

English 491 (Senior Seminar in Literary Studies): "Fringe Moderns and The Landscape of Disillusionment"

Fall Semester 2017

Professor: Enrique Martínez Celaya

Class: Tuesday 2-4:20 pm, THH 209

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Office Hours: T Noon-2pm, and by appointment. Students are advised to make appointments ahead of time.

Course Description

This course explores 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.

Our main effort will be a close reading of poems and careful viewing of paintings, but we will also look at other writings and media. 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.

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.

Assignments

Midterm Essay: Students write a 7-page paper proposing a topic for the final paper. In the final paper you will compare one of the painters discussed with one of the poets. On this mid-term proposal you must discuss which aspects of the work you would like to address, how you plan to steer the comparison, and the merit of these choices in relation to your own interest. This personal element is very important.

Midterm Presentation: Students write a 2-page summary of their proposal's main arguments and present them to the class.

Paper on Landscape: 5-page 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.

Final Paper: 25-page paper that compares 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.

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 August 22: Introduction: Rise and evolution of the modern
Homework: The Painter of Modern Life by Charles Baudelaire, Notes on Painting by Paul Gauguin, and Alienated Labor by Karl Marx.

Week #2 August 29: Modernity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries
Homework: Archaic Torso of Apollo by Rainer Maria Rilke, and Cynicism: The Twilight of False Consciousness by Peter Sloterdijk.

Week #3 September 5: The dark side of modernity
Homework: Walden by Henry David Thoreau, Art in Light of Conscience and Epic and Lyric Poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva, The Meridian by Paul Celan, On the Addressee by Osip Mandelstam, and On Painting by Enrique Martínez Celaya. The Relations Between Poetry and Painting by Wallace Stevens

Week #4 September 12: Poetry and painting
Homework: 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 September 19: Marsden Hartley
Homework: Close reading of Home Burial and Desert Places by Robert Frost.

Week #6 September 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 October 3: Georgia O'Keefe
Homework: Selected writings from Volume Four by Robinson Jeffers, For Robinson Jeffers by Ceslaw Milosz, The Beauty of Things, The Bed by the Window and The World's Wonders by Robinson Jeffers.

Week #8 October 10: Robinson Jeffers
Homework: Life in a Small Town by Peter Schjeldahl, and study examples of Burchfield's work online.

Week #9 October 17: Charles Burchfield
Homework: Close reading of The Steeple-Jack by Marianne Moore. Also due for next class meeting: a 7-page paper proposing a topic for the

final paper. In the final paper you will compare one of the painters discussed with one of the poets. On this mid-term proposal you must discuss which aspects of the work you would like to address, how you plan to steer the comparison, and the merit of these choices in relation to your own interest. This personal element is very important.

Week #10 October 24: Marianne Moore

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

Week #11 October 31: Midterm presentations: Each student will deliver a 15 minute presentation of the main arguments in their mid-term essay (including high quality images of the artist's work) followed by questions 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 challenges or modifications that could or should be incorporated in the final paper.

Week #12 November 7: Midterm presentations

Homework: Due November 21. 5-page 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.

Week #13 November 14: Loss, ethics, disillusionment, and the failure of the modern, Part I.

Homework: Modernity on Endless Trial by Lezek Kolawkowski.

Week #14 November 21: Loss, ethics, disillusionment, and the failure of the modern, Part II.

Howework: Write about the relevance of painting and poetry to your life.

Week #15 November 29: So what? The relevance of painting and poetry

December 7: Final Paper due between 2pm and 4pm. The paper should be submitted via email to my email address included on the heading of this syllabus.

Grading

Midterm Essay 15%

Presentation summary and Presentation 15%

Landscape paper 15%

Participation 15%

Final Paper 40%

Late Papers

Papers to be submitted on the day they are due. You will be penalized 20 points (out of 100) for every day a paper is late. I will not accept papers submitted 3 days after their due date. In case of emergencies, please contact me.

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

- Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life," in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*. Trans. and ed., Jonathan Mayne. London: Phaidon Press, 1965.
- Baudelaire, Charles. *Flowers of Evil*. Trans. James N. McGowan. Oxford: Oxford's World Classics, 2008.
- Brodsky, Joseph. "The Condition We Call Exile," in *On Grief and Reason*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995, pp. 22-34.
- Eldridge, Charles. "Nature Symbolized: American Painting from Ryder to Hartley." In *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art; New York: Abbeville Press, 1987, pp. 113-129.
- Kolakowski, Leszek. "Modernity on Endless Trial." In *Modernity On Endless Trial*. University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp. 3-13.
- . "In Praise of Exile." In *Modernity on Endless Trial*, pp. 55-59.
- Martínez Celaya, Enrique. "Interview with Jeremy Mikolajczak." In *Enrique Martínez Celaya: The Tower of Snow*. Miami, FL: MDC Museum of Art + Design, 2016.
- . "Being Cuban." In *Collected Writings and Interviews, 1992-2010*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010, pp. 175-76.
- Marx, Karl. "Alienated Labor" (1844). In *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*. Trans. and ed. by Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967.
- Paul Gauguin's Intimate Journals*. Trans and ed. Van Wyck Brooks, (New York, 1921), pp. 68-72.
- Rilke, "Archaic Torso of Apollo," in *New Poems: The Other Part 1908*. Trans, Edward Snow. North Point Press, 1990
- Sloterdijk, Peter. *The Critique of Cynical Reason*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988.
- . "The Command from the Stone: Rilke's Experience." In *You Must Change Your Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014.
- Thoreau, Henry Dave. *Walden*. New York: Thomas Crowell & Co, 1910).
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Landscapes of Fear*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1979.
- . *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

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

- Celan, Paul. "The Meridian," in *Paul Celan: Selections*. pp. 154-169.
- Coetzee, J.M. "What is a Classic? A Lecture." In *Stranger Shores: Literary Essays: 1986-99*. New York, Viking, 2001, pp. 1-16.

