

## E30A Twentieth Century Poetry: 1890-1945

**Lecturer:** Richard Clarke  
**Prerequisite:** A pass in E20A Poetry I and/or E20B Poetry II.  
**Contact hours:** Two 1.5-hour seminars per week (Tu and Thurs 1.30 - 3.30pm)

This course offers a broad survey of modern poetry written in the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. from about 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.) as well as the 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 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. To this end, we will consider the impact upon the poetry of some or all of the following: 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 rise of the women's movement, the Harlem Renaissance, etc.

To these ends, we will concentrate upon the following particularly influential poets: Thomas Hardy, Robert Frost, W.B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Hilda Doolittle, Marianne Moore, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen.

Appropriate selections by all these poets may be found in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry, and The Norton Anthology of African American Literature. **Please look elsewhere for and copy for yourself those very few poems listed below which are not to be found in either of those volumes.** You should try to read ahead of class all the poems by a given poet to be found in your anthology but you should concentrate in particular upon those poems which I have listed below under the rubric **Required Readings**. You would also benefit from a careful reading of those suggestions listed under the rubric **Poetics/Philosophy** which have been chosen for the light which they shed on the required readings.

**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)  
 Richard Gray American Poetry of the Twentieth Century

**Assessment:** 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 Topics:

The socio-historical context: the period 1890-1945 in the U.K. and the U.S.A.;

Modernism: ideological features; literary and artistic currents;

The rise of Feminism;

The Harlem Renaissance: African Americans and the period 1919-1940.

The Romantic legacy--e.g. Keats;

Late Victorian poetry--e.g. Hopkins;

### Required Readings:

John Keats                    Ode to a Nightingale

G. M. Hopkins God's Grandeur

### Recommended Readings:

F.E. Halliday                England: a Concise History:  
Ch. 17-19

C.G. Sellers                A Synopsis of American History: Vol. II: Since the Civil War  
Chapters 21-26

Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane    Modernism:  
Bradbury & McFarlane The Name and Nature of Modernism

Alan Bullock The Double Image

## WEEK 2: THOMAS HARDY'S POETRY

### Discussion Topics:

Minor British poetry of the Edwardian era: e.g. the narrative realism of Rudyard Kipling's Barrack-Room Ballads / Craftsmen of the Beautiful and the Agreeable= like Robert Bridges and Walter de la Mare;

Themes and techniques of Hardy's poetry.

### Required Readings:

Thomas Hardy Hap / Neutral Tones / I Look into my Glass / Drummer Hodge / AA Broken Appointment / The Darkling Thrush / The Ruined Maid / The Convergence of the Twain / Channel Firing / Under the

Waterfall@ / AThe Voice@ / ADuring Wind and Rain@ / AIn Time of >The  
Breaking of Nations=@ / AAfterwards@

**Recommended Readings:**

James Gibson et al., eds. [Thomas Hardy: Poems](#)  
David Perkins [A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: AThomas Hardy@ \(Ch. 8\)](#)  
Mervyn Williams [A Preface to Hardy](#)

**WEEK 3: WORLD WAR I POETS / ROBERT FROST-S POETRY**

**Discussion Topics:**

British poetry of the Georgian era: e.g. Rupert Brooke;  
British and American poetry of World War I;  
Characteristics themes and techniques of the American poet Robert Frost.

**Required Readings:**

Siegfried Sassoon [A>They=@ / AThe General@ / AEveryone Sang@ / AChrist and the Soldier@](#)  
Wilfred Owen [AAnthem 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](#)  
Richard Gray [American Poetry of the Twentieth Century:](#) [AIn Search of a Past ...@](#)  
Dominick Hibberd, ed. [Poetry of the First World War \(Casebook Series\)](#)  
David Perkins [A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I:](#)  
[ARobert Frost@ \(Ch. 11\)](#)  
[APoetry of World War I@ \(Ch. 13\)](#)  
John Silkin [Out of Battle: the Poetry of the Great War](#)

**WEEK 4: THE EARLY YEATS: 1890-1914**

**Discussion Topics:**

Poetic movements of the Fin de siècle (Aestheticism, Decadence, Symbolism, Impressionism) and  
their influence upon Yeats;  
Yeats=s 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).  
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@](#)

**Poetics/Philosophy:**

ASymbol as Revelation@ (in E30A folder; in Richard Ellman, et al., eds. The Modern Tradition)  
(called elsewhere AThe Symbolism of Poetry@)

AThe Courage of the Artist@ (in E30A folder; in Ellman at al.)

