

English 396: Honors Seminar
W 9-10:50
113 English Building

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English Avant-Gardes

This honors seminar enquires into the historical and theoretical problem of the literary avant-garde in England. It focuses on two moments: the “High Modernist” era of 1910-22 and the period from 1960-76, when English writers and artists, inspired by European and American influences, attempted to renew the modernists’ spirit of invention in art and politics. The seminar is in this sense a study of influence and revival—but it will be our job to analyze modernism, not just celebrate its persistence in the work of novelists like Ann Quinn or poet-editors like Eric Mottram. We will read theorists, such as Peter Bürger, who contrast Anglo-American “modernism” with the “historical avant-garde” of Zurich or Berlin. We will perform individual research in the Modernist Journals Project, which has created online archives of influential “little magazines” like *Blast* and *The New Age*. We will read seminal works of poetry and fiction by Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf. And we will debate—through criticism, novels and poems, and the instructor’s archival research—how and why the persistence of neo-modernist avant-gardism in England has played such a small role in the dominant literary histories.

Required Texts

The following books, which have been ordered from the Illini Union Bookstore, should be bought or borrowed by all students:

Ann Quin, *Berg*. (Dalkey Archive Press, 2001)
Virginia Woolf, *Jacob’s Room* (Oxford U.P., 2005)

With the exception of one text marked [H] (for “handout”) all other readings are available online or in the course reader. Look for a URL or for the code [CR], which refers to the Engl 396 reader, available through Notes-n-Quotes.

Reserve and Reference List

On Reserve at Undergraduate Library

Poetry Review, vol. 61 (1970) – vol. 69: 2-4 (1979-80). 808.105 POER.
James Acheson & Romana Huk, eds., *Contemporary British Poetry: Essays in Theory and Criticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996). 821.09 C7674.
Robert Hampson & Peter Barry, eds., *New British Poetries: The Scope of the Possible* (Manchester: Manchester U. P., 1993). 821.09 N428.
Romana Huk, ed., *Assembling Alternatives: Reading Postmodern Transnationally* (Middletown: Wesley U. P., 2003). 811.09 As73.

Texts in Other Libraries at UIUC

Alvin Sullivan, ed., *British Literary Magazines, vol. 4: The Modern Age, 1914-1984* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983-1986). English Reference [non-circulating]: 820.8 B7773
Frederick J. Hoffman, et al., *The Little Magazine; a History and a Bibliography*. (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1947). Rare Book & Manuscript Library [non-circulating]: BASK 050.91 H67L1947
Wyndham Lewis, ed., *Blast: Review of the Great English Vortex* (Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press, 1981). Rare Book & Manuscript Library [non-circulating]: 052 BLAFACSIM.

Required Assignments

Written Assignments

Definitional Paper on the term “Avant-Garde” (3-5 pp.)	[15% of grade]
Weekly Reading Journal Midterm Assessment	[15%]
Short Research Project on <i>The New Age</i> (3 pp.)	[10%]
Weekly Reading Journal Final Assessment	[15%]
Discussion Paper on Quin or the British Poetry Revival (6-8pp.)	[25%]

Each of these assignments will be explained in detailed handouts. All work is due on the date given on the syllabus. See the Graduate English Office for rules on EX grades.

Class Participation

I want this class to run as a weekly research colloquium, not as a lecture series that's sometimes interrupted by a student presentation. Without teaching each other, challenging each other's ideas, and listening to one another, our writing and thinking will suffer. 20% of your final grade will be assessed on an A-C-F scale that reflects whether you're a committed, mediocre, or lazy contributor to the everyday workings of our seminar. If you are shy about speaking up in class, email your thoughts to your classmates, or stop by my office hours.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You can expect me to get in touch if you miss more than a couple of classes. Missing large numbers of classes, or regularly turning up late or underprepared, will affect your class participation grade.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism—i.e., the unattributed use of another person's ideas, language, or data—is a serious ethical and methodological problem in the academic humanities. UIUC's policy on Academic Integrity is in Part IV of the *Student Code* (www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/article_1/a1_1-402.html). Penalties for plagiarism can range from a failing grade for the assignment to expulsion from the University. Please be conscientious in acknowledging any sources (especially online sources) that you consult in writing papers. For information on citing sources, see www.library.uiuc.edu/egx/guides/citation.html

Communication

If my posted office hours are inconvenient, I am happy to meet by appointment. Please contact me by email (matthart@uiuc.edu) or phone (333-4774) if you have questions about class material or an assignment, or if you encounter circumstances that might adversely affect your participation in class, such as an illness or family emergency.

