The Vision in Our Minds

Modern British literature and the Challenge of the Imaginary

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Basic information: Hauptseminar, 2 SWS, ECTS-Studium, ECTS-Credits: 7; application at KOS.

Room and time: AR-K 122/123, Thursdays, 14-16.


Modules: LCMS-BA-M8.1 (Literarisches Leben/Medieninstitutionen und Medienpolitik) ab 4; LCM-MA-M2.1 (Epochen der Literatur-, Kultur- und Mediengeschichte) ab 4; EL-3 (Epochen und übergreifende Traditionenstränge) ab 4; AL4 (Institutionen und Medien der literarischen Vermittlung und ihre Geschichte) ab 4; ENG-GHR-M5.1 (Textsorten) ab 4; ENG-GYM-M7.4 (Autoren(-gruppen)) ab 4; Sek I & II-B3 (Englische Literatur von 1650 bis zur Gegenwart) ab 4; ENG-BK-M6.3 (Autoren(-gruppen)) ab 4.

Maximum number of participants: 50

Short description: What do Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness (1902), James Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), and Virginia Woolf’s Orlando (1928) have in common? All these novels, written in the period between the turn-of-the-century and the Second World War, are described as »modern« - not only in the historical, but, most importantly, in the aesthetic and stylistic sense. But what exactly are the implications of the term »modern«? What did the attribute signify to British writers of the early 20th century since so many of them deployed it as a concept in their works? And, finally, how were »modern« techniques of writing (fragmentation, allusion, disruption, experimentation, etc.) developed and modified during this period? Do »modern« texts represent a clear break from the tradition of the Victorian novel, or are there any common denominators, as far as structure and ideology are concerned? The course will deal with British Modernity as a culturally and psychologically charged phenomenon that challenged conventions and reader expectations in many ways, yet also managed to negotiate the needs and fears of the Modern Age. While treating canonized works by James Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, Dorothy Richardson, W.B. Yeats, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett, the seminar will also examine the theoretical background of Modernism in academic criticism as well as a few cinematic examples of a »modern aesthetics.« This course will require the active participation and preparation of each participant. You are asked to bring yourself in creatively with your own ideas and suggestions for group work.

It is highly recommended that you purchase the following version of James Joyce’s novel Ulysses for this seminar: Penguin Books, 1992 [first edition 1922]. Introduction by Declan Kiberd.

Credit requirements:

For 5 or 7 credit points: regular attendance, lively participation in class discussions, and at least 9 entries in the discussion forum before the session (1/3), an oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3), and a final paper (10-12 pp. / 17-20 pp.) (1/3). For 2 credit points: attendance, participation in class discussions, and 8 entries in the discussion forum before the session (50%), oral presentation as part of an expert group (50%).
Deadline for Final Papers: Thursday, July 31, 2008. Note: There is no (!) extension of this deadline.

Syllabus

03. Apr. Introduction to British Modernity

10. Apr. What is ›High Modernism‹?

17. Apr. The Modern Aesthetic
  The Hours (dir. Stephen Daldry, 2002).*

  Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness (1902), especially the following parts: pp. 17-46, pp. 78-94.

01. May Labor Day & Ascension Day
  No class! Relax and enjoy!

08. May The Ghost of the First World War

15. May Feminism and Social Justice

22. May Corpus Christi Holiday (Fronleichnam)
  Relax and enjoy!

29. May Structure and Identity in Modern Literature
  James Joyce, Ulysses (1992), »Introduction«, pp. ix-lxiv + ONE of the following passages of the novel: pp. 1-64, pp. 65-147, pp. 777-871 (or parts of it).

05. June Modernism and the City
  James Joyce, Ulysses (1992), ONE of the following passages of the novel: pp. 147-165, pp. 183-190, pp. 281-98 (or parts of it).

12. June Stream of Consciousness
  James Joyce, Ulysses (1992), ONE central passage from the following pages: pp. 871-933.

19. June Modern Poetry

26. June Modernism meets Postmodernism
  Orlando (dir. Sally Potter, 1992), based on V. Woolf’s novel (1928).*

03. July History and Gender Identity

10. July The Search for Meaning

* These films are available on DVD. They can be checked out over night at our Sekretariat. Room AR-H 213. All texts for the seminar are included in the seminar reader (available at ›Copythek Ankele‹, Glückaufstr. 23, Siegen-Weidenau, Tel.: 0271/71613).