

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)

T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, Edited by Michael North, University of California, Los Angeles (2001), ISBN 0-393-97499-5

Gertrude Stein, *Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein*, Vintage; Rei edition (March 17, 1990), ISBN: 0679724648

William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Vol. 1: 1909-1939*, New Directions Publishing Corporation; Rep edition (September 1991), ISBN: 0811211878

Elizabeth Bishop, *The Complete Poems, 1927-1979*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux (April 1, 1984), ISBN: 0374518173

Langston Hughes, *Collected Poems*, Vintage; 1st Vintage Classics Ed edition (October 31, 1995), ISBN: 0679764089

Charles Olson, *Selected Poems*, University of California Press; Reprint edition (December 1, 1997), ISBN: 0520212320

Schedule

1. Jan 22, **Introduction**

2. Jan 29, **T.S. Eliot**, *The Waste Land* (3-26), “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (114-120), “Ulysses, Order, and Myth” (128-130), “Eliot on *The Waste Land*” (112-3)

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)

3. Feb 5, **Eliot**, cont., Ezra Pound editing of *The Waste Land*, facsimile edition (part 2 and 3 available on Bb, entire book available on Course Reserves at Fondren)
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)

Mark Roskil, “Cubism”, *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 1998), 476-480 (on Bb)

4. Feb 12, **Gertrude Stein**, “Cezanne, Matisse, Picasso” (327-335), *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1-238), “Composition as Explanation” (511-523), “Portraits and Repetition” (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)

Francis Francina, “Collage” and Marjorie Perloff, “Collage and Poetry” in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* (Oxford, 1998)

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

7. Mar 5, **Williams**, continued, *Descent of Winter*, selections from essays, “The Great Figure”, “Introduction to *The Wedge*”, “A Sort of Song”, “Painters and Parties,” from *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*

Sources/Art: Charles Demuth, paintings (on Bb)

Marcel Duchamp, paintings, sculpture, photographs, essays (on Bb)

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

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

8. Mar 19, **Elizabeth Bishop**, “Large Bad Picture”, “Poem,” “The Monument”, “Seascape” “Over 2,000 Illustrations and a Complete Concordance”, “Sestina”, “In the Waiting Room”, “One Art” “Little Exercise”, “Primer”, “The Map” (on Bb)

9. Mar 26, **Bishop**, cont. “Rainy Season: Sub-Tropics”, “The Weed” and others

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)

Susan Rosenbaum, “Elizabeth Bishop and the Miniature Museum”, *Journal of Modern Literature*, Winter 2005, 28: 2 (61-99) (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

The Yale Journal of Criticism 9.1 (1996) 63-92, (on Bb)

12. Apr 16, **Charles Olson**, selections from *Selected Poems*, “The Kingfishers” (5-12), “In Cold Hell, in Thicket” (15-21), “Merce of Egypt” (51-3), “As the Dead Prey Upon Us” (72-80)
“Projective Verse”, “Canto One Hundred and One,” “R²” (on Bb)

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**