ENGL-5343: Reading Materially: Modernist Print Cultures and Book History

Professor Jennifer Sorensen
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Course Meets Wednesdays 7:00 – 9:30 pm in BH-202
Office: FC258  Office Phone: TBA
Office Hours on Wednesdays from 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm and by appointment

We will learn to judge books by their covers. We will immerse ourselves in modernist little magazines. How do we read materially? Working with a combination of digitized and archival materials, we will interpret meanings constructed by features like layouts, frontispieces, fonts, production histories, and material formats. You will learn to analyze the interplay between the text’s content and its formal features; you will develop arguments that attend to both textual features and paratextual frames. We will work with a range of modernist print media: exploring periodical cultures, newspapers, chapbooks, and books. You will build the skills to think and write analytically about the materiality of texts and to develop a research project about the material form of one text of your choosing. The course will involve a large amount of archival work—with digital archives and in TAMUCC and other local special collections—and we will be getting tangible experience with print history and production technologies in local print studios.
Course Goals:
I have designed the course to help you develop and hone the following skills:
* Close-Reading Analysis Skills across a variety of genres and media as we’ll be reading a diverse and genre-bending group of novels, short stories, and poems.
* Close-Looking Analysis Skills across mixed media formats incorporating illustrations and other framing images and materials.
* The ability to think critically and to argue (verbally and in writing) about both the micro and macro levels (i.e. at the level of the sentence, the paragraph, the chapter, and the structure of the whole book or story and at the level of the line, the stanza, the poem, and the volume).
* The ability to engage with literary criticism and theory about modernism, textual scholarship, and materiality and to use these materials to deepen your engagement with primary texts and to enhance your ability to think about texts as material objects with linguistic codes (words) and bibliographic codes (everything else that packages and frames the text for the reader).
* The ability to work in the archive and to develop an archivally-grounded research project exploring the multiple material incarnations and contexts of a particular literally text.

I aim for you to emerge from the semester with a complex understanding of literary modernism and materiality and textual scholarship.

Required Texts for the Course: (Available at the TAMUCC Bookstore)
Willa Cather, The Professor’s House (1925) (Vintage Classics) ISBN 0679731806

(To Be Downloaded and Printed from our course Blackboard site)
Selections from George Bornstein’s Material Modernism, Jerome McGann’s Black Riders, and Janine Barchas’s “Expanding the Literary Text: A Textual Studies Approach” [all on Blackboard]
Henry James, “The Real Thing” [Blackboard]
Selections from Lawrence Rainey’s Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture [Blackboard]

Additional Secondary Readings will be assigned later and posted to Blackboard

Assessment:
Your final grade for this course will be determined by the following breakdown of the percentage weighting of each course component:
Close Reading Practice Posts: 10%
Blogging The Professor’s House: 5%
Journal Analysis Assignment: 15%
Material Close Reading Paper: 20%
Final Research Project: 30%
Participation: 20%

Assignments and Policies:
Close Reading Practice Posts: This semester you will practice and develop your close-reading skills by submitting 2 short responses to our course blackboard site. These short (1 page) responses will sometimes be directed by more specific instructions (i.e. you will respond to a question or prompt that I post) and will always be submitted electronically via the Discussion Board area on our course Blackboard site. These short
writes encourage you to write-to-learn and the emphasis is placed on the process of closely engaging with course readings. They will all be graded on a ✓ (for fulfilling the expectations of the assignment), ✓+ (for exceeding expectations through an exceptionally thoughtful and interesting response), or a 0 (for failing to post a response or for posting a response that fails to fulfill the expectations of the assignment). If you receive a ✓ or ✓+ on both of the postings, then you will be awarded full credit for this 5% of your final grade. Each posting assignment will specify more precisely the expectations for successful completion in that particular case. Late responses (after the due date and time but within 24 hours) will receive ½ credit. Any response posted later than 24 hours after the due time will not be read and will receive a 0.

