

## AML 2410.8974: MODERNISM IN THE AMERICAS

Instructor: Mitch R. Murray / m.murray@ufl.edu

Class: CBD 0210 / T 8-9 (3:00-4:55) / R 9 (4:05-4:55)

Office: TUR TBA / TR: TBA



Diego Rivera. *Man, Controller of the Universe* (recreation of *Man at the Crossroads*), 1934. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

No doubt we've all heard the term "modernist," likely as a descriptor for a work of art or an artist. This course investigates the category of "American modernism," circa 1900 to the immediate postwar period, and the related terms modern and modernity. While this course will, in part, examine canonical texts of U.S. literature, it also focuses on lesser known contemporaneous works.

Rather than reading modernist literature simply as a literary canon of 'genius' works, then, we will complicate the history and applicability of "modernism." This course takes for granted that "modernism" is a periodizing construct important for the study of literary and cultural process and change. That is, the term "modernism" does not simply designate an artistic style, but rather marks a specific historical moment to which any number of aesthetic developments might correlate and respond.

Understanding modernism as such, the course also necessarily complicates the coherence of the term "American." How much sense does this unifying term make when we look at literary and cultural production from various gendered, racial, sexual, and cultural perspectives? What about from regional perspectives (e.g. Willa Cather's *Red Cloud*, Johnson's post-Reconstruction South, Loos's Hollywood)? And when we consider American artists who also lived and worked in Europe (Eliot, James), Canada (Cather), or migrant artists who worked in the U.S. (Rivera)?

By extending our purview to Canada (Callaghan), Mexico (the “big three” of muralism, Kahlo), South America (Borges), and the Caribbean (Carpentier), we will broaden the field of “American modernism” to “modernism in the Americas.” When put into some of its international contexts, what new patterns and dialogues emerge across a range of issues in U.S. literature and culture—nativism, nationalism, and internationalism; cultural distinction; gender and sexuality; and politics? Looking beyond the literal borders of the U.S., we will also pay particular attention to these issues and their intersections with race, racism, empire, and cultural imperialism.

We will supplement our literary readings by looking at a number of contemporaneous texts in non-print media: film, photography, architecture, and painting (given time, we will arrange a tour of the Harn Museum’s current Frida Kahlo exhibit).

This course also provides 6,000 words toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement. You will focus on researching and annotating credible sources; developing short, analytic arguments; and proposing, revising, and polishing a final research paper. The idea is that each of your assignments can potentially inform your final project.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

If you purchase your texts somewhere besides the UF bookstore, shop by the ISBNs below rather than by title. I want everyone to have the same edition; that way, we’ll all literally be on the same page, which streamlines discussion and reading during class meetings.

Jorge Luis Borges, <i>Labyrinths</i> (1962)	9780811216999
Willa Cather, <i>The Song of the Lark</i> (1915)	9780141181042
Morley Callaghan, <i>It’s Never Over</i> (1930)	9781550961577
Alejo Carpentier, <i>The Kingdom of this World</i> (1949)	9780374530112
James Weldon Johnson, <i>Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> (1912)	9780140184020
Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i> (1928)	9780141181271
Anita Loos, <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i> (1925)	9780141180694

We will also read a number of supplementary works and critical texts by:

- Rachel Adams
- Perry Anderson
- T.S. Eliot, select poems
- Caren Irr
- C.L.R. James
- Henry James, select stories
- James and H.G. Wells
- H.P. Lovecraft, select stories
- Mark McGurl

- Ezra Pound, select poems

These readings will be provided electronically or through library course reserves.

### ASSIGNMENTS

These are basic descriptions of your required assignments. Detailed guidelines will be provided on Canvas near the beginning of the semester.

