English 491 (Senior Seminar in Literary Studies): “Fringe
Moderns and The Landscape of Disillusionment”
Spring Semester 2018
Professor: Enrique Martínez Celaya
Class: Monday 2-4:30pm, WPH 603
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Office Hours: Monday, 12-2pm, and by appointment. Students are
advised to make appointments ahead of time.

Course Description
Modernism has shaped many of our attitudes, sensibilities, and
views of art and life. This course approaches Modernist poetry
and art through the similarities and differences among three
American poets often considered to be at the fringe of
Modernism—Robert Frost, Marianne Moore, and Robinson Jeffers—and
three similarly outlying American Modernist painters—Marsden
Hartley, Charles Burchfield, and Georgia O’Keeffe.

The course offers an introduction to Modernism and its
conceptual and temporal boundaries through an exploration of the
ideas as well as the artists and writers usually associated with
it. Of particular interest to this course are the artists’ and
writers’ view of nature, especially in connection with concepts
of expressionism, abstraction, the sublime, conceptualism, and
regionalism. The course will also explore the way these artists
and writers positioned themselves in relation to the social,
political and cultural transformations of modernity as well as
in relation to the work of their contemporaries.

Adjustments to this course and its description may be made
during the semester in response to class discussions.

Attendance and Participation
This course is organized as a seminar. Attendance and
punctuality are requirements and each student should come
prepared to contribute to the discussion. Contributions can take
the form of asking or answering questions, making comments, and
constructively interacting with other students. No electronics
allowed.

Since we only meet one day a week and class discussions are
a critical part of this course, students are allowed only one
unjustified absence throughout the semester. Unjustified
absences are only excused if you e-mail me ahead of time to let
me know you will not be in class. Other absences will be excused
only if you provide a doctor’s notice. Conflicts arising from
travel arrangements are not excused. Every unexcused absence
will carry a one step (e.g., B to B-) penalty on your final
grade for the semester.
Assignments
Assignment #1: A 1,000-word paper on the nature of your relationship with a specific landscape. The landscape you chose to write about must be relevant to who you understand yourself to be, but this relationship can be one of rejection or contention.

Assignment #2: A 5-minute introduction and summary of main arguments on one of the readings.

Assignment #3: An 5-minute introductory response to one of the poets or painters to be discussed in class.

Assignment #4: A 1,500-word paper on the nature of Modernism and your understanding of its boundaries.

Assignment #5: A 500-word proposal for your final paper including arguments and present them to the class.

Assignment #6: A class presentation of the arguments for your final paper and response to class questions.

Assignment #7: A 3,500-word final paper comparing the work of poet and artist in depth with special attention to their view of and relation to nature as well as the social and political environment in which they worked. This paper should reflect your understanding and assimilation of the readings, conversations, and presentations discussed throughout the semester.

Class Presentations. There will be a sign-up sheet for each of the class presentations, including the day you will be leading class discussions. You can approach the presentation or class discussion in whichever way you prefer. The goal is to spark discussion.

Papers. A hard copy of your completed assignment must be turned in at the beginning of the class on the day it is due; an electronic copy must be submitted to turnitin.com (available through Blackboard) before midnight on the same day. Papers should be formatted as 12-point, Courier font, single-spaced, one-inch margins, pages 2-x numbered. References/Works Cited page and in-text citations should adhere to Modern Language Association standards.
Schedule
All reading homeworks must be completed by the following class meeting. Adjustments to this schedule may be made during the course of the semester.

Week #1 January 8: Introduction: Rise and evolution of the modern; sign-up sheet for Assignment #2.
Homework: The Painter of Modern Life by Charles Baudelaire, Notes on Painting by Paul Gauguin, and Alienated Labor by Karl Marx.

Week #2 January 22: Modernity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
Homework: Assignment #1, plus Archaic Torso of Apollo by Rainer Maria Rilke, and Cynicism: The Twilight of False Consciousness by Peter Sloterdijk.

Week #3 January 29: The dark side of modernity
Homework: Walden by Henry David Thoreau, The Relations Between Poetry and Painting by Wallace Stevens

Week #4 February 5: Poetry and painting; sign up for Assignment #3.
Homework: Assignment #4, plus The Condition We Call Exile by Joseph Brodsky, Concerning Fairy Tales and Me by Marsden Hartley, On the Subject of Nativeness by Donna Cassady.

Week #5 February 12: Marsden Hartley

Week #6 February 26: Robert Frost
Homework: On Her Conquest of Space by Frederick Turner, and study examples of O'Keefe's work online, particularly the New Mexico paintings.

Week #7 March 5: Georgia O'Keefe

Week #8 March 19: Robinson Jeffers
Homework: Life in a Small Town by Peter Schjeldahl, and study examples of Burchfield's work online.

Week #9 March 26: Charles Burchfield
Homework: Close reading of The Steeple-Jack by Marianne Moore.
Week #10 April 2: Marianne Moore

Homework: Assignment #5, plus Write a 2-page summary of your proposal's main arguments and prepare to present them to the class.

Week #11 April 9: Midterm presentations: Each student will deliver a 10 minute presentation of the main arguments in their proposal followed by questions, challenges, and comments from the class. The goals of the presentations are to understand the strength and originality of the comparison between poet and painter, and to consider modifications that could or should be incorporated in the final paper.

Week #12 April 16: Midterm presentations

Homework: Modernity on Endless Trial by Lezek Kolawkowski.

Week #13 April 23: Loss, ethics, disillusionment: The failure of the modern, and the relevance of painting and poetry

Grading

There are seven assignments in this course, including four essays. Their contribution to your grade is as follows.

- Assignment #1: 10%
- Assignment #2: 5%
- Assignment #3: 5%
- Assignment #4: 20%
- Assignment #5: 10%
- Assignment #6: 10%
- Assignment #7: 30%

In addition, your participation in the class counts for 10% of your grade.

Your presentations will be evaluated in terms of their clarity and understanding of the material. Your papers will be evaluated on the basis of their level of sophistication (including avoidance of clichés and histronics), organizational clarity, insightfulness of argument, and depth of analysis, as well as in comparison to your peers’ writing.

Papers to be submitted on the day they are due. You will be penalized one step (e.g., B to B-) for each day your paper is late. If you are unable to attend class on the day a written assignment is due, make arrangements for it to be delivered prior to the due date. Later than three days, the grade on any
assignment will be 0 (zero) points. Late or not, however, you must complete all required assignments to pass this course.

Texts
You will be provided with a "working book" containing the necessary readings we will discuss in this seminar, including essays and poems. In addition, I am providing the following bibliography as a reference for your research, writing assignment and familiarity with the topics discussed in this seminar.

I. On Nature, Modernity, Exile, and Place


**II. On Poetry, Painting, and the Work of Art**


**III. Painter/Poet Bibliographies**

Charles Burchfield


Robert Frost


Marsden Hartley


Robinson Jeffers


Marianne Moore

Georgia O’Keeffe

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards (see https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct (at http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct).

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity (see http://equity.usc.edu) or to the Department of Public Safety (see http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us). This is important for the safety of whole USC community.

Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of
another person. The Center for Women and Men provides 24/7 confidential support (see http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm), and the sexual assault resource center webpage describes reporting options and other resources (see sarc@usc.edu).

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students (see http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali). The Office of Disability Services and Programs provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations (see http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology (see http://emergency.usc.edu/).