Blogging The Professor’s House: For three weeks we will be reading Willa Cather's awesome novel *The Professor's House* in its initial material context on the pages of *Collier's Weekly*. The novel was published serially in 9 issues from June 6, 1925 - August 1, 1925 and was lushly illustrated by Frank Street. As we will be focusing on reading materially, we will be reading the entire contents of each issue in which the story appears. And blogging as we go! These blogging entries will be worth 5% of your final course grade. You will receive full credit on these entries if they are posted on time (due before the start of class on the day they are assigned) and if you genuinely engage with the material reading experience in each posting. No thesis statements required at all—these are less formal pieces of writing so feel free to use “I” and explain how/why certain pieces of the issue affected your reading experience. You should still be quoting text and describing visual details as specifically as possible in your analysis. You can use your book version for comparison and to help compensate for the difficulties of reading on the screen.

Journal Analysis Assignment (3-4 pages) (Due Sunday October 4th by midnight posted on Blackboard): For this assignment, you will select 1 issue of one of the modernist journals digitized by The Modernist Journals Project at [http://dl.lib.brown.edu/mjp/](http://dl.lib.brown.edu/mjp/) and you will select one item (this needs to be a literary text of some kind (not an advertisement or purely visual image) in that journal to close-read and contextualize within the frame of the particular issue/journal that you select. How do adjacent items (potentially including advertisements, manifestos, visual images, other literary texts of similar or wildly different contents and styles, etc) inflect your interpretation of your selected item? We will practice these kinds of contextual analyses as we close-read three sample issues together as a class to help prepare you for the kinds of analytical connections that you will be asked to make in this assignment. An assignment sheet with more specifics will be handed out in class.

Material Modernism Paper (4-5 pages) (Due Sunday November 15th by midnight on Blackboard): For this paper, you will select one of the texts that we have read together as a class (either a volume of poetry or a modernist experiment with the book format) and you will develop a debatable argument about one aspect of that text and then connect that argument to the material form of the text. In other words, if you select a volume of poetry then the aim of this assignment is for you to formulate an interesting, debatable argument about a single poem and to connect that argument in a meaningful way to the larger volume in which that poem appeared. When talking about the volume context, you can address the cover/dust-jacket design, the order in the volume in which your poem appears, the relationship amongst a group of poems within the volume, the way in which the poem you’re focusing on connects (or resists) larger themes and trends in the volume, etc. If you select one of our modernist experiments in the book format, then you will analyze a particular element of that text do develop a complex argument about the text and you will also incorporate the bibliographic code into your analysis. An assignment sheet with more specifics will be handed out in class.

Final Research Project (9-10 pages + Annotated Bibliography) (Due Wednesday December 9th by 9:45 pm posted to Blackboard): After writing about texts that I selected and that we explored together, you will develop a research project on a text that you select to explore on your own in the TAMUCC Library Archives or through online forums, the Harry Ransom Center, etc. You will choose a modernist text that has been published in at least 3 different formats or editions (for example a poem that appeared in a journal, then
in a volume, and then in an anthology or on a website) and you will complete a short annotated bibliography summarizing the key differences between the 3 different versions. You will then develop an analytical argument about your chosen text and incorporate your analysis of at least 1 of its material forms into your paper. The paper length is designed to be ideal for a conference paper and I hope that many of you will be able to use your original research to present your ideas at an academic conference in your chosen field. An assignment sheet with more specifics will be handed out in class.

Participation: Your participation grade will be based on your active engagement with class materials, your frequent and thoughtful contributions to class discussions of all shapes and sizes, your active listening to your classmates and to me, your productive work in frequent in-class small group activities, your reflections upon and completion of the assigned reading, and your coming to class prepared (with materials, thoughts, questions, and assigned work) every day. In order to engage actively with these texts and to promote lively discussions, you will need to prepare diligently for class each day—I encourage you to thoroughly mark up your texts (write all over them, use post-it notes, keep a reading journal on a separate page if you prefer), flag key passages that interest you, jot down questions as they occur to you, and come to class ready to discuss and to contribute questions and themes, passages, and patterns that you find particularly intriguing and worth talking about.

As you will see, I keep records of participation every single class meeting so that these grades are fair and able to be documented: I keep a huge spreadsheet of each day’s grade (assessed using a 4 point grading scale from 4 (an A for outstanding, engaged, thoughtful participation) to a 0 (total non-participation)) and the semester’s participation grade is an average of all of these daily marks (thus local highs and lows get evened out). Also, participation in this course can also extend beyond the boundaries of the classroom and efforts to engage more fully with the reading and writing in the course during office hours also contributes to good participation (I also record frequent office hours attendance and will bump up one or more of the daily marks to reflect this alternative, valuable form of engagement). I will give everyone mid-term participation grades so that you can see how you are doing in this area of the course. If you are concerned about your ability to effectively participate, please come and talk with me in office hours and we can develop strategies to improve your active participation.

