

English 8378
Modern American Literature:
Faulkner and the Politics of Space
Spring 2002
W 5:30-8:30
RG Cullen 112

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Required Texts:

Anderson, Sherwood. *Winesburg, Ohio*
Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!*

As I Lay Dying

Go Down, Moses

Intruder in the Dust

The Sound and the Fury

García Marquez, Gabriel. *Leaf Storm and Other Stories.*

Hemingway, Ernest. *In Our Time.*

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye.*

Recommended:

Faulkner, William. *Collected Stories.*

Weinstein, Philip. *The Cambridge Companion to William Faulkner.*

Course Goals: This seminar will introduce students to specific questions relating to the category “modernism” primarily via the novels of William Faulkner. With regard to modernism, we will briefly take up the most traditional definitions, which see it as primarily a series of formal experiments, before turning our attention to contemporary attempts to reread the concept of modernism through various postmodern prisms. Increasingly, contemporary criticism reads questions of ideology, race, gender, and postcolonialism into the question of modernism, as with all other issues. Thus, we will attempt to put formalist and ideological readings in dialogue and debate over Faulkner’s project which often seems to audaciously presume to encompass ideology, form, race, and ultimately globalization. The goals of this process are to leave the course with a critical framework for addressing the concept of modernism, a familiarity with a decent sampling of Faulkner’s major fiction, an idea regarding current debates and key figures in Faulkner studies, and a sense of a few other contemporary issues with respect to which Faulkner’s work and Faulkner criticism are beginning to play a role.

Requirements: There will be two sets of assignments each involving both a paper and an oral presentation. The first assignment will be during the semester and will consist of the student writing a brief paper probing a particular aspect or proposing a particular interpretation of that week’s reading. The paper will be read in class as part of a panel on that week’s topic (during one of the weeks marked with an *). At the end of the semester, students will be asked to write a final paper and to present a very brief overview of their conclusions during the last class session.

Grades: midterm paper= 20%, 2 presentations=20%, final paper=60%

Attendance: Students will have a minus added to their earned final grade for every absence beginning with the fourth.

Schedule:

Unit 1 Before Faulkner

Week 1 1/15 Introductions

Week 2 1/22 Modernism: Beebe, "What Modernism Was"; Berman, "Modernity—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow"; Williams, "When Was Modernism"; Harvey, "Modernity and Modernism"; Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meaning of Modern/Modernity/Modernism"

Week 3 1/29 *Winesburg, Ohio*; Rideout, "The Simplicity of *W,O*"; Rigsbee, "The Feminine in *WO*"; Stock, "Anderson's Expressionist Art"

Week 4 2/5 *In Our Time*; Locke, "The New Negro"; Baker, from *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* *

Unit 2 Faulkner and the Politics of Space

Week 5 2/12 Faulkner, "Barn Burning," "A Rose for Emily," "That Evening Sun," "Turnabout," start *The Sound and the Fury* #

Week 6 2/19 *The Sound and the Fury*; Irwin, "Doubling and Incest"; Porter, "Faulkner's America"; Davis, "Faulkner's 'Negro'"; Lester, "Racial Awareness and Arrested Development" *

Week 7 2/26 *As I Lay Dying*; Matthews, "*AILD* in the Machine Age"

3/5 SPRING BREAK

Week 8 3/12 *Absalom, Absalom!* *

Week 9 3/19 Saldívar, "Looking for a Master Plan"; Porter, "*A, A!*: (Un)making the Father"; Godden, "*A, A!* and Faulkner's Erroneous Dating"; Ladd, "The Direction of the Howling"; start *Go Down, Moses*

Week 10 3/26 *Go Down, Moses*; Willis, "Aesthetics of the Rural Slum"; Davis, "Crying in the Wilderness"

Week 11 4/2 *Intruder in the Dust* * #

Unit 3 After Faulkner

Week 12 4/9 *Leafstorm*; Fuentes, "William Faulkner: The Novel as Tragedy"

Week 13 4/16 Cohn, "The U.S. South and Spanish America"; Kanafani, *What is Left for You*

Week 14 4/23 Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

5/2 Final Papers Due

* By the beginning of class on Wednesday 1/29, sign up to give a short paper in class on one of these dates or find a classmate to present a paper with you on any alternative day.

An (optional) extra session will be arranged on the weekend following these two classes in order to screen and discuss the films *Today We Live* and *Intruder in the Dust*.