Assignment	Description	Words	Value
<b>Short Paper 1</b>	You are required to write two short position papers throughout the semester in which you submit an argument rooted in close readings of one of our major texts.	750	50 pts./5%
<b>Short Paper 2</b>		1,000	100 pts./10%
<b>Bibliographic Annotation</b>	Annotated bibliographies are useful resources for research and writing because they force you to think about, and articulate engagements with, secondary sources in advance of writing. This assignment is meant to 1) hone your researching skills and 2) make you start research for your final paper early in the semester. This will be something of a collective assignment. Every one will be responsible for finding one scholarly secondary source of immediate relevance to our class readings. We will keep your annotations in a Google Doc, to which you will all have access throughout the semester. This is meant to aid you all in writing your final papers by distributing the work of research across the class.	500	150 pts./15%
<b>Prospectus</b>	I must approve your topic before you begin writing your final paper. I therefore require that you give some tentative form of your main research interests and the argument you want to make in a brief prospectus (kind of like an abstract, but written <i>before</i> the paper rather than after). By articulating your project early in the semester, you 1) are forced to begin thinking early, 2) have time to rethink and rework your original idea, and 3) have plenty of time to discuss your project with me.	750	100 pts./10%
<b>Introduction</b>	After I approve your proposed research paper topic, you will turn in a draft introduction. This is to ensure you begin early on and gives me a chance to see how your thinking has developed since your proposal.	500	100 pts./10%

<b>Research Paper</b>	Building on your prospectus, research, and the collective bibliography, write an argumentative research paper on <u>any two, or more, texts</u> from our reading list, and include <u>at least three reputable, scholarly, secondary sources of clear relevance to your project</u> . Your research paper should be the most polished piece of writing you produce all semester.	2,500	250 pts./25%
<b>Participation</b>	This is a small class. As such, silences will be quite noticeable. Your written assignments take place outside of class, but these will not exist in isolation from our class discussions. The benefit of a small discussion oriented class, in fact, is that you can use it as a laboratory for ideas that might produce interesting papers. You are encouraged to elaborate on and complicate class discussions in your written assignments. Thus, the more you participate the more everyone has to work with.		250 pts/25%
<b>Total</b>		6,000	1,000 pts. /100%

### ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSIONS & GUIDELINES

1. I will not accept late work. Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Exceptions *may* be made, if 1) you have some kind of major conflict (an appointment, an emergency, etc.) and are unable to meet deadlines *and* 2) you inform me in advance, not on or after the due date.
2. I require hard copies of all of your assignments. You must also submit your assignment via Canvas. You might complete an assignment on time and submit on Canvas, but I will not read or comment on the assignment until I receive a hard copy (and in this case I can't project when you'll receive comments on your work).
3. All assignments must be formatted according to the MLA Handbook, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. For a helpful guide, see the MLA guidelines on OWL at Purdue. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/> for help with MLA guidelines.
4. Please double-side your assignments, staple them, and definitely do not use plastic folders, binders, covers, etc.
5. Assignments for this class will be graded rigorously for complexity of thought and the quality of their arguments. Therefore, I will not grade any assignment that makes sexist, misogynist, racist, homo-, trans-, or xenophobic arguments. Strictly speaking, these are not arguments at all. Such stances are opinions (bad ones), and therefore do not subscribe to anything remotely resembling critical thinking or logical or academic rigor.

## GENERAL RUBRIC AND GRADING SCALE

These are the general criteria for your assignments. Look on Canvas for more detailed descriptions, as the particular aims of each assignment will vary. As discussion, research, thinking, drafting, and revising are each inseparable from the others, grading will be holistic.

