

## **E30A Seminar in Twentieth Century Poetry**

- Lecturer:** Richard Clarke
- Prerequisite:** A pass in E20A and/or E20B.
- Contact hours:** Two 1.5-hour seminars per week

This course offers a broad survey of modern poetry written in the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. from the 1890's to about the Second World War, the characteristic techniques and preoccupations of which have had a profound impact on all poetry written subsequently in this century. We will explore some of the innovative technical features (e.g. Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry [the 'objective correlative'], colloquialism, vers libre, the deconstruction of traditional generic boundaries, etc.) and themes (urban life, nihilism, futility, despair, etc.) which made much modernist poetry such a radical departure from the Romantic and Victorian modes of poetic discourse which immediately preceded it.

We will attempt to study these techniques and themes by setting the poetry against the backdrop of the tumultuous economic, political and ideological changes that occurred during this period particularly within Europe which was still at that stage by and large the cultural centre of the U.S.A. For example, the social consequences of industrialism, the apogee of empire, three monarchies, World War I and its aftermath, the dominance of political Liberalism, the rise of Communism and Fascism, the increasing nihilism attendant upon the decline of Christianity and the corresponding rise to prominence of positivist scientific discourses (in particular, Darwinist theories of evolution), the advent of the women's movement, etc.

To these ends, proceeding roughly in chronological order, we will concentrate upon the following particularly influential poets: Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas and W.H. Auden. Occasionally we will also refer to other less influential (but not insignificant) poets such as H.D., William Carlos Williams, Marianne Moore. (Appropriate selections by all these poets may be found in The Norton Anthology of Poetry and The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry. Please look elsewhere for those few poems listed below which are not to be found in either of those volumes. You should try to read all the poems by a given poet to be found in your anthology but you should concentrate upon those poems which I have listed below.)

It is impossible in a course as short as this to study all the important poets that this century has produced to date. However, my hope is that, by introducing you to the key techniques, themes and figures of the period up to the 1930's, you will be persuaded to study at some stage on your own in the light of this knowledge other major poets who rose to prominence later in this century and all of whom reflect to a greater or lesser degree the innovations of Modernist poetics: e.e. cummings\*,

Jean Toomer, Hart Crane, Langston Hughes\*, W.H. Auden\*, Dylan Thomas\*, R.S. Thomas, Gwendolyn Brooks, Robert Lowell, Philip Larkin\*, Allen Ginsberg, Thom Gunn, Adrienne Rich\*, Ted Hughes\*, Sylvia Plath\*, Audre Lord, and Seamus Heaney\*. (The ones marked with an asterisk are the crucial ones.) After the Modernist revolution, poetry has never looked the same this century.

**Required texts:** The Norton Anthology of Poetry (NAP)

**Recommended texts:** David Perkins A History of Modern Poetry: from the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Vol. I)  
 ---. A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After (Vol. II)

<b>Assessment:</b>	Seminar participation and presentation(s)	-	10%
	One term paper (2,000 - 3,000 words)	-	30%
	Final exam	-	60%

NB: Students are forewarned that a) essays must be written according to the guidelines set out in the MLA Handbook and the Faculty of Humanities Essay Writing Guidelines; **IMPROPERLY PRESENTED WORK WILL BE PENALISED**; b) departmental regulations decree that even if students go into the exam with a passing coursework grade, **STUDENTS MUST PASS AT LEAST ONE QUESTION IN THE EXAM IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.**

**WEEK 1: Introduction**

**Discussion:** The socio-historical context: the period 1890-1930.  
 Modernism: ideological features; literary and artistic currents.

**Required Readings:** F.E. Halliday England: a Concise History:  
 Ch. 17 **A**The Conservatives and Imperialism, 1886-1905"  
 Ch. 18 **A**Liberal Reform and the First World War, 1906-1918"  
 Ch. 19 **A**Between Two Wars, 1918-1939"  
 Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane Modernism:  
 Bradbury & McFarlane **A**The Name and Nature of Modernism@  
 Alan Bullock **A**The Double Image@

**WEEK 2: Poetry of the Fin-de Siècle**

**Topics:** The influence of the French Symbolists (Baudelaire, Rimbaud);  
 The Aesthetes (Art for Art's Sake), the Decadents and the Impressionists (Wilde, Johnson, Dowson);

**Required Readings:** Charles Baudelaire **A**Correspondances@/ **A**Le Cygne@/ **A**Le Crépuscule du Matin@/ **A**Les Sept Vieillards@ (in E30A folder)

