

Course Syllabus

Course Information

<i>Course Number/Section</i>	HUSL 6312 Section 501
<i>Course Title</i>	T. S. Eliot and William Carlos Williams: Dueling Modernists
<i>Term</i>	spring 2012
<i>Days & Times</i>	M, 7 - 9:45 PM

Professor Contact Information

<i>Professor</i>	Milton Cohen
<i>Office Phone</i>	972-883-2029
<i>Email Address</i>	mcohen@utdallas.edu
<i>Office Location</i>	JO 5.518
<i>Office Hours</i>	M, 6-7 PM, W 12-1 PM

Course Description

"*The Waste Land* wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it and our brave sallies into the unknown turned to dust. . . .

I felt at once that it had set me back twenty years, and I'm sure it did. Critically, Eliot returned us to the classroom just at the moment when I felt that we were on the point of an escape to matters much closer to the essence of a new art form itself—rooted in the locality which should give it fruit. I knew at once that in certain ways I was most defeated. . . . I had to watch him carry my world off with him, the fool, to the enemy."

(*The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* 174)

Eliot sniffed back that Williams was a poet "of some local interest, perhaps." Intensely personal as this feud was (on Williams's side), it points a major fissure in modernist poetry between, on one side, Pound and Eliot, whose work drew globally on past cultures, and, on the other, poets like Williams and Cummings whose poetry emphasized immediate experience, did not require footnotes and historical erudition to read, and, in Williams's case, was "rooted in the locality."

Ironically, at the time of *The Waste Land*, Williams had far more in common with Eliot than he realized. Both were profoundly affected by modernist art and philosophy of the preceding generation. Both were close friends of Ezra Pound, the lynchpin, propagandist, and chief dynamo of poetic innovation in their generation. And both were radically restructuring poetic form at the same time, though in different ways. Their real divergence came later.

This semester we shall study both sides of the fissure: contrasts and the parallels in the poetry and theory of two poets who were two of the most influential of the 20th century.

Required Textbooks (note changes from earlier on-line syllabus)

T. S. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (Harcourt)
---, *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot*, Frank Kermode, ed. (Harcourt)
Lyndall Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (Norton)

William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, ed. MacGowan and Litz,
 Vol. 1: 1909-1939 (New Directions)
 Vol. 2: 1939-1962 "

---, *The William Carlos Williams Reader* , ed. M. L. Rosenthal (New Directions)

Herbert Leibowitz, *Something Urgent I Have to Say to You": The Life and Works of William Carlos Williams* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux)

Course Requirements

Students will give an oral report lasting about 45 minutes (20% of grade) and write a research paper of about 15 pages (60%). Class participation is important and counts about 20% .

Early in the semester, students who have not taken my graduate courses previously should submit a one-page sample of their academic writing. All students should meet with me by the third week of the semester to discuss their oral reports and research projects.

Assignments

Date due **Topic / Reading**
 (note: since most of Williams' poems are brief and less challenging to read than Eliot's, I'm assigning many more of WCW's than we'll have time to discuss in class to suggest the range of his topics, themes, and styles.)

1/23 Introduction to course

I. Early Promise and Success: 1910-1922

1/30 Eliot, from *Prufrock—1917*
 "Preludes"
 "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
 "Hysteria"

Eliot biography, pp.

oral report:

2/06 Eliot, from *Poems—1920*
 "Sweeney Among the Nightingales"
 "Whispers of Immortality"
 "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar"
 "Gerontion"

from *Selected Prose*

"Tradition and the Individual Talent"

"Reflections on Verse Libre"

"The Perfect Critic"

Eliot biography, pp

oral report:

2/13

Williams: 1914 – 1921

"Rendezvous"

"Pastoral 1" (cf., "Pastoral" p. 70)

"Grotesque"

"The Young Housewife"

"Tract"

"Dance Russe"

"Portrait of a Women in Bed"

"Spring Strains"

"Love Song" (107; cf., first version, 53)

"Portrait of a Lady"

"Overture to a Dance of Locomotives"

"Complaint"

"Queen-Anne's-Lace"

"The Great Figure"

Williams biography, pp.

oral report:

II. Breakthroughs

2/20

Eliot, 1922-25

The Waste Land (1922) (see also *The Waste Land Manuscript* on reserve)

from *Selected Prose*:

"The Metaphysical Poets"

"The Function of Criticism"

"*Ulysses*, Order and Myth"

Eliot biography, pp

oral report:

2/27 *The Waste Land* (continued)
 "The Hollow Men"

Eliot biography, pp

oral report:

3/05 Williams, 1923 - early 1930s
 Spring and all (complete)

Williams and Objectivism

"Poem" ("As the cat")

"Flowers by the Sea" (both versions: pp. 352 & 378)

"The Locust Tree in Flower" (both versions: pp. 366-67 and 379)

"Nantucket" (cf., "Love Song" p. 79)

"Between Walls"

"The Attic Which is Desire"

"The Trees"

"The Wind Increases"

"Rain"

"Death"

"The Botticellian Trees"

"This is Just to Say"

"The Catholic Bells"

"The Girl with Big Breasts" (cf. earlier version in notes)

"Classic Scene"

"The Return to Work"

Williams biography, pp.

oral report:

3/12 Spring Break

III. Conversions and Ideologies: late 1920s – 1930s

3/19 Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism
 "Ash Wednesday" (1930)

from *Selected Prose*

"Religion and Literature"

“The Idea of a Christian Society”

Eliot biography, pp.

oral report:

3/26

Williams: proletarian or humanitarian?