- A An A assignment gives a strong and original argument. It is logical, well supported and organized, and cites and interprets key passages from our texts. It demonstrates a thorough and complex engagement with the text(s) and builds on the themes and concepts discussed in class. Papers at this level also contain strong prose and are mostly free of typos, as well as mechanical and stylistic errors.
- B B assignments fall noticeably short of the criteria for an A assignment, but still demonstrate a thorough and complex engagement with the text(s) and the themes and concepts discussed in class. Work at this level needs minor to moderate revision at the levels of textual analysis, argument, organization, and it may be otherwise stylistically and mechanically sound, with few errors.
- C If you just complete your assignment, you're probably doing C work. C designates an average level of engagement, which often simply echoes or restates class lectures, and which falls noticeably short of the criteria for B and A range papers. C work needs significant revision of both content and organization. C assignments also often appear as summaries rather than arguments. But they still show effort, and, most importantly, contain kernels of a potential B or A range assignment.
- D A D assignment is disorganized, poorly argued, and often far too obvious in terms of its argument. Often times a D paper presents an observation rather than an argument. It may also lack textual support for the arguments being made. Work in this range is in need of almost complete revision and contains numerous spelling and/or mechanical errors that affect the clarity of the writing.
- E An E assignment misses most or all of the criteria listed above. It is incomplete or so poorly argued that it does not satisfy the basic requirements of the assignment. E work is also full of spelling/mechanical errors, which make the writing unclear or unreadable.

A	4.0	93–100 (100)	B	3.0	83-86 (85)	C	2.0	73–76 (75)	D	1.0	63-66 (65)
A-	3.67	90–92 (91)	B-	2.67	80-82 (81)	C-	1.67	70–72 (71)	D-	0.67	60-62 (61)
B+	3.33	87–89 (88)	C+	2.33	77-79 (78)	D+	1.33	67–69 (68)	E	0.0	0-59 (0)

## COURSE POLICIES

**1. Attendance and Lateness:** Attendance is mandatory in all physical and intellectual senses. Absences *will* affect your grade, not only because you will lose participation credit, but you will also lose track of our discussions be in a weak position to complete your assignments. Students who often miss class invariably produce weaker papers. After 3 missed discussions (excused or otherwise), every following unexcused absence will earn you a 10% drop in possible participation points.

Students travelling for university-sponsored events or observing religious holidays are, of course, excused from class. However, you must tell me about these absences in advance so that we can make arrangements to have you make up missed work within an appropriate timeframe.

**2. Readings:** All readings are to be completed *before* the class meetings in which they are to be discussed. If you've not done the reading, then you have nothing to say. Accordingly, then, you are unable to participate.

Some advice for readings:

- Readings will vary in length and difficulty, so, as a general suggestion, keep ahead on all readings. For example, begin the first novel before the semester starts. Or begin reading our longest novel 10 pages per day from the very beginning of the semester to put yourself in a good position for later.
- If we have light readings one week, finish it early and get started on next week's.
- Don't wait till the night before class to complete readings; rather, pick a minimum daily page count (even 20 or 30 pages a day makes a huge difference in maintaining the work of the semester).
- Write in your books (or annotate your files)! Underline key passages and make notes. As you read, think: "What's weird?" If something strikes you as odd or interesting, is phrased interestingly, is jarring, etc., it's probably an important passage to talk about. Note those pages and come to class with discussions and questions at the ready.

**3. Office Hours and Communication:** Assignments are to be discussed during office hours, not via email or Canvas. That is, I do not host office hours so that I can make more time *later* to discuss things and answer questions you should have brought to me when I was available. I will therefore not discuss the particulars of an assignment by email or Canvas that you have not discussed with me during office hours first.

Moreover, our class meetings are for collective discussions of the readings. These discussions will provide a good generative laboratory for assignment topics, but putting in the participation work during class does not automatically mean your written assignments will be at the A level. If you need assistance, it is your responsibility to come get it.

I do not use office hours to hear grade disputes. There is no rewrite and resubmit policy (this would take up valuable time for all of us). We can, however, talk about how to approach your *next* assignment. I suggest suspending any kind of “checklist” approach you might have to assignments: that is, writing is a constant practice of self-revision—in writing style, to be sure, but also in reading habits and thinking. Thus, there is no formula—no checklist of components—that lead to better papers. Students who discuss assignments in person invariably produce stronger work.

All that said, I will, of course, respond to routine queries by email and Canvas, but I insist that any substantial discussion about the class, especially your assignments, be done in person *first*.