Arthur Rimbaud      A Aube (in E30A folder)  
 Oscar Wilde        A Hélas / A Impression du Matin / A The Harlots House (in E30A folder)  
 Lionel Johnson A The Dark Angel (in E30A folder)  
 Ernest Dowson A Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae / A To One in Bedlam (in E30A folder)

**Relevant Readings:** Oscar Wilde      A The Decay of Lying (in Houghton, et al., eds. Victorian Poetry and Poetics)

Walter Pater      A The Renaissance: Conclusion (in Kaplan)

Arthur Symons      A The Decadent Movement in Literature (in Houghton, et al., eds. Victorian Poetry and Poetics)

Charles Chadwick      Symbolism: A The Theory of Symbolism (Ch. 1)

**Recommended Readings:** Clive Scott      A Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism (Bradbury & McFarlane)

David Perkin      A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: A The Romantic Legacy (pp. 4-7)  
A Ars Victrix (Ch. 3)

**WEEK 3: Poetry of the Edwardian Period: especially Thomas Hardy=s Poetry**

**Lecture Topics:** The Realist counter-reaction--narrative poetry / the ballad form (Kipling)  
 The emphasis on the Beautiful and the Agreeable (Robert Bridges, Walter de la Mare);  
 The Genteel Tradition in the USA;  
 The poetry of Thomas Hardy: themes and techniques.

**Required Readings:** Rudyard Kipling      A Tommy / A Recessional (NAP)  
 Robert Bridges A London Snow / A On a Dead Child / [A The Snow Lies Sprinkled on the Beach] (in E30A folder)  
 Walter de la Mare      A The Listeners / A Fare Well (NAP)  
 Thomas Hardy A Hap / A Neutral Tones / A I Look into my Glass / A Drummer Hodge / A A Broken Appointment / A The Darkling / A The Ruined Maid / A The Convergence of the Twain / A She Hears the Storm / A Channel Firing / A Under the Waterfall / A The Voice / A During Wind and Rain / A In Time of >The Breaking of Nations=< / A Afterwards

**Recommended Readings:**

James Gibson and Trevor Johnson, eds. Thomas Hardy: Poems (Casebook Series)  
 David Perkins A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: A The Narrative Protest (Ch. 4)  
A Thomas Hardy (Ch. 8)

**WEEK 4: Poetry of the Georgian Period: especially Robert Frost's Poetry**

**Lecture Topics:** Georgian poetry (Rupert Brooke)  
The poets of World War I (Siegfried Sassoon, Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen)  
The poetry of Robert Frost: themes and techniques.

**Required Readings:** Rupert Brooke AFrom The Old Vicarage, Grantchester@ / ADining-Room Tea@ / AHeaven@ / AThe Great Lover@ / ATiare Tahiti@ / The five World War I sonnets including AThe Soldier@  
Siegfried Sassoon A>They-@ / AThe General@ / AEveryone Sang@ / AChrist and the Soldier@  
Wilfred Owen AAntem for Doomed Youth@ / ADulce et Decorum Est@ / AStrange Meeting@  
Isaac Rosenberg ABreak of Day in the Trenches@ / Louse Hunting@ / ADead Man's Dump@  
Robert Frost AMending Wall@ / AThe Wood Pile@ / AThe Road Not Taken@ / ABirches@ / AStopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening@ / AWest-Running Brook@ / ADesign@ / AProvide, Provide@ / ACome In@ / AThe Gift Outright@ / ADirective@

**Recommended Readings:**

James Cox, ed. Robert Frost: a Collection of Critical Essays  
Dominick Hibberd Poetry of the First World War (Casebook Series)  
David Perkins A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: AThe Georgian Poets@ (Ch. 10)  
ARobert Frost@ (Ch. 11)  
APoetry of World War I@ (Ch. 13)

**WEEK 5: The Early Years: 1890-1914**

**Lecture Topics:** Poetry from Crossways (1889), The Rose (1893), The Wind Among the Reeds (1899), In the Seven Woods (1904), The Green Helmet and Other Poems (1910), and Responsibilities (1914).  
The influence of the Romantics, the French Symbolists, the Decadents, the Impressionists, the Edwardians and Georgians upon the early Years  
Irish nationalism: the Celtic Twilight;  
Unrequited love for Maud Gonne.

