English 564.04: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group

M and W 9:30 –11:18
Professor Thomas Davis
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 3:30 – 4:30 or by appointment

Required Texts:

Virginia Woolf:       *Jacob’s Room*
                         *Mrs. Dalloway*
                         *To the Lighthouse*
                         *Orlando*
                         *The Years*
                         *Three Guineas*

E.M. Forster:          *Passage to India*

Other readings available via Carmen

Course Goals and Aims:

1. Over the next ten weeks we will gain a reasonably comprehensive history of the literary, art historical, political, and cultural contributions of Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group.

2. Because many of these texts are highly innovative and rather difficult, much of the class will be spent expanding and refining our critical reading practices. We will be concerned with how these texts generate meaning, not just deciphering their “message.” Part of this interpretive procedure will require us to think through the same problems that vexed Woolf and her cohorts in the first half of the 20th century: the relationship of art and politics; the historicity of literature; the social function of the intellectual and the artist.

3. Students will contribute heavily to the class in a variety of formats: class discussion, blog entries, a passage preparation exercise, and written work.

Course Requirements and Policies:

Grades: Final grades will be determined by the student’s performance in the following areas: class participation, blog entries, a passage preparation, and two essays, one shorter (3-4 pages) and one longer (6-8 pages).
Class Preparation and Participation (15%): All students must come prepared to class having read and thought about the assigned texts. Students will be evaluated on how actively they participate and how engaged they are in the class.

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at each class session. Students are allowed to miss 2 classes without penalty. Each additional absence will result in a reduction of student’s final grade by one step (that is, with 3 absences, an A becomes an A-; with 4, a B+). Any student missing more than 5 classes will automatically fail. All late arrivals and early departures will result in a reduction of your participation grade by one step and will be regarded as an absence. The student remains responsible for any information or assignments given out during missed classes. If you arrive to class without the assigned materials, you will be counted as absent (you cannot participate or follow the discussion without the texts). In addition, I ask that you please turn off all cell phones, Blackberries, iPhones, and any other electronic devices. Failure to comply with this policy will result in half of a letter grade penalty per instance.

Blog Entries (15% of grade): Students will receive full credit after five postings (initiating a topic or replying). This is a relatively open, free space for discussion and thought. I will occasionally offer prompts, but this is your space to think about what we do in class or draw connections between our discussions and other things. Find the blog at: woolfandbloomsbury.wordpress.com. Please be respectful of all ideas posted and discussed.

Passage Preparation (15% of grade): Students will work in pairs and will prepare a passage for discussion and analysis. The presentation might perform a close reading of a particular passage (or set of passages), trace a set of thematic or formal concerns, or draw our attention to something particularly interesting or problematic in the text and help us work through it.

Select your top three choices and submit by the end of the first class.

Midterm Essay (20% of grade): An essay of 3–4 pages that addresses one or two of the texts covered through week 5. No research required for this essay.

Final Essay (35% of grade): The final essay will be a researched argument of 6 – 8 pages in length. You may write on any of the texts covered in class. If you wish to work on a text not on the syllabus, please consult with me first. I will distribute a handout after midterm with all of the specifications and requirements. It is essential that you hand in your papers on time. No late work is accepted.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is the representation of another's work or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of suspected plagiarism, in accordance with university rules, will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If you have any questions about what may or may not constitute plagiarism, feel free to contact me and discuss it.
Disability and Accommodation:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Special health provision
The university has created a website (http://flu.osu.edu/) that contains information about the H1N1 flu virus, including prevention, vaccination, transmission, symptoms, treatment, and coursework accommodations should you have to miss class. Please be conscientious of your health, your peers’ health, and your academic work as we enter the flu season. Should health concerns arise, feel free to talk to or email me.

Reading Calendar:

Week One: Bloomsbury Modernism: 1910 and After
M 29: Introduction.
W 31: Roger Fry: “The French Post-Impressionists”
     Desmond McCarthy: “The Post-Impressionists”
     Reviews of The Post-Impressionist Show
     V. Woolf: “The Mark on the Wall,” and “Solid Objects” (PDF on Carmen)

Week Two: Towards a New Novel: War and Form.
M 5: Woolf: Jacob’s Room and “Modern Fiction” (Carmen)
W 7: Woolf: Jacob’s Room

Week Three: The Metropolis and Mental Life
M 12: Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway and “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (Carmen)
W 14: Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway and Georg Simmel “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (Carmen)

Week Four: Formalism and Tragic Modernism
M 19: Woolf: To the Lighthouse
W 21: Woolf: To the Lighthouse

Week Five: Imperial Bloomsbury?
M 26: L. Woolf: “Short Stories,” Roger Fry “Negro Art” (Carmen) and M. Torgovnick from Gone Primitive (Carmen)
W 28: Forster: Passage to India

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE FRIDAY the 30th by 5pm in Carmen Dropbox

Week Six: Imperial Bloomsbury? (II)
M 3: Forster: Passage to India
W 5: Woolf: Orlando and “Thunder at Wembley” (Carmen)

Week Seven: History and Biography in a Different Key
M 10: Woolf: Orlando and “Street Haunting” (Carmen)
W 12: Woolf: Orlando

Week Eight: Everyday Life and Disastrous History
M 17: Woolf: The Years and H. Lefebvre on Everyday Life (Carmen)
W 19: Woolf: The Years

Week Nine: Anticipations of War
M 24: Woolf: The Years
W 26: Woolf: Three Guineas (excerpt, on Carmen) and “A Sketch of the Past” (Carmen)

Week Ten: In Retrospect
M 31: NO CLASS
W 2: Conclusions