Emergency Alerts

The University's emergency plan utilizes cell phones to ensure that emergency alerts reach students and staff. I will bring a charged cell phone to class in order that we may receive any necessary emergency alerts. Please turn off your cell phone or set it to silent alert for the duration of our meeting.

Calendar of Classes and Assigned Readings

W 8/29 Introductions

- Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939)
<<http://www.sharecom.ca/greenberg/kitsch.html>>

W 9/5 BLAST 1

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- *Blast* vol. 1 (1914)
<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/mjp_journals.xq>
- Mark Morrison, "Blast: An Introduction"
<<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/display.xq?docid=mjp.2005.00.097>>
- Modernist Journals Project Profile of Wyndham Lewis
<<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/pllookup.xq?id=LewisWyndham>>

W 9/12 BLAST 2

[MEET IN LINCOLN HALL 390]

- *Blast* vol. 2 (1915)
<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/mjp_journals.xq>
- Ezra Pound, "Small Magazines"
<<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/mets.xq?metsid=mjp.2005.00.091>>
- Teresa Prudente, "Italian Futurism and English Vorticism"
<<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/display.xq?docid=mjp.2005.00.094>>

W 9/19 Theories of the Avant-Garde

- Peter Burger, from *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (1984) [CR]
- Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (1968) [CR]
- Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Foreword: Theory of Modernism versus Theory of the Avant-Garde" (1984) [CR]

Definitional Paper Due W 9/26

W 9/26 Pounding BLAST

- Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly (Contacts and Life)* (1920) [CR]
- Peter Nicholls, from *Modernisms: A Literary Guide* (MacMillan, 1995) [CR]
- Mark Morrison, from *The Public Face of Modernism* (Wisconsin U. P., 2000) [CR]

W 10/3 "On or About December, 1910"

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- Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924) [CR]
- Modernist Journals Project, December 1910 Project
<<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/december1910/index.html>>

W 10/10 "Art is Significant Deformity" 1

- Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (1922)

W 10/17 "Art is Significant Deformity" 2

- Virginia Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (1922)

Reading Journal Midterm Assessment 10/24

W 10/24 The New Age

[MEET IN LINCOLN HALL 390]

- Browse in *The New Age* vols. 1-30 (1907-22)
<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/show_series.xq?id=1158589415603817>

- Robert Scholes and Staff of the MJP, "General Introduction to *The New Age*, 1907-22" <<http://dl.lib.brown.edu:8080/exist/mjp/display.xq?docid=mjp.2005.00.001>>
- Ann Ardis, from *Modernism and Cultural Conflict* (Cambridge U. P., 2002)

W/ 10/31 No class

- Individual Research on a writer, theme, or issue of *The New Age*

Research Project Due 11/7

W 11/7 The Neo Avant-Garde

- Paul Mann, from *Theory-Death of the Avant-Garde* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana U. P., 1991) [CR]
- from Dietrich Scheunemann, ed., *Avant-garde/Neo-avant-garde* (New York: Rodopi, 2006) [H]
- Hal Foster, "Who's Afraid of the Neo-Avant-Garde?," in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge: MIT / October Books, 1996)

W 11/14 A Post-War Avant-Garde English Novel?

- Ann Quin, *Berg* (1964)
- Giles Gordon, Introduction to *Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction* (London: Hutchinson, 1975) [CR]
- Karl Miller, Introduction to *Writing in England: The Last Fifteen Years* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1968) [CR]

W 11/21 Thanksgiving Break

W 11/28 The British Poetry Revival 1

- Peter Barry, from *Poetry Wars* (2006) [CR]
- Documents from the Eric Mottram Papers, King's College London (ca. 1971-78) [CR]
- Eric Mottram, "The British Poetry Revival, 1960-75" (1993) [CR]

W 12/5 The British Poetry Revival 1

- Documents from the Eric Mottram Papers, King's College London (ca. 1971-78) [CR]
- Poems by Barry MacSweeney, Bob Cobbing, Allen Fisher, and Lee Harwood [CR]

Final Paper and Reading Journal Due 12/14