**Required Readings:** AThe Stolen Child@ / AThe Lake Isle of Innisfree@ / AWhen You Are Old@ / AThe Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland@ / AAdam's Curse@ / ANo Second Troy@ / ASeptember 1913" / ATo a Shade@ / ABeggar to Beggar Cried@ / AThe Magi@ / AA Coat@

**Theory:** ASymbol as Revelation@ (in Ellman) (called elsewhere AThe Symbolism of Poetry@)

## The Courage of the Artist (in Ellman)

### Recommended Readings:

Richard Ellman W.B. Yeats: the Man and His Masks  
 T.R. Henn The Lonely Tower: Studies in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats  
 A. Norman Jeffares W.B. Yeats: Man and Poet  
 --- A Commentary on the Poems of W.B. Yeats  
 Edward Malins and John Purkis A Preface to Yeats  
 David Perkins A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: William Butler Yeats  
 Raymond Cowell, ed. Critics on Yeats  
 Elizabeth Cullingford, ed. Yeats: Poems, 1919-1935 (Casebook Series)  
 John Stallworthy, ed. Yeats: Last Poems (Casebook Series)

## WEEK 6: The Mature Poetry of W.B. Yeats: 1915-1928

**Lecture Topics:** Major poems from The Wild Swans at Coole (1919), Michael Robartes and the Dancer (1921), The Tower (1928)--especially the >Byzantium= sequence.

**Required Readings:** The Wild Swans at Coole / An Irish Airman Foresees His Death / Easter 1916 / The Second Coming / Sailing to Byzantium / Leda and the Swan / Among School Children / Byzantium

**Theory:** The Anti-Self (in Ellman)  
History as Symbolic Reality (in Ellman)

## WEEK 7: The Last Poems Written by W.B. Yeats: 1929-1939

**Lecture Topics:** Selections from The Winding Stair and Other Poems (1933), Words for Music Perhaps (the >Crazy Jane= sequence) and Last Poems (1936-1939)

**Required Readings:** Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop / Lapis Lazuli / Long-Legged Fly / The Circus Animals= Desertion / Under Ben Bulbin

## WEEK 8: Ezra Pound, W.C. Williams, H.D., Marianne Moore

**Lecture Topics:** Modernist poetry as a counter-reaction to the dominant mode of Edwardian and Georgian poetry;  
 Imagism and Vorticism;  
 The shorter poems of Ezra Pound;  
 The widespread influence of Imagism: Imagist elements in the poetry of William Carlos Williams, H.D., Marianne Moore.

**Required Readings:** Ezra Pound Portrait d'une Femme / The Garden / Ts=ai Chi=ch / In a Station of the Metro / The River-Merchant's Wife: a Letter  
 W.C. Williams Danse Russe / The Red Wheel Barrow / Queen-Ann=s-Lace  
 / The Yachts / The Dance / Spring and All /

H[ilda] D[oolittle]  
Marianne Moore

APortrait of a Lady@  
ASea Rose@/ASea Violet@/AHelen@/AGarden@/AOread@  
APoetry@/ AThe Fish@/ AA Grave@/ What are Years?@/  
ACritics and Connoisseurs@/ AThe Mind is an Enchanting  
Thing@

**Theory:** Ezra Pound AA Retrospect@ (in T.S. Eliot, ed. Literary  
Essays of Ezra Pound)  
Ezra Pound & F.S. Flint AImagism@ (in Ellman)

**Recommended Readings:** Graham Hough AThe Modernist Lyric@(Bradbury & McFarlane)  
David Perkins AHistory of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: ATransitions and Premises@  
AThe New Poetry of America@  
AImagism@  
AEzra Pound: the Early Career@  
AThe New York Avant-Garde@  
  
Walter Sutton, ed. Ezra Pound: a Collection of Critical Essays  
Peter Wilson A Preface to Pound  
Natan Zach AImagism and Vorticism@(Bradbury & McFarlane)

## WEEK 9: The Early Eliot

**Lecture Topics:** The influence on T.S. Eliot of the French Symbolists  
(Baudelaire, Laforgue), Impressionism and the Imagism of  
Pound;  
The early nihilism of Prufrock-- 1917;  
The irony and satire of Poems-- 1920.

**Required Readings:** Jules Laforgue AEsthétique@/ ALa Mélancolie de Pierrot@/ ALa Mélancolie de  
Pierrot@ (in E30A folder)  
T.S. Eliot AThe Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock@/ APortrait of a  
Lady@/ APreludes@/ ARhapsody on a Windy Night@/  
ABurbank with a Baedeker@/ ASweeney Among the  
Nightingales@

**Theory:** Eliot ATradition and the Individual Talent@ (in Kaplan; in  
Adams)  
AHamlet and Its Problems@ (in Kaplan; in Adams)  
AThe Metaphysical Poets@ (in Selected Prose of T.S.  
Eliot)