If you urgently need to contact me, email is better than Canvas messages. I will respond to queries as soon as possible, but give me a working day’s time to reply before sending another message.

**4. Devices:** Electronic copies of texts are fine, so long as the pagination is consistent with the edition on our reading list. Supplementary readings will be made available as pdf files, so you may also use devices for these if you prefer.

Use of devices is limited to course content. Using devices for social media, texting, etc. are especially unwelcome distractions. Not only is it annoying (imagine if I stopped listening to your class discussion to send a text); it will also impact your participation grade. Moreover, students who are intellectually present during class discussions invariably produce stronger papers.

Very simply put: send any texts/make any calls/catch any Pokémon you need *before* class starts.

Of course, life happens to us all, and you might absolutely need your phone for some reason. I trust you to decide what counts as necessary. Just quietly step out of class for a reasonable amount of time and do what you need to do.

**5. Classroom Behavior:** This is a small class that involves lots of discussion and participation. It should go without saying that your courtesy for the rest of the class is expected at all times. I insist that you treat our classroom as intellectual arena in which to discuss complex ideas. Any disrespectful behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from the class.

**6. Course Evaluations:** You are encouraged to do a course evaluation at the end of the semester at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/>. There is also a GatorRater app on our Canvas page.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

### **Statement on Academic Honesty:**

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

### **Statement of Humanities and Composition Credit:**

This course can satisfy the General Education requirement for Composition or Humanities. For more information see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1314/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

### **Statement of Writing Requirement:**

This course can provide 6,000 words toward the UF requirement for writing. For more information see <http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement.aspx>

### **Statement on Sexual Harassment:**

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual discrimination for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment see <http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/policies-2/sexual-harassment/>

### **Statement of Student Disability Services:**

The University of Florida complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center in Peabody 202, which will provide documentation. Accommodations cannot be made until I have received documentation. For more about the DRC see <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

## SCHEDULE

	<b>T 8-9 (3:00-4:55)</b>	<b>R 9 (4:05-4:55)</b>
1	8.23 Introduction: syllabus	8.25 Frameworks: <b>TBA</b> from Wells and James
2	8.30 Frameworks: "The Madonna of the Future"	9.1 Frameworks: <i>Novelty</i> ; poems <b>TBA</b>
3	9.6 Frameworks: Mark McGurl, <i>The Novel Art</i>	9.8 Frameworks: Anderson, "Modernity and Revolution"
4	9.13 Johnson, <i>Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man</i> Chaps. 1-9	9.15 <i>Autobiography</i> Chaps. 10-11
5	9.20 Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i>	9.22 <i>Quicksand</i> <b>Short paper 1 due</b>
6	9.27 <i>Quicksand</i> Locke, from <i>The New Negro</i>	9.29 Willa Cather, <i>The Song of the Lark</i> Part 1
7	10.4 <i>Lark</i> Part 2	10.6 <i>Lark</i> Part 3-4
8	10.11 <i>Lark</i> Part 5	10.13 <i>Lark</i> Part 6 <b>Short paper 2 due</b>
9	10.18 Morley Callaghan, <i>It's Never Over</i>	10.20 <i>Never Over</i> <b>Annotated bibliography entry due</b>
10	10.25 Frameworks: <b>TBA</b> from Irr <i>Never Over</i>	10.27 Anita Loos, <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i>
11	11.1 <i>Blondes</i>	11.3 Borges, "Pierre Menard" <b>Prospectus due</b>
12	11.8 Borges, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius," "The Aleph"	11.10 Mexican Muralism
13	11.15 Frida Kahlo tour at the Harn	11.17 Vasconcelos, from "The Cosmic Race" <b>Introduction due</b>
14	11.22 Alejo Carpentier, <i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	11.24 <b>Thanksgiving</b>
15	11.29 <i>Kingdom</i>	12.1 H.P. Lovecraft, "The Horror at Red Hook"

	<b>TBA</b> from C. L. R. James	and “The Call of Cthulhu”
16	12.6 Final paper due	