

ENGL 204: Modern European Literature
Spring 2021
MWF 12:30-1:20: HH #212

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Required Texts (all the required texts are available online and have been linked to our MyBLC course page except for *The Dwarf*, *Perfume*, and *Spring*):

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774/1787)
- Arthur Rimbaud, select poems from *A Season in Hell* (1873)
- Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (1912)
- T.S. Eliot, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1915) and “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919)
- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (1929)
- Par Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf* (1944)
- Patrick Suskind, *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985)
- Karl Ove Knausgaard, *Spring* (2019)

In addition to the above, there will be a number of contextualizing readings, like author bios, essays on modernism, etc.

Course Description:

According to the BLC catalogue, in this course “[s]tudents study a selection of major European authors from the late eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. A particular emphasis will be placed on literary modernism, its responses to late Enlightenment [and Romantic] thought, and its influence on postmodern sensibilities and practices in the arts.”

A primary interest of many modernist writers is the role of the artist and of art more broadly in contributing to, perhaps shaping, and certainly commenting upon the values and practices informing the social, political, and cultural milieus of which they were a part. They share this interest with their Romantic forebears, but the moderns rejected the nineteenth-century’s devotion to realism and the Romanticist belief in nature, and wondered instead about the role of the artist and the arts in an industrial and technological age that seemed to be unstable and ever changing and in need, therefore, of a “new” art to reflect and respond to what they saw as their “new” age.

Almost all of the works we will read this semester feature an “artist” of one sort or another or engage the topic of the arts (producing works that are aesthetically pleasing or challenging, like novels, new styles of expressive writing, and even perfumes!) and ask questions about the social,

political, and cultural values and uses of art in a time that challenged and often rejected outright traditional notions of art's function and value: The eternal, the ideal, the universally true and beautiful were no longer understood as viable or accurate characteristics of art and could no longer be, therefore, goals to which the artist aspired. If the function of the artist is no longer to represent the eternal or universally beautiful and, as a result, to uplift and inspire humankind, what is the goal and purpose of the artist in a "modern" moment? This will be a primary question we will ask in relation to the works we read and discuss in class, one that will lead, I am sure, to a series of other and related questions: Why is this a dominant character type and trope in modern European literature? What kinds of knowledge do or should works of art enable or produce? What does it mean to live a beautiful life? Is the pursuit of the beautiful beneficial, useful, a good in its own right, or is it impractical, foolish, and short-sighted? Finally, we will wonder about the relevance of these eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century works to our own twenty-first-century "postmodern" moment.

Another primary topic for the class will be a consideration of the "Modern" in the course title. In part, this designates a historical period, the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century, though this neat chronology is not without controversy. After all, every "new" period imagines itself as "modern." "Modern" also refers, at least in my mind, to "Modernism," a philosophical and aesthetic movement that a number of scholars agree developed and flourished from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. Though again, there is hardly a consensus about this. But the writers and thinkers—the literati and intelligentsia—during this period are producing work and espousing a philosophy that is self-consciously "new." Ezra Pound, for instance, an expatriate American poet, made this his mantra for art in the early twentieth century: "make it new" he insisted. As we grapple with defining, however loosely, Modernism, we will consider what a figure like Pound meant, as well as what other figures during this time period meant by "new" or modern, why producing something "new" was imagined as necessary, and how this informed the work they produced.

By the end of the semester we should have a clearer understanding of how European writers and thinkers imagined their moment as modern, in need of something "new," and how the works they produced respond to and comment upon particular cultural moments and contexts. Attending to how their works are culturally embedded productions and to the dialogue their works engage—with their respective historical-cultural moments and with our own—will enable us to meet the following learning outcome for all general education Humanities courses: *"to identify and explain the perennial concerns fundamental to human nature and experience as expressed in literature."*

Learning Objectives and Outcomes:

I. Institutional Objectives:

1. Recognize that the historic Christian faith professes that God the Holy Trinity is the source of all knowledge and truth, and that His wisdom is most clearly revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. Demonstrate (a) intellectual, (b) creative, and (c) problem-solving skills.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of personal and public responsibility.