You are responsible for obtaining all of the class readings for the course (including printing out any electronic resources assigned and accessible through Blackboard), for reading them carefully prior to class, and for bringing them to class with you as we will work actively with the assigned readings every single class session. If you do not bring your reading materials assigned for a given class meeting to class with you, then you will receive a zero for that day’s participation. We will work actively with the texts every single day and thus you really need to have them with you in order to actively contribute and even to keep up with our discussions.

Please turn off all cell phones before class begins. No electronic devices—including computers—are to be used during class sessions. If you have your cell phone or any other electronic device out during class, you will receive a zero for that day’s participation.

Attendance Policy and Lateness: This course will be very discussion-intensive—so if you miss a class meeting, you are missing a lot any day that you miss. But obviously I understand that life sometimes gets in the way and so you may have two absences with no penalty. For each absence after the first two, your course grade drops 1/3 of a letter grade (i.e. from B to B-). So please use those two permitted absences wisely, they are to be used for times when you absolutely cannot make it to class (illnesses, family or personal emergencies, planned trips, etc.) and not for sleeping in, work for other courses, etc. Being more than fifteen minutes late to class constitutes a full absence and each day that you are even slightly late will deduct from that day’s participation grade. Please be right on-time to class every day as we will start promptly at 7:00 pm.
Late work: Late assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hour period that they are late (i.e. if it was due on Wednesday at 4 pm it will be marked 1/3 grade down if it is turned in after then but before Thursday by 4 pm; if it is turned in after 4 pm on Thursday, it will be marked down an additional 1/3 of a letter grade and so on). Please make every effort to have all your assignments in on time! I do not accept papers or read drafts over email.

Academic Integrity:
Violations of academic integrity include cheating, plagiarism (failure to acknowledge via appropriate citation the sources for written, visual, on-line, and other sorts of material), fabrication, multiple submissions (e.g., submitting the same or substantially the same paper for two or more courses without prior approval of all instructors). Any assignment found to violate the TAMUCC guidelines for academic integrity will be reported to the college dean and the Office of Student Affairs in accordance with university policy. Please read “Academic Integrity” guidelines carefully and ask me if you have any questions: these guidelines are posted at http://catalog.tamucc.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=177#Academic_Integrity

The Writing Center
You will be doing a lot of writing in this course and the TAMUCC CASA Writing Center is an excellent resource to help you. The Writing Center offers one-on-one tutoring sessions with experienced student writers to help you with a whole range of skills—getting started, building arguments, grammatical issues, organization, and many more—and I highly recommend using this resource. They offer appointments (easy to schedule with their online system) and also walk-ins during their open hours. See their website for more details: http://casa.tamucc.edu/wc.php

Services for Students with Disabilities:
If you think you may need an accommodation for any sort of disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services and make an appointment to see me within the first two weeks of the semester. Thank you. Here is the website: http://disabilityservices.tamucc.edu/

Religious Observances:
If a class meeting conflicts with a religious holiday, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we can make alternate arrangements. In most cases, I will ask you to turn in your assignment ahead of your scheduled absence, but, in accordance with the TAMUCC policy on Religious/Academic conflicts, your absence will not affect your grade in the course.

Academic Advising
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Grade Appeals Process
Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.
**Communication:**
The best way to get in touch with me outside of class and office hours is by email. During the semester, I check my email regularly every weekday. I probably will not be able to respond as promptly on weekends or late at night (I will most likely not respond on the same day if you email after 6 pm). Email is a great way to ask a question, share a comment, or make an appointment to talk in person. If you have a long, complicated question, please come visit during office hours or make an appointment so that we can talk it over in person. All conversations about grades and comments on written work should take place in person.

I will email the class if class should be cancelled due to extreme winter weather or other emergency, or if I want to circulate course information to the class so please check your own email regularly.

If you must miss a class, please do not email me asking what you missed. It is your responsibility to check in with a classmate to find out what was covered and to obtain the notes from that day. You should exchange email addresses with at least two of your classmates so that you can contact them if you have to miss class.

