The twentieth century novel

In that very narrative passage he sat dejected.

The same sophical things.

A volume perplex.

Parts of the novel. The photograph of a man as writing pieces of the writings of the names.

The journal of secret scribing and hiding.

Journal contents.

As yet is only one half of the story.

The first scenes and feelings.

A core course

Taught by professor Buurma
English 044: Core Course: The Twentieth-Century British Novel

Professor Rachel Buurma  
rbuurma1@swarthmore.edu  
Office: LPAC 302  
Office hours: M 12-1, 4-5 T 11-12 and by appointment

What happens to the trustworthy realist novel when it encounters the twentieth century? Does it ultimately die of too much experimentation? Does it become irrelevant in the face of what some refer to as the novelization of modern (or postmodern) experience? Or is it still a centrally important form? This core course asks key questions about the function of the novel at the present time by surveying the relatively recent history of the British novel. Beginning in the twentieth century and ending almost at the present moment, we will ask how changes in novelistic form exist in dynamic relation to changing ideas of history, memory, and modernity within social contexts in which ideas of gender, sexuality, race, and class also constantly shift. We will also examine how the novel continues to respond to and shape emergent twentieth-century media forms such as radio, film, and television.

Week I  
Introduction: the history of the novel and the 20th century
Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1914-1916)
January 18
Welcome and Introduction
Close Reading the Novel and Reading Criticism (handouts)
Portrait (entire)

Week II  
Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (1927)
January 25
To the Lighthouse (entire)
“Techniques for Rendering Consciousness in Narrative” (handout on Blackboard)
Bertrand Russell, “Vagueness”
“Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”
Erich Auerbach, “The Brown Stocking,” from Mimesis
No blog group 1

Week III  
Evelyn Waugh, Brideshead Revisited (1945)
February 1
Brideshead (entire)
Paul Fussell, from The Great War and Modern Memory
Barthes, “The Reality Effect”
No blog group 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Title/Authors</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
George Orwell, “Inside the Whale”  
Critical reading tba  
No blog group 3 |
Jean-François Lyotard, from *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*  
No blog group 4 |
| VI   | B.S. Johnson, *Christie Malry’s Own Double Entry* (1973) | February 22 | *Christie Malry* (entire)  
*Humument* (examine selected pages)  
critical reading tba  
No blog group 5 |
| VII  | Midterm exam  | March 1 | No one blogs |
| VIII | Spring Break (read Rhys and Narayan)  | March 8 | spring break |
Gayatri Spivak, “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” (1985)  
No blog group 1 |
Linda Hutcheon, “Historiographic Metafiction” | March 22 | *Midnight’s Children*, 3-271  
Rushdie, “Outside the Whale”  
No blog group 2 |
Critical reading tba  
No blog group 3 |
No blog group 4 |
No blog group 5 |
All blog |
Final exam date TBA

Assignments

Blogging
The blog offers you a chance to begin thinking about and discussing the week’s reading in advance of class. We will write several short blog posts over the course of the semester; some of them will respond to specific questions I set, others will be open topic. You may use a less formal style than you would for a paper, and I encourage you to experiment with your prose style, but sure that the (relative) informality of the writing doesn’t lead you into sloppy, unfocused thinking or writing. These assignments are short – I recommend between 200-300 words (excluding any quotations you might want to incorporate) on average – so you need to be very clear about what you want to express in order to be able to express it efficiently and clearly. These posts are due by midnight the Friday before class; by midnight Sunday before class you should have read the blog posts of the other members of your blog group and made substantial comments on two of them. Note that you need not have completed all of the week’s reading before posting!

Note that you will blog most weeks but not every week; the syllabus indicates dates that you need not blog.

You will be randomly assigned to one of five blog groups. During the first week of class I will send you an invitation to join the blog. Be sure to notify me via email this week if you would like to use an email address other than the one linked to your Swarthmore record. You can access your blog via the link from our Blackboard course menu. After the first week, you are responsible for posting your blog entry on time; to get credit your entry must appear on the blog on time. If technical problems occur do email me to notify me and turn in a blog post, but if this happens you are still responsible for posting the entry to the blog as soon as possible. You may skip one blog post without any penalty.

Privacy concerns: our blogs are posted on Blogspot and set to private; only you and your seven or so co-bloggers (along with me) can access your blog. If you like, for further privacy you may create a pseudonym in order to post; if you do this makes sure to use your first name to sign each post so that your co-bloggers can identify you.

I will read the blogs and occasionally offer comments of my own; I will also refer to the blogs during class discussion as relevant, and you should, too. The blogs are evaluated as a portfolio at the end of the semester; if you have questions about your blog performance I encourage you to check in with me about it. Half-way through the semester is usually a good time to do this.

Class Format
Format will vary, but in general we’ll begin class with some background on the week’s materials and highlighting of key issues that we may wish to discuss further. We’ll then move into a close reading and group discussion mode – sometimes as a class, sometimes in workshop groups – until our break. We will return from break via our week’s critical reading(s). Finally, in the last half-hour or so we will try to piece together broader conclusions and prepare for our next week of readings.

Midterm exam
This is a three-hour exam covering the first half of the semester; we will discuss specifics further in class.

Final exam
This is a three-hour cumulative exam covering the entire semester (but likely with a focus on the second half); we will discuss specifics further in class.
Policies and Advice

Grading

10% class participation (includes quizzes)
35% midterm exam
15% blog
40% final exam

[Additional paper option available for students majoring in English or a related field; discuss with me before spring break.]

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a very serious offence. It includes both the direct copying of the words of another person without crediting him or her and paraphrasing the ideas of another person without giving credit. If you have any questions about how to properly cite another person’s work, please do not hesitate to ask me.

Attendance and due dates

Attendance is essential. Missing more than one class session will result in a lowered grade unless you have a valid excuse processed through the advising system or through Worth (in cases of illness). Late blog posts will both inconvenience your co-bloggers and cause your final blog grade to be lowered.

Books

The main books you will need to buy are:


Or


Or


The books are available (or in some cases will soon be available) at the bookstore. You are also welcome to buy the books online or at a different store. Be aware that you need to have your own copy of the specific edition assigned of each of the books listed above, so make sure that the ISBN numbers above match the ISBN numbers of the edition you order. All other texts will be available on Blackboard. Please print out, read, mark up, and bring to class ALL of the texts assigned for each week.