

ENG 474 THE MODERN EUROPEAN NOVEL: The Postmodern Novel.

Tus./Thur. 2:15-3:30 Instructor: Lee Foust tel: (055) 831-6086 e-mail: foustclementi@aliceposta.it

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Through the close examination of the exemplary postmodern texts and films listed below we will seek to describe, define, and thus understand just exactly what makes up a “postmodern European novel.” Side by side with our close reading and class discussions of these texts and films, students will be asked to give and pay close attention to a series of short oral reports on the authors, techniques, forms, and critical stances that are associated with what Jean-François Lyotard has called “*The Postmodern Condition*.”

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Beyond regular attendance, participation in the class discussions, and the completion of the requisite reading, students will be expected to present one of the oral reports listed on the calendar below. The written work will consist of a short paper dealing with one of the novels that we study, plus a longer term paper which perhaps compares two or more novels, explores a novel outside of our reading list, or examines a current of literary criticism, a sub-genre, or a historical topic related to the modern European novel. The short paper (3-5 pp.) will spring, hopefully, from our class discussions and will be due no later than one week after we have finished discussing the novel upon which you choose to write. The term paper (7-10 pp.) may come out of the research that you do for your oral report or rise from a particular point of interest that springs from the reading that we do this semester. The due dates of these projects are marked on the syllabus with a ☞.

Grades will be based on the written work and the oral presentation, with positive or negative considerations for attendance and participation in the class discussions.

A NOTE ON METHOD:

I do not believe that I (or anyone else) can coerce or cajole anyone into “learning.” Rather I believe that intellectual progress is made by the discussion and sharing of ideas and interpretations. Therefor this course will be conducted as a seminar totally dependent upon your individual contributions and courtesy. Obviously then it is absolutely necessary that each of you take control of your own education not only for your own sakes, but also in accordance with your responsibility to the rest of us participating in this class. You must both keep up with the reading and begin the process of digesting the material by coming to class with something either to say or ask about it. I strongly recommend that you take notes while reading with both questions and observations and that you come to class prepared to challenge and/or benefit from the group’s discussion. You cannot depend on me to lecture on material you have not read, nor will I accept the role of monitor for your reading or policeman for discourtesy to the class during the discussions. Concerns of this kind should be voiced and dealt with by the community during the class sessions. Remember that I am only one in a group of people here to explore and learn from this very interesting group of texts. That said, I am extremely available both in class and out to offer my expertise and experience to help you digest and write about this material. (I also have a lot of experience living, studying, and now teaching here in Florence and I offer a sympathetic ear to culture shock concerns as well!) Though I have no official office hours I’m always available for private conferences and very open during the in-class discussions to address both our method and the material of our study if the group as a whole is in agreement as to the utility and feasibility of changing them. All of this is said and done to clarify from the start my particular approach--based on the assumption that we are each mutually dependent individuals demanding of respect and ultimately responsible for our own intellectual progress--and to allow the greatest flexibility in our proceeding so that the most appropriate and useful materials and methods are addressed in this course.

CALENDAR:

Jan 7: Course Presentation and choosing of oral reports.

Jan 9: Italo Calvino, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
Chapters 1 & 2 and the novels attached to them.

Jan 14: Italo Calvino, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
Chapters 3 & 4 and the novels attached to them.
Oral Report: Italo Calvino

Jan 16: Italo Calvino, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
Chapters 5 & 6 and the novels attached to them.
Oral report: James Joyce and the Post-modern European Novel

Jan 21: Italo Calvino, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
Chapters 7 & 8 and the novels attached to them.
Oral report: Umberto Eco's postmodern novels

Jan 23: Italo Calvino, *If on A Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
Chapters 9 & 10 and the novels attached to them, 11 & 12.
Oral report: Postmodern architecture

Jan 28: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 1
Oral report: Georges Perec

☞ Jan 30: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 2 (Papers on Calvino due.)
Oral Report: Raymond Queneau and Pataphysics

Feb 4: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 3
Oral Report: OuLiPo

Feb 6: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 4
Oral Report: The French *Nouveau Roman*

Feb 11: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 5
Oral Report: Gaston Bachelard and *The Poetics of Space*

Feb 13: Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978) Part 6
Oral Report: Postmodern theory: Jean Baudrillard

Feb 18: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979)
"The Bloody Chamber"
Oral Report: Angela Carter

☞ Feb 20: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979) (Papers on Perec due.)
"The Courtship of Mr. Lyon," "The Tiger's Bride" and "Puss-In-Boots"
Oral Report: Female postmodern and (re)writing: Kathy Acker

Feb 25: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979)
"The Erl-King," "The Snow Child" and "The Lady in the House of Love"
Oral Report: Cixous, Kristeva, Irigaray and "*l'écriture féminine*"

Feb 27: Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber* (1979)
"The Werewolf," "The Company of Wolves" and "Wolf-Alice"
Oral Report: Postmodern visual art

March 4: Angela Carter, *The Company of Wolves* (Radio Play—1979-1984?)
Oral Report: Postmodern film

March 6: Angela Carter, *The Company of Wolves* (Screen Play—1984)

☞ March 11: Angela Carter, *The Company of Wolves* (Film—1984) (Papers on Carter due.)

- March 13: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) Parts One & Two
 Oral report: Milan Kundera
- ☞ March 18: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) Parts Three & Four
 (Papers on Carter's adaptations due.)
 Oral Report: Prophet of the postmodern condition: Fredric Jameson
- March 20: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) Part Five
 Oral Report: Language *qua* language: Samuel Beckett
- March 25: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984) Parts Six & Seven
 Oral Report: Books *qua* books: John Fowles
- March 27: Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Film—1988)
- April 1: Peter Handke, *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972) Part One "The Short Letter"
 Oral Report: Peter Handke
- ☞ April 3: Peter Handke, *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972) Part Two "The Long Farewell"
 (Papers on Kundera due)
 Oral Report: American postmodern: Don DeLillo
- April 8: Peter Handke, *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972)
- April 10: Peter Handke, *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972) / Summation of course
- ☞ Final Exam: Make-up class (If necessary.) Term project due. (Papers on Handke due.)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Italo Calvino, *If on a Winter's Night A Traveler* (1979)
 Georges Perec, *Life, A User's Manual* (1978)
 Angela Carter, *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979)
 *Angela Carter, *The Company of Wolves* (Radio Play—1979-1984? & Screen Play—1984)
 Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)
 *Peter Handke, *Short Letter, Long Farewell* (1972)

All of the above texts (except*) are available at **Paperback Exchange**, Via Fiesolana, 31r. Tel: 055/2478154.

The two adaptations of Angela Carter's *The Company of Wolves* and Peter Handke's *Short Letter, Long Farewell* are available in photocopies at **Copisteria X**, Via Guelfa No 3r. Tel: 055/215367.