

Eng 730 (01) Studies in American Literature
Visions and Visionaries in Modernist Poetry
Anthony Cuda, Wednesdays 6:30-9:20, MHRA 3209



“And indeed there will be time,” says T. S. Eliot’s Prufrock, “for a hundred visions and revisions.” This course begins with the premise that literary modernism was a time for visions, revisions, and visionaries, that is, for lyric poets whose desire to make meaning often led them towards intense, revelatory states of mind and elevations of consciousness. Focusing upon English and American poetry and poetic theories from the early twentieth century, we’ll examine the stylistic innovations that modernist poets developed to accommodate the visionary, and we’ll interrogate the spiritual, psychological, and cultural circumstances behind the modernist fascination with moments of insight and revelation. We’ll read the philosophers—like Henri Bergson and William James—who helped to spark these visions, and we’ll ask how the psychological extremities of vision helped to shape modernist thinking about the mind and its faculties.

I. Course Texts: The following texts are available at the UNCG bookstore.

H. D., *Collected Poems*

T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*

_____, *Selected Poems*

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Poems*

David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I, From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode*

Plato, *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*

Ezra Pound, *Personae*

Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness*

William Carlos Williams, *Collected Poems, Vol. 1: 1909-1939*

Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*

W. B. Yeats, *Selected Poems and Four Plays*

There are a number of texts which will be available only as PDF files on the class's blackboard site; please print these and bring them to class meetings.

II. General and Particular Requirements:

1 oral presentation	20%
1 7-10 pp. mid-term essay	20%
1 12-15 pp. final essay	60%

Oral Presentation (20%) : At the beginning of the semester each student will sign up to give one oral presentation of no more than 10 minutes in length on any single poem (except for the focus items) by the author under consideration during that class meeting. Presentations should adhere strictly to the time constraints. They should give lucid, comprehensive readings of the poem's stylistic and structural workings; discuss its salient language and / or imagery; investigate the poet's diction and word choice (including, for instance, the use of connotation and etymology); and propose conclusions relevant to the poet's broader body of work. Presentations should be given with notes but not read verbatim; handouts for your colleagues are strongly encouraged; creative use of other audio-visual materials is welcome. Students must inform the class of their chosen poem via blackboard at least three days in advance of the presentation.

Mid-term essay (30%): The 7-10 pp. midterm essay will focus upon the workings of a single poem by an author on our syllabus. You must choose a poem that first appeared in a periodical and indicate the original publication data at the beginning of the essay, directly beneath the title. To enrich and illuminate your discussion of the poem, you must draw upon the following sources: (1) adjacent poems or prose from the periodical issue in which the poem first appeared; (2) material from at least four other periodicals published in the same year, at least two of which must be exclusively literary or artistic publications; (3) at least one play (by any author, living or dead) performed in the same year; (4) at least one letter composed by the author in the same year. Papers should conform to either Chicago or MLA style format and should include bibliography or works cited.

Final essay (60%): The 12-15 pp. final essay shall focus on a topic of your choosing and follow the standard practices and guidelines for graduate seminar research papers, which we will discuss further in class.

III. Schedule of Readings

For each class session, students should read the primary text by the author under consideration in its entirety and then return to pay particular attention to the individual poems listed below, i.e., for Yeats on 4 February, read all of the poems in *Selected Poems and Four Plays*, but pay particular attention to "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," "He bids his beloved be at rest," etc.

- 21-Jan **Introduction**
 William Blake, “The Tyger”
 Charles Baudelaire, “The Seven Old Men”
 W. B. Yeats, “Byzantium”
 excerpt from Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night’s Dream* (V, i)
 excerpt from Coleridge, *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare*
- 28-Jan **Backgrounds: Reason and Epiphany**
 Plato, *Ion* in *Two Comic Dialogues* and excerpt from *Letter VII* (PDF)
 Partee, Morriss Henry, “Inspiration in the Aesthetics of Plato” (PDF)
 Carter, Robert Edgar. “Plato and Inspiration” (PDF)
- 4-Feb **W. B. Yeats I, The Symbolist Vision**
 Yeats, *Selected Poems and Four Plays*: “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” “He bids his beloved be at rest,” “The Magi,” “The Second Coming,” “Leda and the Swan”
 From *Essays & Introductions*: “Magic,” “The Symbolism of Poetry,” “The Autumn of the Body,” “The Body of Father Christian Rosencrucx” (all PDF)
 Arthur Symons, from *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (PDF)
 Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, Part I: especially “Mysticism and Symbolism” and “Mysticism and Magic”
 Perkins, *A History*, chapters 2 and 23
- 11-Feb **W. B. Yeats II, From Innisfree to Byzantium**
Selected Poems and Four Plays: “Sailing to Byzantium,” “Byzantium,” “Lapis Lazuli”
 “Per Amica Silentia Lunae” (PDF)
 “The Manuscript of ‘Leo Africanus’” (PDF)
 Daniel Albright, “The Fool by the Pool” (PDF)
 Anthony Cuda, “Crying in Plato’s Teeth” (PDF)
- 18-Feb **Catastrophic Vision and Apophasis: Hulme, James, Worringer**
 T. E. Hulme, “Romanticism and Classicism,” “Cinders” from *Speculations* (PDF)
 William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Lectures I-VIII: especially lectures VI and VII, “The Sick Soul.”
 Wilhelm Worringer, *Empathy and Abstraction*
 Helen Carr, “T. E. Hulme and the ‘Spiritual Dread of Space,’” from *T. E. Hulme and the Question of Modernism* (PDF)
- 25-Feb **Ezra Pound: Imagism, Vorticism, Vision**
Personae (focus items to be announced)
 Essays (all PDF): “A Retrospect,” “I Gather the Limbs of Osiris,” “Psychology and the Troubadours”
 From *Letters of Ezra Pound* (PDF)
 Schneidau, Herbert N. “Pound and Yeats: The Question of Symbolism” (PDF)
 _____. “Vorticism and the Career of Ezra Pound” (PDF)
 Perkins, *A History*, chapters 15 and 20

- 4-Mar **T. S. Eliot I, My Madness Singing**
Selected Poems: “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”
 “Prufrock’s Pervigilium” and “Silence” from *Inventions of the March Hare* (PDF)
 Essays (all PDF): “Tradition and the Individual Talent”; “Modern Tendencies in Poetry”; “Hamlet”; “Dante as a Spiritual Leader”; “The Metaphysical Poets”
 William James, “Mysticism” from *Varieties of Religious Experience* (PDF)
 Perkins, *A History*, chapter 21
- 11-Mar **Spring Break**
- 18-Mar **T. S. Eliot II, The Heart of Light**
Selected Poems: *The Waste Land*
Four Quartets: “Burnt Norton”
 Essays (all PDF): “Dante,” “Pascal,” “Baudelaire”
 Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism* Part II: especially “The Dark Night of the Soul”
 Tim Dean, “T. S. Eliot, famous clairvoyante” (PDF)
- 25-Mar **Unreal City: Baudelaire and the Metropolis**
 Simmel, “The Metropolis and Modern Man” (PDF)
 Baudelaire, “Seven Old Men” (PDF); “The Painter of Modern Life” (PDF)
 T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*
 Tim Armstrong, “Two Types of Shock in Modernity” (PDF)
 Raymond Williams, “The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism” (PDF)
 Peter Collier, “Nineteenth-Century Paris: Vision and Nightmare” (PDF)
- 1-Apr **William Carlos Williams: Imagism and Deprivation**
Collected Poems: “The Wanderer: A Rococo Study,” “The Yachts,” “The Young Housewife,” “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “Spring and All”
 Roger Fry, “The Artist’s Vision,” from *Vision and Design* (PDF)
 Hyatt Waggoner, from *American Visionary Poetry* (PDF): “Visionary Poetry: Learning to See” and “William Carlos Williams: Naturalizing the Unearthly”
 Perkins, *A History*, chapter 22
 Perkins, “The Impact of William Carlos Williams,” from *A History*, vol. II (PDF)
- 8-Apr **H. D. I, On Sea Garden**
Collected Poems: *Sea Garden* (volume)
 from *Notes on Thought and Vision* (PDF)
 Adalaide Morris, “The Concept of Projection: H. D.’s Visionary Powers” (PDF)
 Eileen Gregory, “Rose Cut in Rock: Sappho and H. D.’s *Sea Garden*” (PDF)
- 15-Apr **H. D. II, On Trilogy**
Collected Poems: *Trilogy* (three volumes)
 from *Tribute to Freud* (PDF)

Joseph Riddel, "H. D. and the Poetics of 'Spiritual Realism'" (PDF)
Normal Holland, "H. D. and the 'Blameless Physician'"(PDF)

- 22-Apr **D. H. Lawrence, Coming Through**
Selected Poems (focus to be announced)
Essays: excerpt from "Chaos in Poetry" (PDF), "Poetry of the Present" (PDF)
Mary Ann Gillies, from "Henri Bergson and British Modernism" (PDF)
Helen Swords, "D. H. Lawrence and the Poetics of Contradiction" (PDF)
Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*: "Mysticism and Vitalism"
- 29-Apr Make-up material; seminar paper discussions.

IV. Expectations and Guidelines for graduate seminar work

1. Reading and note-taking, primary sources

Read all primary source material slowly, repeatedly, and with sustained and singular attention. If dealing with collections of poetry, I recommend reading individual volumes at a time, before returning to poems of particular interest. If collection is not separated by original volumes (as in some "selected" editions), take careful note of publication dates of poems and keep chronology in mind. Take note of continuities and discontinuities between poems and between volumes, including recurrent phrases, images, symbols, literary techniques and conventions. Make note of significant changes in style and theme between volumes and between sets of poems. When rereading individual poems, jot down paraphrases, salient phrases and tropes, and brief interpretative readings of the poem's movements. Define and look up etymology for all unfamiliar or seldom used words and phrases.

2. Reading and note-taking, secondary sources

Read all secondary source material as thoroughly as necessary to reformulate the author's central claim in your own language and to recall the most salient evidence that the author uses to support that claim. Take active, synthetic notes as opposed to passive, reproductive notes, which simply repeat phrases and ideas directly from the source. Active note-taking often means formulating categories to help you take standard, uniform notes on each essay—like author, date, central claim, primary evidence, theoretical underpinnings, presuppositions, possible shortcomings—so that they can be quickly compared and consulted during class discussion. Force yourself to keep these notes relatively brief and to keep your language simple and concise in recapitulating them. Do at least basic research on any significant names or concepts with which you are unfamiliar; "Literature Resource Center" on-line databases through UNCG's library and reference books like the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* and M. H. Abrams's *Glossary of Literary Terms* are useful for this purpose.

3. Preparing for class discussion

Especially if you have read the material over the course of the preceding week, preparing adequately for class discussion means first reviewing all notes you've taken on the reading. Actively assemble and think through the networks of ideas and verbal associations as they form across the various texts. Be prepared to offer detailed readings of individual poems upon which we'll focus and be ready to support your conclusions with evidence from other poems and prose under consideration that session. As time permits, I highly recommend pursuing additional secondary research into themes and persons of interest, especially given the ease with which such research can be performed via on-line scholarly resources. In reviewing, consider what each secondary source might contribute toward our grasp of each focus poem, even if that source does not address it directly.