

Carleton University
Fall and Winter 2025-2026 Preliminary Course Outline
Department of English

**FYSM 1004D: READING LITERATURES AND CULTURES:
A Writing-Attentive Seminar in Twentieth-Century Literature**

**This seminar precludes additional credit for
ENGL 1000 (no longer offered), ENGL 1100, ENGL 1200, ENGL 1300, ENGL 1400,
ENGL 1600, and ENGL 1700. DO NOT register in any of the listed preclusions.**

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***** This is a preliminary syllabus only—texts and assignments are subject to change.
A complete version will be available closer to the start of the term. *****

This seminar introduces students to the mechanics of analysis, argument, and formal writing through the lens of twentieth-century literature. Skills associated with the study of language and literature (close reading, rhetorical techniques, writing the formal essay, advanced scholarly research) will be developed in conjunction with a study of some of the most influential works of the Modernist period. We will track the rise of Modernism on both sides of the Atlantic: from its roots in a conscious reaction against nineteenth-century literary forms and ideas, through the crisis of the First World War and the birth of psychoanalysis, to the excitement of European expatriation and the Harlem Renaissance, to masterpieces of Indigenous literature.

We will begin by examining some of the strategies used by proto-Modernists such as G.B. Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, and Anton Chekhov to distinguish themselves from their literary and ideological predecessors. The rise of psychoanalysis provided some of the chief insights that separated modern conceptions of the self from older models, and we will explore F. Scott Fitzgerald's and Djuna Barnes's conflicting treatments of Freudian psychology for evidence of the deep contradictions in an intellectual climate where the barriers of class, race, and gender were both contested and defended. Additionally, we will examine how poets such as Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot led a revolution in poetic expression. Questions about the duties of the artist and the quest for meaning in what was viewed as an increasingly meaningless world were exacerbated by the coming of World War I. To gauge the impact of the carnage of the war upon the minds of combatants and non-combatants, we will read a number of war poets alongside writings by Antonia White and Ernest Hemingway. The social and geographic mobility instigated by rapid advances in technology prompted rich (and often devastating) crosscurrents of migration, expatriation, and colonization. Works by Joseph Conrad, Nella Larsen, and Louise Erdrich will raise the question of moral responsibility in the face of racial and cultural otherness.

The seminar will adhere to the following aims and principles common to other writing-attentive seminars taught within the Department of English and Literature:

Students will spend a significant amount of class time learning and improving university-level forms of thinking and writing, particularly essay-writing skills, that will concentrate on the following:

- establishment of university-level expectations for grammar and syntax
- establishment and refinement of literary-critical skills through close analysis of texts from a variety of genres
- generation and proof of an argumentative thesis across an essay
- establishment and refinement of arguments and opinions using persuasive, clear and grammatically correct English
- use and citation of primary literary texts in appropriate and convincing ways
- introduction to the fundamentals of secondary research (including critical evaluation, use, and citation of academic sources)
- completion of a number of writing assignments which will include at least one formal scholarly essay
- writing at least one formally scheduled examination or a culminating reflective assignment

This course also shares a common set of Learning Outcomes with other First Year Seminars at Carleton. These include:

- Closely analyze texts ('text' to be interpreted broadly) in order to extract key ideas and construct meaning
- Distinguish between opinion and evidence-based argument
- Effectively identify and evaluate resources in relation to a specific problem
- Comprehensively explore an issue, including interpreting available data or evidence and formulating an argument or conclusion that is supported by the examined resources
- Communicate ideas to a variety of audiences, including purposeful development and expression of academic ideas in written and/or oral formats
- Identify available university-support services for students and recognize how they can contribute to academic success