**Recommended Readings:**

Richard Ellman The Identity of Yeats  
C. 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 (especially chs. 2, 3, 4)  
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 5: THE MATURE POETRY OF W.B. YEATS: 1915-1928

### Discussion 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:

AThe Wild Swans at Coole@ / AAn Irish Airman Foresees His Death@ / AEaster 1916" / AThe  
Second Coming@ / ASailing to Byzantium@ / ALeda and the Swan@ / AAmong School Children@  
AByzantium@

### Poetics/Philosophy:

AThe Anti-Self@ (in E30A folder; in Ellman at al.)  
AHistory as Symbolic Reality@ (in E30A folder; in Ellman et al.)

## WEEK 6: THE LAST POEMS WRITTEN BY W.B. YEATS: 1929-1939

### Discussion 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:

ACrazy Jane Talks with the Bishop@ / ALapis Lazuli@ / ALong-Legged Fly@ / AThe Circus Animals=  
Desertion@ / AUnder Ben Bulbin@

## WEEK 7: IMAGISM--POUND / WILLIAMS / H.D. / MARIANNE MOORE

### Discussion Topics:

Characteristically >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,



ed. Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot--on reserve; also in Kaplan, and in Adams)

^Hamlet and Its Problems@ (extracted in E30A Folder; in Kermode; in Kaplan; in Adams)

^The Metaphysical Poets@ (extracted in E30A Folder; in Kermode; in Kaplan; in Adams)

**Recommended Readings:**

Harriet Davidson	<u>T. S. Eliot</u>
G.M. Hyde	^The Poetry of the City@(Bradbury & McFarlane)
Hugh Kenner, ed.	<u>T.S. Eliot: a Collection of Critical Essays</u>
Graham Martin, ed.	<u>Eliot in Perspective</u>
A. David Moody, ed.	<u>A Cambridge Companion to T.S. Eliot</u>
David Perkins	<u>A History of Modern Poetry, Vol. I: T.S. Eliot: the Early Career@</u>
Clive Scott	^The Prose Poem and Free Verse@(Bradbury & McFarlane)
B.C. Southam, ed.	<u>T.S. Eliot: ^Prufrock@ ^Gerontion@ ^Ash Wednesday and Other Shorter Poems</u> (Casebook Series)
Erik Svarney	^The Men of 1914': T. S. Eliot and Early Modernism
Ronald Tamplin	<u>A Preface to TS Eliot</u>

## WEEK 9: T.S. ELIOT=S THE WASTELAND

**Discussion Topics:**

The nadir of Eliot=s despair.

**Required Readings:**

The Waste Land

**Poetics/Philosophy:**

Matthew Arnold	<u>Culture and Anarchy</u> (on reserve)
T.S. Eliot	^From <u>Notes Towards the Definition of Culture@</u> (in Kermode)
C.	^Ulysses, Order and Myth@ (in Kermode)
Sir James Frazer	<u>The Golden Bough</u>

**Recommended Readings:**

C.B. Cox, et al., eds.	<u>T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land</u> (Casebook Series)
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## WEEK 10: THE LATER POETRY OF T.S. ELIOT

**Discussion Topics:**

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

**Required Readings:**

Ariel Poems (^Journey of the Magi@, ^Marina@) / The Four Quartets: ^The Dry Salvages@

**Poetics/Philosophy:**

T.S. Eliot	^Religion and Literature@ (in Kermode)
C.	^From <u>The Idea of a Christian Society@</u> (in Kermode)

## WEEK 11: W. H. AUDEN / DYLAN THOMAS

**Discussion Topics:**

British poetry of the 1930's.

**Required Readings:**

Auden	As I Walked Out One Evening@/ ALullaby [Lay Your Sleeping Head My Love]@/ ASpain 1937@/ AMusée des Beaux Arts@/ AIn Memory of W.B. Yeats@/ AIn Praise of Limestone@/ AThe Shield of Achilles@
Thomas	AThe Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower@/ AThe Hand That Signed the Paper@/ AAfter the Funeral@/ AThe Hunchback in the Park@/ AA Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London@/ AFern Hill@/ AIn my Craft and Sullen Art@/ ADo Not Go Gentle into That Good Night@

**Poetics/Philosophy:**

Auden APoetry as a Game of Knowledge@ (in Ellman, et al.)