4. Develop habits of thinking that apply to a fulfilling life of learning.

The goals and outcomes specific to this particular course correspond especially with Institutional Objective 2a (intellectual skills), though we will take advantage of every opportunity to engage with all four Institutional Objectives.

II. General Education Institutional and Divisional (Humanities) Objectives:

Institutional: 2a. Intellectual Skills: (1) Demonstrate ability to read texts closely and critically; (2) demonstrate an understanding of ideas from different cultures and time periods; (3) demonstrate the ability to identify a diversity in perspective, ideology, and religion.

Divisional: To identify and explain the perennial concerns fundamental to human nature and experience as expressed in literature.

III. English Department Program Goals and Learning Outcomes (PLOs 1-4 are especially applicable to this course):

The English program goals are to produce students able to think critically and creatively, ready to situate, interpret, and criticize texts, and to produce students able to write well in a range of expressive modes.

The following learning outcomes ensure that students who graduate with a BA in English do so having met the above program goals:

- 1) Students are able to adjust their use of spoken and written language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
- 2) Students are able to comprehend and create written and multimedia texts.
- 3) Students demonstrate basic cultural literacy of the era, genres, movements, and historical events pertinent to particular course content, and can identify correctly allusions, excerpts from particular works, and works written by key authors, as well as exhibit a foundational knowledge of literary terminology.
- 4) Students can ask effective questions about texts and pursue answers to those questions as analytic and creative readers and thinkers.
- 5) Students are able to apply theoretical perspectives to their interpretations of texts.
- 6) Students exhibit familiarity with the databases, archives, and scholarly sources common to the discipline, and regularly gather and apply the data contained therein, using an appropriate citation format.

Course Requirements:

- **Attendance:** *Three allowed absences—for every absence after 3 your grade will drop one letter; 7 or more absences constitute an automatic F.* While a part of the format for this course is lecture (but even the “lectures” will typically be framed by a series of questions/discussion topics), we will primarily engage the course texts through discussion. Indeed, my pedagogy (teaching style) relies on and values more than anything else your take on the readings/topics under consideration. That is, the comments you make and the questions you ask help me and your classmates to consider the texts and topics differently than we otherwise would have. This works only when each member of the class comes to class with the reading and any other related assignment complete. Active participation in discussion and active listening to the insights of your classmates are effective ways to learn—they require you to articulate and defend a position or opinion you hold, and, you may discover as a result of the discussion, compelling reasons to alter that position or opinion. In order to participate actively students must be present. You will have three absences in this course to use for illness, emergencies, personal days, etc. Use them wisely, because after three absences your grade will drop one letter for each additional absence. If you have an A at the end of the term but 5 absences, you will receive a C for the course.
- **Whole Class Responses (@ 2 points each):** At some point during a given class students will respond verbally to the reading for the day. These responses will help to ensure that students are doing the reading (thoughtfully and honestly), taking notes, and attending to the class discussions. More important, they will or could provide direction for further illumination and insight, perhaps even “double-rainbow” moments.

If students have done the reading and thought about it in relation to what we have been discussing, their responses and/or questions will be legitimate. If they have not, they won't be. “I didn't do the reading”; “I don't know what to say” . . . these are unacceptable responses; responses that don't take us anywhere. And I want to go places, think new things, have insights about this life and world. This is, after all, a primary reason to study complex works of art—they enable us to think in new ways.

Legitimate responses include thoughtful questions and comments about a given reading (I noticed that this character in this work does or says this thing that strikes me as meaningful in relation to the other events and scenes we have discussed. Here is how I think it is meaningful . . .); or questions and comments that make a connection between a given reading and a historical-cultural detail germane to an author, a time-period, etc.; or questions and comments that engage, in an informed way, a question that I ask respective to an author, a text, etc.