Name: ____________________________________________________  
Email: ____________________________________________________

Name: ____________________________________________________  
Email: ____________________________________________________

I reserve the right to make minor changes and to adjust this syllabus if necessary for the improvement of the course.
Week 1: Introductions
W August 26: Introductions and Syllabus Review; “In a Station of the Metro” and “This is Just to Say” versions. In class: Activity with W.B. Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan” and Marianne Moore’s shifting “Poetry.” In class: Activity with Emily Dickinson’s “He Fumbles at Your Soul.” (readings circulated in class).

Week 2: Material Poetics & Fascicles
W September 2: George Bornstein’s “How to Read a Page: Modernism and Material Textuality” (excerpt); Janine Barchas’s “Expanding the Literary Text: A Textual Studies Approach” (excerpt) and Jerome McGann’s Black Riders (excerpt); Emily Dickinson, Fascicle 17; Virginia Jackson’s Dickinson’s Misery (excerpts) and Kristin Krieder, “The Material Poetics of Emily Dickinson’s Later Manuscript Pages” (all readings posted on Blackboard).

Sunday September 6: Close Reading Post #1 due on Blackboard by midnight.

Week 3: “The Waste Land” & its Drafts

Week 4: Journeying through Modernist Little Magazines
W September 16: Excerpt from Robin Schulze’s Becoming Marianne Moore on Poetry magazine & on Others and Modernist Journals Project Example Reading: We’ll all read 1 issue of Poetry & 1 issue of Others.

Sunday September 20: Close Reading Post #2 due on Blackboard by midnight.

Week 5: Journeying through Modernist Little Magazines
W September 23: Modernist Journals Project Example Reading: We’ll all read 1 issue of The Little Review and excerpt from Robin Schulze’s Becoming Marianne Moore on The Little Review & Student Choice Journal Issue – We’ll vote and read the Journal issue that you are most intrigued by! Printmaking Studio Field Trip.

Week 6: Learning to Read Illustrated Print Contexts
W September 30: “The Real Thing” (read the whole story in the easy to read Norton version, pp 189-210 (on Blackboard)). Then re-read the story in the Periodical version (on Blackboard); Mary Leighton and Lisa Surridge’s “The Plot Thickens: Toward a Narratological Analysis of Illustrated Serial Fiction of the 1860s” (on Blackboard). Blogging on Material Encounters with Collier’s Assignment Assigned.

Sunday October 4: Journal Assignment Due by Midnight to Blackboard

Week 7: Serial Reading: The Professor’s House in Collier’s Weekly
W October 7: June 6th Issue of Collier’s Weekly (read cover to cover! Including advertisements!); June 13th & June 20th Issues of Collier’s Weekly (focus on The Professor’s House installments and select at least 2 other features of each issue to closely analyze as you read); Blogging due. Patrick Collier’s “Imperial/Modernist Forms in the Illustrated London News” (on Blackboard).

Week 8: Reading the Material Clauses of The Professor’s House in Collier’s Weekly
W October 14: June 27th & July 4th & July 11th Issues of Collier’s Weekly (focus on The Professor’s House installments and select at least 2 other features of each issue to closely analyze as you read); Blogging due. Selected Criticism (on Blackboard).
Week 9: Orgies of Acquisition in *The Professor’s House in Collier’s Weekly*
W October 21: July 18th & July 27th & August 1st (final installment) Issues of Collier’s Weekly (focus on *The Professor’s House* installments and select at least 2 other features of each issue to closely analyze as you read); **Blogging due.** Charles Johanningsmeier’s “The Cultural Work of *The Professor’s House in Collier’s Weekly*” (on Blackboard).

Week 10: *Cane’s* Bookish Embodiment

Week 11: Multimedia Materiality

Week 12: Verbal and Visual Collaborations

Sunday November 15: Material Close Reading Paper Due by midnight on Blackboard

Week 13: Individual Research Project Development
W November 18: **Work in Library for Final Research Project**; Rare Books and Special Collections visit.

Week 14: Individual Research Project Development
W November 25: **Work in Library for Final Research Project**.

**Final Research Project Due: Wednesday December 9th by 9:45 pm posted to Blackboard**