**Recommended Readings:**

Ronald Carter, ed. [Thirties Poets: >The Auden Group<](#)

**WEEK 12: CLAUDE McKAY / LANGSTON HUGHES / COUNTEE CULLEN****Discussion Topics:**

Euro-American society and African American culture;  
The poetry of the Harlem Renaissance, 1919-1940.

**Required Readings:**

Claude McKay Selection in Gates, et al., eds. [The Norton Anthology of African American Literature](#)

Langston Hughes Selection in Gates, et al.

Countee Cullen Selection in Gates, et al.

**Poetics/Philosophy:**

Du Bois, W.E.B.	AOf Our Spiritual Strivings@ and AThe Concept of Race@ (in E30A folder; in David Levering Lewis, ed. <a href="#">W.E.B. Du Bois: a Reader</a> )
Locke, Alain	AThe New Negro@ (in E30A folder; in Gates, et al.)
Garvey, Marcus	ADeclaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World@ (in E30A folder; in Van Deburg, ed. <a href="#">Modern Black Nationalism</a> )
Hughes, Langston	AThe Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain@ (in E30A folder; in Van Deburg; also in Gates, et al.)

**Recommended Readings:**

Houston Baker, Jr. [Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance](#)  
 Eugenia Collier AI Do Not Marvel, Countee Cullen@ (in Donald Carter, ed. [Modern Black Poets](#))  
 James Emmanuel AChrist in Alabama: Religion in the Poetry of Langston Hughes@ (in Donald Carter, ed. [Modern Black Poets](#))  
 Henry Louis Gates, et al. [The Norton Anthology of African American Literature](#): Introduction to AHarlem Renaissance, 1919-1940@ pp. 929-936  
 Donald Gibson AThe Good Black Poet and the Good Gray Poet: the Poetry of Hughes and Whitman@ (in Donald Carter, ed. [Modern Black Poets](#))  
 Dudley Randall AThe Black Aesthetic in the Thirties, Forties, and Fifties@ (in Donald Carter, ed. [Modern Black Poets](#))  
 J. Saunders Redding AThe New Negro Poet in the Twenties@ (in Donald Carter, ed. [Modern Black Poets](#))  
 Jean Wagner chapter 5 AThe Negro Renaissance@ in [Black Poets of the United States](#)  
 C. chapters 6, 8, 10 on McKay, Cullen, and Hughes in [Black Poets of the United States](#)

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN READING EACH POEM

### Content

- 1) Paraphrase the poem as it develops step by step. What form does this development take? Does the poem consist in a logical argument? An attempt to persuade? A description?
- 2) Summarise the main theme(s) (what Ransom calls the >logical core=<) of the poem in one sentence or less.
- 3) Is there an identifiable voice in the poem? Who is speaking? What is the tone adopted by this voice?
- 4) Is the speaker in the poem the poet? If so what does the poem reveal about the poet?
- 5) Does the poem provide any clues as to the identity of the audience addressed by the speaker? What effect is the poem designed to have upon the reader? Is the poem designed to appeal to the reader's intellect or his/her emotions?

### Form (aspects of what Ransom called the >local texture= of the poem)

- 6) What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
- 7) Does the poem have an identifiable metre/rhythm?
- 8) Does the poem have a particular stanzaic structure?
- 9) Does the poem belong to an identifiable genre? If so, is it a lyric poem as opposed to an epic poem? If so, what kind of lyric poem is it? A sonnet? An ode? What are the characteristics of the genre in question?
- 10) Discuss the diction of the poem by examining the imagery employed by the poet: identify examples of metaphor, simile, metonymy, personification, if any, and show how these contribute to the meaning of the poem which you discussed above.
- 11) Identify examples of paradox, hyperbole, litotes, irony, allusions, etc., if any, and show how these contribute to the meaning of the poem which you discussed above.
- 12) Does the poem contain any examples of symbolism? If so, what is the meaning of the symbols you have identified? To what end are symbols used here?
- 13) Identify examples of alliteration and assonance in the poem, if any, and show how these contribute to the meaning of the poem which you discussed above.
- 14) Is a discussion of the form of a poem separable from that of the content of a poem and vice versa?

