Virginia Woolf once wrote that: “On or about December 1910, human character changed” and as the course argues so did the forms and content of 20th century literature. In the same vein, George Orwell speaks of “the invasion of literature by politics” and the resulting politicization of writing. Through a selection of literary works of the 20th Century, this course draws the connection between the aesthetic, namely literary form and genre, and the political that is the meaning generated by a given literary text within an ideological context. The latter is a reference to the set of beliefs and practices, held by individuals and groups and that are political in nature. In the case of Mrs Dalloway for instance, we will ask how this feminist modernist novel produces meaning in the particularly charged context in which it was written. We will also ask how its form and style illustrate or challenge the ideological context of the times and how the formulation of the literary devices Woolf uses can by no means be divorced from the political and social realities of her world. The course assumes the position that literature is neither autonomous nor elitist. Rather, it is a cultural product that constantly engages with contemporary socio-economic, political and historical contexts. This course will provide students with the tools of understanding, interpreting, and evaluating some “canonical” and “less canonical” novels, poems, and short stories of the 20th century. To this end, the course emphasizes the development of critical reading, thinking, and writing skills. It requires you to read all of the assigned materials carefully, participate in individual and group work assignments, and write two argumentative essays. By the end of the class, students should have a working knowledge of different literary genres, the way that they are influenced by period, historical moments as well as the mutual relationship between aesthetics and politics.

Course texts to purchase (hard copy or electronic):

James Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925)
Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1959)
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985)

**COURSE POLICIES:**

1- **Attendance** is crucial and participation is graded! (10%) It is essential to do the required readings before class and to come prepared.

2- Please check Studium well in advance of each meeting to make sure you have downloaded and read all posted PDFs and/or URLs. If there is a problem with Studium, please let me know ASAP so I can circulate readings via email, if necessary.

3- **Plagiarism** of any kind will not be tolerated. Please check the university’s policies regarding academic integrity ([http://integrite.umontreal.ca/reglementation/officiels.html](http://integrite.umontreal.ca/reglementation/officiels.html)) You have to be familiar with MLA style in order to cite properly your sources in your essays and final papers so please consider investing in an MLA style manual (also exists online).

4- **Assignments and grading:**
Argumentative Essay I (550 words) 15%
Argumentative Essay II (700 words) 20%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Exam 35%
Participation 10% (group work, pair work...)

*Additional readings will be required on a weekly basis. These will be made available online through STUDIUM. It is important that you read these in conjunction with the required novels.

REQUIREMENTS

Participation in seminar discussion (I expect students to come to class prepared to ask questions about the assigned texts and to participate in discussions, either in small group discussions or in discussions with the class at large) 10%

First argumentative essay (a 550 words essay about one of the class’s assigned texts. You will be able to choose from a list of topics/questions) 15%

Mid-term in-class exam (short essay which analyses one or two of the class’s assigned texts. You will be able to choose from a list of questions/topics) 20%

Second argumentative essay (a 700 words essay which analyses one of the course’s assigned texts – its rhetorical strategies, its arguments and the ways in which those arguments have been critiqued and/or taken up by other theorists) 20%

Final exam (8-10 page essay; topic chosen from, or related to, course material; students are welcome to focus on theoretical texts OR to read literary texts in their own field of interest through theoretical concepts) 35%

PREPARATION

To assist classroom discussions, come to class prepared with questions, discussion points, notes, and the relevant text(s) for that class. Lack of preparation will negatively impact your grade.

ATTENDANCE

Prompt and regular attendance is required. You are responsible for any material you miss from class lectures and discussions. Get copies of missed notes and handouts from classmates. We do not post lectures or notes online. Frequent tardiness or absence will have a negative impact on your grade.

LATE WORK, EXTENSIONS

Due dates cannot be changed. Deferred grades will be given only on the basis of authenticated medical disability. If you miss an in-class writing assignment or a homework assignment you will not be able to make it up, unless you have a medical note. Extensions will only be granted for serious reasons. Late work will be penalized at the rate of 3% per day.
PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism - the stealing or “borrowing” of another person’s written work and passing it off as one’s own - is a very serious academic offense. Plagiarism occurs when:

a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work;

b) an entire work (e.g., an essay), is copied from another source, or parts of the work are taken from another source without explicit reference to the author;

c) an essay copies a sentence or paragraph of another work with minor variations. Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without explicit acknowledgement, but also when original ideas from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography or “works cited” is insufficient to establish which portions of the student’s work are taken from external sources; formal modes of citation (i.e., page numbers and the author’s name in parenthetical references) must be used for this purpose. If you are unclear on the definition of plagiarism or you are unsure about how to avoid it, please do not hesitate to ask me. Ignorance is not a valid defense. Professors are required to report all cases of plagiarism to the Dean. The minimal disciplinary measure is an F on the assignment, essay, or exam. Further measures can include an F in the course, suspension from the Faculty, and even the requirement to withdraw from the University.

COURTESY AND TECHNOLOGY

Please be respectful of a productive learning environment by ensuring that your phones, laptops, and other electronics are not disruptive to the class or to the students around you. If needed for family or medical reasons, phones should be switched to vibrate. Misuse of laptops, (smart)phones, or other electronics for non-class purposes will be dealt with according to UdeM policy and devices may be banned.

Week 1 January 5th - Introduction

Introduction to the class

Week 2 January 12th - Colonial literature? Frame literature? Modernist literature?

Joseph Conrad “Heart of Darkness” a Novella


Recommended Cedric Watts’s “A Bloody Racist: About Achebe's View of Conrad”

Week 3 January 19th - Postcolonial literature and the modern African novel
Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1959)
Achebe “The Novelist as Teacher”
Recommended Abdul JanMohamed, from ‘Sophisticated Primitivism: The Syncretism of Oral and Literate Modes in Achebe’s “Things Fall Apart”’

**Week 4 January 26th - “the center cannot hold”**
William Butler Yeats, a selection of poems
Introduction by Seamus Heaney
Yeats, “A General Introduction to my Work”

**Week 5 February 2nd - The bildungsroman and the Modernist novel: Aesthetics and politics**
James Joyce, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916)
Gregory Castle “Coming of Age in the Age of Empire: Joyce’s Modernist Bildungsroman”

**First essay due**

**Week 6 February 9th - “The continuous present”**
Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1926)
Virginia Woolf. *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) (excerpt) and “Modern Fiction”

**Week 7 February 16th - “For you know only a heap of broken images”**

**Week 8 February 23rd**

**In-class assignment**

**Week 9 March 2nd NO CLASS; READING WEEK**

**Week 10 March 9th - “Make it new!”**
A selection of modernist poetry: Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, H.D...

**Week 11 March 16th “A continuity isn’t necessarily right”**
Secondary readings TBA

**2nd essay due**

**Week 12 March 23rd - “A maze of mazes”**
Samuel Delany “Atlantis: Model 1924”
Secondary readings TBA
Week 13 March 30th – “We lived in the gaps between the stories”  
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985)

Secondary readings TBA

Week 14 April 6th – “I, too, sing America”  

Week 15 April 13th  
Nadine Gordimer, “At the rendezvous of Victory”  
Alice Walker, “Everyday Use”  
Toni Morrison, “Recitatif”

Week 16 April 20th  
Final exam

*Depending on the pace of the class, the schedule may have to be amended accordingly. I encourage you to discuss with me (via e-mail or during my office hours) any issues that might concern you about the course. I look forward to meeting you.*