

**Carleton University
Fall 2013
Department of English**

ENGL 3603A: 20th Century Fiction

Topic: Time's Arrow and Modern Fiction

Tuesday / 8:35 am – 11:25 pm

Location: Please confirm location on Carleton Central

**Instructor: Adam Barrows
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Office: DT 1901
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Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-4:30**

Description

The second law of thermodynamics tells us that time has a direction, at least in closed systems. Entropy increases, things fall apart, we age and die. Modern fiction has been preoccupied with the arrow of time ever since Arthur Eddington coined and popularized the term in his bestselling 1928 work, *The Nature of the Physical World*. Some authors have grimly documented the effects of time on our bodies and memories while others have fantasized realms beyond the reach of entropy. The arrow has been reversed, broken, accelerated and decelerated in fiction that challenges the relationship between time and narrative, in the process calling into question the nature of free will, of chronology, and of historical transformation. In this course, we will read fiction that wrestles with entropy, plays games with time and its arrow, and radically re-envisions the nature of Eddington's physical world.

Texts (available at Octopus Books – 116 3rd Ave in the Glebe – any edition is acceptable)

Amis, Martin. *Time's Arrow*
Conrad, Joseph. *The Secret Agent*
Nabokov, Vladimir. *Invitation to a Beheading*
Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*
Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse Five*

Writing

You will produce two 5-8 page essays for the course (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman or equivalent). Essay topics will be made available on a separate handout. Your essays will be evaluated on the following criteria: originality and complexity of thesis, sophistication of primary textual analysis, organization, style and mechanics. Papers are due electronically via CULearn by 11:55 pm on the date specified in the course schedule below.

Late papers will be subject to a penalty of 10 points deducted for every 24 hours late. In addition to the two formal essays, there will be several discussion papers assigned periodically. These will be announced at the end of lecture and will be due at the beginning of the following lecture. You will be asked to address a specific question about the following week's reading in an informal paper of up to two pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point Times New Roman or equivalent). Discussion paper questions will only be announced in lecture. No late papers will be accepted.

Examination

There will be one cumulative formally scheduled final examination. You will be expected to identify passages from the texts by author and title and to discuss each passage's thematic significance and relationship to the larger ideas of the course.

Attendance/Participation

You are expected to attend every class and to readily participate in the discussion. Participation includes bringing the text to class and having carefully read the assigned pages for the day.

Grading

Attendance/Participation: 5%

Discussion Papers: 15%

Formal Paper 1: 25%

Formal Paper 2: 25%

Exam: 30%

Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs."

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with

the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 8, 2013 for the Fall term and March 7, 2014 for the Winter term.

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Course Schedule (This schedule is subject to change at my discretion. All reading assignments must be completed *before* the date they are listed)

Sept. 10

Introduction

Sept. 17

Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World* Chapter IV ("The Running-Down of the Universe") and Chapter V ("Becoming") pages 63-110 (on CUlearn)

Sept. 24

Conrad, *The Secret Agent* Chapters I-VI

Oct. 1

Conrad, *The Secret Agent* Chapters VII-XIII

Oct. 8

Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49*

Oct. 15

Zoline, "The Heat Death of the Universe" (on CUlearn)

Oct. 22

Nabokov, *Ada* Part One Chapters 1-26

Paper #1 Due by 11:55 pm on Culearn

Oct. 28 FALL BREAK

Nov. 5

Nabokov, *Ada* Part One Chapters 27-43

Nov. 12

Nabokov, *Ada* Part Two

Nov. 19

Nabokov, *Ada* Parts Three to Five

Nov. 26

Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse Five*

Dec. 3

Amis, *Time's Arrow*

Paper #2 Due by 11:55 pm Culearn