### Relevant Theoretical Works to Consult

- 1) John Crowe Ransom Criticism as Pure Speculation (in Charles Kaplan, ed. Criticism: the Major Statements)
- 2) Aristotle Poetics (can also be found in Charles Kaplan, ed. Criticism: the Major Statements)
- 3) Alastair Fowler Kinds of Literature
- 4) Bert Bach et al., eds. The Liberating Form
- 5) Laurence Perrine, et al., eds. Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense

## TERM PAPER

Answer **ONE** (1) of the following questions:

- 1) Hardy is a transitional figure in the history of British poetry. Do you agree with this assessment? If so, why?
- 2) To what extent would you agree with the view that much of Robert Frost's poetry is devoted to "unsaying" the Romantics?
- 15) Through close reference to the poetry of any of the World War I poets which you have studied this semester, discuss the view that their poems represent, in terms of both subject and form, a grotesque parody of established Romantic norms.

**Firm Deadline:** 5 pm, Thursday November 4, 1999

**Word Limit:** 2,500 - 3,500 words

*STUDENTS ARE REMINDED THAT THEY ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A RESEARCH PAPER SET OUT IN FACULTY PAMPHLET ON ESSAY WRITING AND THE MLA HANDBOOK. SEE IN THIS REGARD THE ESSAY WRITING GUIDE TO BE FOUND IN THE E30A FOLDER.*

## SOME WORKS TO CONSULT

**R**-- on reserve

**REF B** in reference section

### Primary Sources:

#### *Anthologies of Poetry:*

Frances Ferguson, et al., eds.	<u>The Norton Anthology of Poetry</u>	<b>R</b>
Richard Ellmann, et al., eds.	<u>The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry</u>	<b>R</b>
Henry Louis Gates, et al. eds.	<u>The Norton Anthology of African American Literature</u>	<b>R</b>
	(also <b>REF</b> )	

#### *Relevant Philosophical and Theoretical Anthologies*

Richard Ellman, et al., eds.	<u>The Modern Tradition</u>	<b>R</b>
Charles Kaplan, ed.	<u>Criticism: the Major Statements</u>	<b>R</b>
Hazard Adams, ed.	<u>Critical Theory Since Plato</u>	
		<b>REF</b>
William Van deBurg, ed.	<u>Modern Black Nationalism</u>	<b>R</b>

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

Matthew Arnold	<u>Culture and Anarchy</u>	<b>R</b>
Frank Kermode, ed.	<u>Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot</u>	<b>R</b>
William Empson	<u>Seven Types of Ambiguity</u>	
I.A. Richards	<u>Practical Criticism</u>	
---	<u>Principles of Literary Criticism</u>	
F.R. Leavis	<u>New Bearings in English Poetry</u>	

### Secondary Sources:

#### *On Poetry in General:*

	<u>The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics</u>	<b>REF</b>
Bach, et al.	<u>The Liberating Form</u>	
Anthony Easthope	<u>Poetry as Discourse (on order)</u>	
Paul Fussell	<u>Poetic Meter and Poetic Form (on order)</u>	
Timothy Steele	<u>Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter</u>	

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

Malcolm Bradbury	<u>The Social Context of Modern English Literature</u>	
Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds.	<u>Modernism, 1890-1930</u>	<b>R</b>
Rainer Emig	<u>Modernism in Poetry: Motivations, Structures and Limits</u>	
Richard Gray	<u>American Poetry of the Twentieth Century</u>	<b>R</b>

F.E. Halliday	<u>England: a Concise History</u>	<b>R</b>
Peter Nicholls	<u>Modernisms: a Literary Guide</u>	
David Perkins	<u>A History of Modern Poetry: from the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode (Vol. I)</u>	<b>R</b>
---	<u>A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After (Vol. II)</u> ( <i>on order</i> )	
C.G. Sellers	<u>A Synopsis of American History: Since the Civil War</u>	<b>R</b>
Douglas Tallack	<u>Twentieth Century America: the Intellectual and Cultural Context</u>	

*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: APrufrock@, AGerontion@, 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

**Auden and Thomas**

Ronald Carter, ed. Thirties Poets: >The Auden Group=

**McKay, Hughes, Cullen (The Harlem Renaissance)**

Jean Wagner Black Poets of the United States

Donald Carter, ed. Modern Black Poets