**Recommended Readings:** C.B. Cox, et al., eds. T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land (Casebook Series)  
G.M. Hyde AThe Poetry of the City@(Bradbury & McFarlane)  
Hugh Kenner, ed. T.S. Eliot: a Collection of Critical Essays  
Graham Martin, ed. Eliot in Perspective  
A. David Moody, ed. A Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot  
David Perkins AHistory of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: AT.S. Eliot: the Early Career@  
Clive Scott AThe Prose Poem and Free Verse@(Bradbury & McFarlane)

B.C. Southam, ed. T.S. Eliot: *Prufrock*, *Gerontion*, *Ash Wednesday* and *Other Shorter Poems*. (Casebook Series)

**WEEK 10: T.S. Eliot's The Wasteland**

**Lecture Topics:** The nadir of Eliot's despair.

**Required Readings:** The Waste Land

**Recommended Readings:** Sir James Frazer The Golden Bough  
Sigmund Freud Civilisation and Its Discontents

**WEEK 11: The Later Poetry of T.S. Eliot**

**Lecture Topics:** The later religious poetry of T.S. Eliot: salvation found.

**Required Readings:** Ariel Poems (*A Journey of the Magi*, *A Marina*) / The Four Quartets: *The Dry Salvages*

**WEEK 12: Wallace Stevens**

**Lecture Topics:** The Poetry of Wallace Stevens: themes and techniques.

**Required Readings:** *The Snowman* / *The Emperor of Ice-Cream* / *Anecdote of the Jar* / *13 Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* / *The Idea of Order at Key West* / *Of Mere Being* / *The Plain Sense of Things* / *Reality is an Activity of the Most August Imagination*

**Recommended Readings:** Ellman Crasnow *Poems and Fictions: Stevens, Rilke, Valery* (Bradbury & McFarlane)

## SOME WORKS TO CONSULT

Those works which are on reserve in the library are marked **R**.

### Primary Sources:

#### *Anthologies of Poetry:*

- Frances Ferguson, et al., eds. The Norton Anthology of Poetry **R**  
 Walter Houghton, et al., eds. Victorian Poetry and Poetics **R**  
 Richard Ellmann, et al., eds. The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry **R**

#### *Relevant Philosophical and Theoretical Anthologies*

- Richard Ellman, et al., eds. The Modern Tradition **R**  
 Charles Kaplan, ed. Criticism: the Major Statements **R**  
 Hazard Adams, ed. Critical Theory Since Plato (this may also be found in the Reference Section)

#### *Some Other Seminal Statements of Modernist Literary Theory to Consult:*

- William Empson Seven Types of Ambiguity  
 I.A. Richards Practical Criticism  
 ---. Principles of Literary Criticism  
 F.R. Leavis New Bearings in English Poetry

### Secondary Sources:

#### *On Poetry in General:*

- Bach, et al. The Liberating Form  
 Paul Fussell Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (*on order*)  
 Anthony Easthope Poetry as Discourse (*on order*)  
 Timothy Steele Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter

#### *General Introductions to the Period and its Poetry:*

- Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds. Modernism, 1890-1930 **R**  
 Malcolm Bradbury The Social Context of Modern English Literature  
 Peter Nicholls Modernisms: a Literary Guide  
 David Perkins A History of Modern Poetry: from the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Vol. I) **R**  
 ---. A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After (Vol. II) (*on order*)  
 Rainer Emig Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures and Limits

#### *Critical Anthologies on Individual Poets:*

#### **Hardy**

- James Gibson, et al., eds. Thomas Hardy: Poems (Casebook Series)



**The World War I poets (Sassoon, Owen, Rosenberg)**

Dominick Hibberd                      Poetry of the First World War (Casebook Series)

**Frost**

James Cox, ed.                      Robert Frost: a Collection of Critical Essays

**Yeats**

Raymond Cowell, ed.                      Critics on Yeats

Elizabeth Cullingford, ed.                      Yeats: Poems, 1919-1935 (Casebook Series)

John Stallworthy, ed.                      Yeats: Last Poems (Casebook Series)

**Pound**

Walter Sutton, ed.                      Ezra Pound: a Collection of Critical Essays

**Eliot**

C.B. Cox, et al., eds.                      T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land (Casebook Series)

B.C. Southam, ed.                      T.S. Eliot: *A Prufrock*, *A Gerontion*, *Ash Wednesday* and Other  
Shorter Poems (Casebook Series)

Hugh Kenner, ed.                      T.S. Eliot: a Collection of Critical Essays

Graham Martin, ed.                      Eliot in Perspective

A. David Moody, ed.                      A Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot