ENGL 6393-001, Prof. Siraganian (lsiragan@smu.edu)
American Modernism: The Poem and the Poetics of Art
Monday, 2-5pm
156 Dallas Hall

Office Hours: MW, 10:30 to 12, and by appointment (Dallas Hall 15)

Course Description
What counts as a work of art – and specifically, as a poem -- in Modernism? Does a poem need to do more or less than capture a view of the world or a piece of the reality? This course considers these questions in relation to some of the major American poets (Eliot, Stein, Williams, Bishop, Hughes, Olson) of the first half of the twentieth-century. We will pay close attention to poets whose poetics, or theories of poetry and reading, had a substantial role in shaping theories of the art object in 20th-century literature. At times we will also look at these poets in relation to the painters and sculptors (Pablo Picasso, Wyndham Lewis, Marcel Duchamp, Robert Rauschenberg, etc.) that they befriended and wrote about in their prose.

Requirements
• One presentation, written up, photocopied and submitted to everyone at the beginning of that class
• 4-page prospectus for seminar paper due sometime mid-semester
• 15 to 20 page seminar paper due at the end of the semester (this can be, but doesn’t have to be, a development and revision of your presentation)

Required Books. Please purchase these editions (they are all at the SMU bookstore)
Gertrude Stein, Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein, Vintage; Rei edition (March 17, 1990), ISBN: 0679724648
Charles Olson, Selected Poems, University of California Press; Reprint edition (December 1, 1997), ISBN: 0520212320
Schedule

1. Jan 22, Introduction


Sources/Art: Charles Baudelaire, “To the Reader” (42-3)
    Ovid (46-50)
    Gotama Buddha, “The Fire Sermon” (54-5)
    “Brihadāranyaka Upanishad” (62-3)
Criticism: Lydall Gordon, “The Composition of TWL” (67-72)

    Pound, Selections from The Cantos (on Bb).

Criticism: Helen Gardner, “TWL: Paris 1922” (72-89)
    Charles Powell, “So Much Waste Paper” (156)
    David Tomlinson, “T. S. Eliot and the Cubists”, Twentieth Century Literature Spring 1980, 26:1 (on Bb)


5. Feb 19, Stein, cont, Tender Buttons (459-509), “Pictures” (on Bb), “Poetry and Grammar” (on Bb)

Sources/Art: Pablo Picasso, paintings and photographs (on Bb)
    Georges Braque, paintings (on Bb)
    Juan Gris, paintings and photographs (on Bb)
    Clement Greenberg, “Collage” (on Bb)

6. Feb 26, William Carlos Williams, “Contemporania” (16), “Rendezvous” (36-7), “Portrait of a Lady” (129), Spring and All (175-236), related notes in the appendix

**Sources/Art:** Charles Demuth, paintings (on Bb)
Marcel Duchamp, paintings, sculpture, photographs, essays (on Bb)

**Criticism:** Joseph Riddle, from *The Inverted Bell: Modernism and the Counterpoetics of William Carlos Williams* (Baton Rouge: 1974), 124-140

----- Mar 12, spring break-----


**Sources/Art:** Bishop, paintings and sculpture (on Bb)
Joseph Cornell, sculptures (on Bb)
Max Ernst, paintings and collages (on Bb)
Andre Breton, from “Manifesto of Surrealism” (on Bb)

**Criticism:** Richard Mullen, “Elizabeth Bishop’s Surrealist Inheritance” *American Literature*, 54 (1982), 63-80 (on Bb)

10. Apr 2, **Langston Hughes**, selections from *Collected Poems* and "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*, 122 (1926), selections from *Essays on Art, Race, Politics, and World Affairs*

11. Apr 9, **Hughes**, continued, selections from *Collected Poems, The Sweet Flypaper of Life* (with photographs by Roy DeCarava)

**Criticism:** Seth Moglen, “Modernism In The Black Diaspora: Langston Hughes and the Broken Cubes of Picasso” *Callaloo* 25.4 (2002) 1189-1205, (on Bb)
Maren Stange, "Illusion Complete within Itself": Roy Decarava's Photography

13. Apr 23, Olson, continued, selections from The Maximus Poems

*Criticism:* Martin Duberman, “A New Black Mountain” from Black Mountain: Explorations in Community

*Sources:* Robert Rauschenberg, paintings (on Bb)
John Cage, writings (on Bb)

14. Apr 30, Presentations