In other words, you have a lot of elbow room here. The crucial issue is to be vocal in an intelligent and conscientious way at least once a week. (**Addresses GEI 2a.#s 1-3 and ENGL PLOS 1 and 4**)

- **Exams:** Over the course of the semester there will be **four** exams (**points TBD**). These will have both objective questions (multiple choice and true/false) and a number of more subjective questions that will require a short answer/essay response. One or more of the exams might only be subjective (i.e., essay) in nature, requiring you to respond to a question or topic specific to multiple texts (2 or 3) and/or that explores and analyzes one or more of the “*the perennial concerns fundamental to human nature and experience*” explored in the respective texts. The “perennial concerns” could be specific to GEI 2a. #s 2 and 3. (**Addresses GEI 2a. #s 2 and 3 and ENGL PLOs 1, 3, and 4**)
- **Perennial Concerns/Reflection Essay (100 points):** In a final comparative essay (4-5 double-spaced pages) students will discuss at least two texts from the semester and explain how these texts engage a “perennial concern.” The essays must have a focus (a “perennial concern”), rely on textual evidence to support/illustrate the focus, and refer to pertinent details from the respective authors’ historical/cultural contexts. Thus, the essays must draw upon primary and secondary sources. The essays will also use MLA citation conventions, including a Works Cited page. A sample essay and rubric will be provided. (**Addresses GEI 2a. #s 1-3 and ENGL PLOs 1-6**)

Academic Honor Code:

Based upon truths that people are gifted with reason and other intellectual abilities above all creatures and that the moral law of God applies equally to all people, Bethany Lutheran College encourages personal academic integrity and respect for the intellectual work and influence of others.

Therefore, members of the Bethany Lutheran College community are committed to academic honesty. They will not intentionally violate the requirements of an assignment nor intentionally fail to credit sources. They will complete all assignments and examinations according to the requirements set forth by the professors and submit work that is theirs alone.

Another word on academic integrity:

The MLA Handbook* has defined plagiarism as follows:

1. repeating another’s sentences as your own
2. adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own
3. paraphrasing someone else’s argument as your own
4. presenting someone else’s line of thinking as though it were your own.

In short, to plagiarize is to use someone else’s work as your own, without crediting or citing the source. Direct word-for-word copying is permissible if the material appears in quotation marks and if the source is cited. Rephrasing and summarizing is permissible if the source is cited.

The penalties and consequences for plagiarism can be severe and far-reaching: a zero for the assignment; failure of the course; dismissal from a program or the college; revocation of the degree.

* *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, Dissertations* (New York, Modern Languages Association, 1977).

Institutional and Course Policies:

Recording and Privacy:

In this class, software will be used to record live class sessions. As a student in this class, your participation may be recorded. These recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the class. The intent of the recordings is to assist those who cannot attend the live session or to serve as a resource for those who would like to review content presented during the current semester in which the recording is made.

You may not download, share, replicate, or publish the recording, in whole or in part, or use the recording for any other purpose without the written approval of the instructor. Recordings are for personal academic use only, where personal academic use is restricted to the personal study use of the individual. Any violations to this policy must be reported to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and may result in disciplinary action, including expulsion from the college. All recordings will become unavailable to students in the class shortly after the course ends.

If you have any concerns about being recorded during class, please discuss your options with your instructor or express your concerns to the Dean of Faculty.

Students with Disabilities:

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require that “no qualified person shall, solely by reason of disability, be denied access to, be excluded from participation in, or the benefits of services, programs or activities or subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance.”

If you have a disability, or feel you are in need of accommodations, please contact Kristi Ringen in the Academic Resource Center (kringen@blc.edu, 507-344-7730).

Resources:

BLC Memorial Library and Staff:

From research to formatting citation guidelines, BLC students may seek assistance from the Memorial Library staff concerning a variety of topics. The staff is friendly and they welcome your digital requests.

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| Name and Title: | Alyssa Inniger, Library Director / E Resources Ref |
| Office Location: | ML 205 |
| Office Phone: | 507.344.7874 |
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Name and Title: Jessica Zimmerman, Reference Librarian / Instruction
Office Location: ML 212
Office Phone: 507.344.7349
Email: Jessica.zimmerman@bkc.edu
ML Services: <https://www.bkc.edu/library-services>

Ada Stokes Writing Center:

The mission of the [Ada Stokes Writing Center](#) is to help BKC students grow as independent critical thinkers and writers. As such, tutors offer support in the areas of academic essay writing, creative writing, cover letter writing, resume writing and graduate application essay writing.

Regardless of your writing needs, or your level of ability, we are here to serve. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are given priority. [Click here](#) to make an appointment.