Eliot; a play by Sartre; and excerpts from an unclassifiable work by Gertrude Stein. Visual art-works and screenings of modern dance (Igor Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*) and film-clips (from Sergei Eisenstein and the Hollywood silent movie *Ben-Hur*) will supplement the course readings.

***COURSE FORMAT:*** Lectures and discussions. Both instructors will be present at all class-meetings. On any given day, one instructor will take the lead in lecturing or setting up the discussion, and the other will respond; that exchange will open up into general class discussion.

***WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:*** Students will write three papers of about 4 pages (1200 words) each on assigned topic based on the readings, lectures, and class discussions, and a final paper of about 5 pages (1200). There is no mid-term or final exam.

Both instructors will read all papers and assign independent letter grades, in light of the differing skills, standards, and objectives of their respective disciplines. For at least the first paper, instructors will conduct one-on-one writing tutorials with every student.

***GRADING:*** The three shorter papers will each be worth 20% of the final grade; the final paper will be worth 30%; class participation, 10%.

***ATTENDANCE:*** Roll will be taken every day, and tardiness without a compelling reason will count as an unexcused absence. Four or more unexcused absences will lower a student’s final grade in the course one full level, for example, from an A to a B. Seven or more absences will lower the final grade two full grades. Late papers will not be accepted unless a student is ill or has a pressing personal emergency or requests an extension for a valid reason *before* the paper is due. To pass this course, students must submit all four papers on time or with a suitable extension.

***READINGS:*** Students are urged to buy the assigned edition of the works listed below, which will make it easier for them to follow discussions. Students who have different editions or students who rent or attempt to read these sources on iphones will be at a disadvantage. The book on writing by Diana Hacker is critically important for successful student papers.

***Books to Purchase***

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Nietzsche and the Death of God,* edited by Peter Fritzsche

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* ISBN 978-0486264646

Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* ISBN 978-0486298979

Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918*

Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis* ISBN 978-0486290300

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* ISBN 978-0156787338

Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* ANY EDITION

***Readings on Carmen***

Guillaume Apollinaire, *Zone*

Blaise Cendrars, *Prose of the Transsiberian*

Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (selections)

James Joyce, *Ulysses* (selections)

T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (selections); *No Exit*

Virginia Woolf, “The Mark on the Wall”

***Schedule of Readings***

***Week one: Introduction to the Course***

Introduction: The Modern Period [SK]

Introduction: Modernist Literature [BMcH]

***Week two: Nietzsche and the “Death of God”***

Lecture: Nietzsche [SK]

Discussion: Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals* (selections) [SK]

***Week three: Nietzsche’s Overman and the Imperial Narrative***

Lecture: Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (selections)[SK]

Discussion: Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* [BMH]

***Week four: Modernist Art and Cubist Poetry***

Lecture: Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, and Abstraction [SK]

**First paper due: Nietzsche & Conrad**

Discussion: Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons* (selections)[BMcH]

***Week five: The Age of Simultaneity***

Lecture: Space & Time (1): The Revolution in Communication and Transportation and the Arts. [SK]

Kern, *Culture of Time & Space:* Preface, Introduction, Chapter 3.

Discussion: Apollinaire, *Zone*; Cendrars, *Prose of the Transsiberian* [BMcH]

***Week six: Modern Music***

Lecture: Leonard Bernstein on Tonality vs. Atonality--*The Unanswered Question* (screening)

Discussion: Stravinksy, *The Rite of Spring* [BMcH]

***Week seven: The Revolution in Psychiatry***

Lecture: Freud (1): Foundations of Psychoanalytic Theory [SK]

**Second paper due: Kern & Art, Music, and/or Poetry**

Discussion: Freud (2): Freud’s Theory of Dreams and Symptoms [SK]

Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (selections)

***Week eight: Psychoanalysis and Literature***

Lecture: Freud (3): Freud’s theory of Psychosexual Development--The Oedipus complex [SK]

Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (selections)

Discussion: Kafka, *Metamorphosis* [BMcH]

***Week nine: Narrative Theory and the Modernist Novel***

Lecture: Narrative Theory [BMcH]

Discussion: Joyce, “Nausicaa” from *Ulysses* [BMcH]

***Week ten: Modernism’s Turning Point—World War I and the Arts***

Lecture: World War I [SK]

**Third paper due: Freud & Kafka and/or Joyce**

Discussion: Eliot, *The Waste Land* [BMcH]

***Week eleven: The Phenomenology of Lived Space***

Lecture: Space & Time (2): Perspectivism and Montage [SK]

Kern, *Culture of Time & Space:* Chapters 5 and 6.

Screening: Eisenstein, *Battleship Potemkin* [Odessa Steps]; the 1925 silent *Ben-Hur* [Chariot Race] [BMcH]

***Week twelve: Modernism and Feminism***

Lecture: Virginia Woolf: “The Mark on the Wall” [BMcH]

Discussion: *A Room of One’s Own* [BMcH]

***Week thirteen: The Existential Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre***

Lecture: Sartre on Consciousness, Freedom, and Responsibility (1) [SK]

Discussion: Sartre: *Being & Nothingness* (selections) [SK]

***Week fourteen: Existentialism and Literature***

Lecture: “Hell is Other People”--Sartre on Being-for-Others as Object and Subject—(2) [SK]

Discussion: Sartre, *No Exit* [BMcH]

*Exam week:*

**Final paper (5 pages) due:**

**Possible topics: Kern & montage; or Woolf; or Sartre**