- Gauguin, Paul. "Notes on Painting" (1890). *Impressionism and Post-Impressionism 1874-1904: Sources & Documents*. Ed. Linda Nochlin. Englewood, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966, pp. 162-165.
- Martínez Celaya, Enrique. "On Painting." In *Collected Writings and Interviews, 1992-2010*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010, pp. 240-47.
- . "From Considering Painting and Meaning." In *Collected Writings and Interviews, 1992-2010*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010, pp. 169-170.
- Mandelstam, Osip. "On the Addressee" (1913). In *Osip Mandelstam: Critical Prose and Letters*, Jane Gary Harris, ed. and trans. New York, Ardis, 1979, pp. 67-73.
- Tsvetaeva, Marina. "Art in the Light of Conscience." In *Art in the Light of Conscience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 149-183.
- . "Epic and Lyric of Contemporary Russia." In *Art in the Light of Conscience*, pp. 104-129.
- . "The Poet and the Critic." In *Art in the Light of Conscience*, pp. 39-63.

III. Painter/Poet Bibliographies

Charles Burchfield

- Burlingham, Cynthia, R. Gober, D. Hickey, T. Johnson, N. Weekly. *Heat Waves in a Swamp: The Paintings of Charles Burchfield*. Prestel, 2009.
- Kuspit, Donald B. "Charles Burchfield: Apocalypse Now," in *The Rebirth of Painting in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, 2000, pp. 9-17.
- Maciejunes, Nannette. *Paintings of Charles Burchfield: North by Midwest*. New York: Abrams, 1997.
- Schjeldahl, Peter. "Life in a Small Town charles Burchfield, Homebody Modernist." *The New Yorker*. July 5, 2010.
- Townsend, J. Benjamin, ed. *Charles Burchfield's Journals: The Poetry of Place*. State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Weekly, Nancy. *Charles E. Burchfield: The Sacred Woods*. State University of New York Press, 2010.

Robert Frost

- Brodsky, Joseph. "On Grief and Reason (1994)" in *On Grief and Reason: Essays*. New York, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux and Straus, 1995, pp. 223-266.
- Lathem, Edward Connery. *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems*. 2nd Rev. ed. New York: Henry Holt & Co, 2002.
- Parini, Jay. *Robert Frost: A Life*. New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1999.
- Poirier, Richard. *Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing*. Stanford, 1990.
- Richardson, Mark, ed. *The Collected Prose of Robert Frost*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Timmerman, John. *Robert Frost: The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Bucknell University Press, 2002.

Marsden Hartley

- Cassidy, Donna. *Marsden Hartley: Race, Region, and Nation*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005.

- . "On the Subject of Nativeness": Marsden Hartley and New England Regionalism," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 29/4 (Winter, 1994), 227-245. Griffey, Randall, D. Cassidy, E. Finch, R. Demming, *Marsden Hartley's Maine*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2017.
- Hartley, Marsden. *On Art*. Gail Scott, ed. New York: Horizon Press, 1982.
- . *Somehow a Past: An Autobiography of Marsden Hartley*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.
- Ludington, Townsend. *Marsden Hartley: The Biography of An American Artist*. Cornell University Press, 1998.

Robinson Jeffers

- Hunt, Tim. *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: 1920-28*. Vol. 1. Stanford University Press, 1988.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: 1928-38*. Vol. 2. Stanford University Press, 1989.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: 1939-1962*. Vol. 3. Stanford University Press, 1991.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: Poetry 1902-1920, Prose and Unpublished Writings*. Vol. 4. Stanford University Press, 2000.
- . *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers: Textual Evidence and Commentary*. Vol. 5. Stanford University Press, 2002.
- Karmen, James. *Robinson Jeffers: Poet of California*. Ashland, OR: Story Line Press, 1994.
- . *Robinson Jeffers: Poet and Prophet*. Stanford University Press, 2005.

Marianne Moore

- Leavell, Linda. *Holding on Upside Down: The Life and Work of Marianne Moore*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013.
- White, Heather Cass, ed. *Marianne Moore: New Collected Poems*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017.
- Willis, Patricia, ed. and intro. *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1986.

Georgia O'Keeffe

- Cowart, Jack. *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*. Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989.
- Robinson, Roxanna. *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989.
- Lynes, Barbara Buhler and A. Lopez, *Georgia O'Keeffe and Her Houses: Ghost Ranch and Abiquiu*. New York: Abrams and Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, 2012.

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/>).