"Impromptu: The Suckers"

“To Elsie”

"The Men"

"A Foot-Note"

"The Sun Bathers"

"An Early Martyr"

"Item"

"To a Poor Old Woman"

"Late for Summer Weather"

"Proletarian Portrait"

"The Raper from Passenack"

"The Yachts"

"A Poem for Norman MacLeod"

"The Poor" (p. 452)

"The Halfworld"

Williams biography, pp.

oral report:

IV. Writing in Other Genres

4/02

Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*

Eliot biography, pp.

oral report:

from *The William Carlos Williams Reader*

Kora in Hell (sample)

stories tba

---, *White Mule* (chapters 1-2)

Williams biography, pp.

oral report:

IV. Second Surge: 1940s – 1950s

- 4/09 Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "Burnt Norton," "East Coker,"
Eliot biography, pp
oral report:
- 4/16 Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "The Dry Salvages," "Little Gidding"
Eliot biography, pp.
oral report:
- 4/23 Williams and Paterson
"Paterson" (*CP I*, p. 263)
"Paterson: the Falls" (in *CP II*, p. 57)
Paterson: all selections (from *The WCW Reader*)
Williams biography, pp.
oral report:
- 4/30 Williams, from late poems 1944 – 1962 **RESEARCH PAPER DUE**
"Raleigh Was Right" (both versions)
"The Pink Church"
"The Dance" (cf. "The Wedding Dance in the Open Air" p. 390)
"Rhumba! Rhumba!"
"The Hard Core of Beauty"
"The Descent"
"The Pink Locust"
"Asphodel, That Greeny Flower"
"Self-Portrait"
"Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"
(cf. Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts"—handout)
"The Parable of the Blind"
"The Dance" ("When the snow falls")
Williams biography, pp.
oral report:

Suggested Readings on Eliot and Williams (*on reserve at McDermott Library)

Eliot

*Ronald Bush, *T. S. Eliot: A Study in Character and Style*

Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*

*B. C. Southam, *A Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*

Harold Bloom, *T. S. Eliot: Modern Critical Views*

Grover Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays*

*T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts*

Calvin Bedient, *He Do the Police in Different Voices: The Waste Land and Its Protagonists*

Michael North, ed., *The Waste Land: an authoritative text, contexts, criticism*

Elizabeth Schneider, *T. S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet*

William Chance, *The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot*

Kenneth Asher, *T. S. Eliot and Ideology*

Williams

**The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*

*William Carlos Williams, *I Wanted to Write a Poem*

[for WCW in the 1930s] Milton A. Cohen, *Beleaguered Poets and Leftist Critics: Stevens, Frost, Cummings and Williams in the 1930s*, Williams chapter

*William Marling, *William Carlos Williams and the Painters, 1909-1923*

Bram Dijkstra, *The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech: Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams*

Linda Wagner-Martin, *Interviews with William Carlos Williams*

on both

*Louis Simpson, *Three on the Tower: The Lives and Works of Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Williams Carlos Williams*

Course Policies

Syllabus

Items on the syllabus (due dates, readings, etc.) are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. I'll try to email you regarding last minute changes.

Oral Report

The O.R. should typically last about 45 minutes. I will hand out specific guidelines for it.

Research Paper

The R.P. typically should run about 15 pages. It may, but need not, be related to your oral report. Within the first four weeks of the semester, I will want to confer with you about your topic.

Class Participation

C.P. is part of your final grade, typically counting for about 20%. It represents your active contribution to class discussion. Quality, not quantity, of contributions is what matters.

Attendance

I do take attendance, and your cumulative absences affect your class participation grade (see above). Leaving after the break in a long class may result in an absence recorded for that class. If you know you must leave early, let me know at the beginning of class.

Tardiness

Since class typically starts on time, if you come in late, you disturb not only the instructor and your classmates, but the "flow" of the lesson. Coming in late while a student is presenting an oral report is even more disturbing.

Secondary Research

Required, of course, but it should never dominate your paper or control the discussion; your ideas should. Use s.r. to amplify your arguments, to provide contrasting views you will argue against, or (in your introduction) to suggest the range of critical opinion on your topic.

Consider the source's potential validity (and respectability): scholarly books and journal articles (whether in hard copy or on JSTOR) have been peer-reviewed and are therefore more reliable and usually more sophisticated than other material found on the internet (e.g., undocumented opinions from "enthusiast" websites).

Use quotation marks for all material taken directly from a secondary source. For both quoted material and for paraphrased material, **cite your source** parenthetically immediately after the quoted or paraphrased material, using author's last name (or abbreviated book title) and page number: "xxxxx" (Smith 40). At the end of your paper add a "Works Cited" page with complete bibliographical data. See the *MLA Handbook* for correct form.

Grading

Typically, the final paper counts for about 60%, oral presentation and class participation about 40%, which means that to get an "A" in the course, your final paper must receive at least an "A-".

For UTD general policies, click on:

<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

1. Students will demonstrate, through class discussion, graduate-level comprehension of the assigned Eliot and Williams readings.
2. Students will give an oral presentation (30-45 minutes) on assigned poems and/or themes.
3. Students will write a graduate-level research paper demonstrating their comprehension and mastery of their chosen topic.
4. Students will attend class regularly and participate actively in class discussion.