

Weekend Courses 2024-25

The Literature of 1925

Start date: 2 May 2025 **End date:** 4 May 2025

Venue: Madingley Hall
Madingley
Cambridge
CB23 8AQ

Tutor: Dr Jenny Bavidge **Course Code:** 2425NRX041

Tutor biography

Jenny Bavidge is Associate Professor in English Literature and Academic Director in English Literature for the University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education and is a Fellow in English at Murray Edwards College, Cambridge. Before joining the Institute in 2011, she was Senior Lecturer at the University of Greenwich. She was elected a Fellow of the English Association in 2015. Her publications have included work on London in literature, children's literature, ecocriticism, and rats.

Summary of content

Any given year has its own literary highlights, but 1925 has some particularly dazzling works to its credit, including Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* and F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. This weekend, we'll step back a century and examine the literary and cultural milieu of the time and explore some key novels and poetry which reset the literary world for the 20th century. Literary experimentations and innovation in the work of writers such as Gertrude Stein and John Dos Passos responded to rapid societal change in the post-war period and the atmosphere of urban modernity, as well as to the new forms of sight, sound and movement suggested by jazz and cinema. We will also explore Alain Locke's ground-breaking anthology of writing of the Harlem Renaissance and we'll place all this literary production in the context of the music, art and fashions of 1925.

Aims

This course aims to:

- explore the literature of the year 1925
- place the literature of 1925 alongside other art forms of the period, including visual art and music
- investigate the development of American and European literary modernism as exemplified by the innovations of work published in 1925

Course sessions

Friday

Please plan to arrive between 16:30 and 18:30. You can meet other course members in the Terrace Bar which opens at 18:15. Tea and coffee making facilities are available in the study bedrooms.

19:00

Dinner

20:30 – 22:00

Session One

Introduction: 1925 and all that

In our first session we will lay out the artistic, political and social contexts of 1925 in readiness for study of our texts.

22:00

Terrace Bar open for informal discussion

Saturday

07:30

Breakfast (for residents only)

09:00 – 10:30

Session Two

***Mrs Dalloway*: Writing the city 1**

We'll begin with a discussion of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, published in May 1925. In this novel, set on one single day in London, Woolf explores the inner lives and motivations of her characters as they move around the city, contemplate their own lives and memories and observe each other, as friends or as strangers. In the tragic figure of Septimus Smith, Woolf created an unforgettable account of the sufferings visited upon body and mind by World War One.

10:30

Coffee

11:00 – 12:30

Writing the city 2

In this session we'll continue our discussion of *Mrs Dalloway* and we'll also look at some extracts from John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer* (these extracts will be supplied) which develops its own techniques to capture the 'cityful' experience of New York City.

13:00

Lunch

14:00 – 16:00

Free time

16:00

Tea

16:30 – 18:00

The Lost Generation: Ernest Hemingway and Gertrude Stein in Paris

We'll travel to Paris in this session to explore the work of the American writers of the 'Lost Generation' looking at extracts from Stein's poetic novel *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* and Hemingway's first collection of short stories *In Our Time*. Stein and Hemingway had a fractious friendship and influenced each other's writing: we will read Hemingway's story 'Indian Camp' as an illustrative example of the development of his characteristic sparse and elliptical style.

18:00 – 18:30

Free time

- 18:30 Dinner
- 20:00 – 21:30** **Sight and Sound: Film and Music**
We will begin our evening session looking at key films such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* in the US and *Battleship Potemkin* in the USSR. Film narrative and style was an increasing influence on literary style in this period. We'll also consider the influence of jazz artists on prose and poetry, particularly in the work of authors associated with the literature of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes.
- 21:30 Terrace Bar open for informal discussion
- Sunday**
- 07:30 Breakfast (for residents only)
- 09:00 – 10:30** **The Harlem Renaissance**
We'll continue our thinking from the previous evening about the Harlem Renaissance, looking at the content of Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, a ground-breaking collection of essays, poetry and fiction highlighting the work of African-American writers who were asserting new creative and political freedoms to write about their experiences and to imagine new forms of identity and representation.
- 10:30 Coffee
- 11:00 – 12:30** ***The Great Gatsby***
We will conclude the course with a discussion of one of the most enduring novels of 1925, F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. A century on it is seen as emblematic of its era and the tarnished glitter of the American Dream, expressed in its restless, elegiac style and enigmatic imagery.
- 12:45 Lunch

The course will disperse after lunch

Presentation of the course

The course will be taught in a combination of informal lectures and seminar style discussion. It is hoped that students will read the 'set' texts, (*Mrs Dalloway*, *The Great Gatsby* and Hemingway's short story 'Indian Camp') in advance of the course. Other extracts will be provided for discussion in class.

Learning outcomes:

As a result of the course, you will gain a greater understanding of the subject and you should be able to:

- place the literary works we encounter in the cultural and historical contexts of the late 19th century
- develop insights into the nature of the narrative structure and style of the selected works and how the form of the novels reflects their themes and content
- demonstrate knowledge of the major themes and concerns of literary modernism and the literature of 1925 in particular

Reading and resources list

Ideally, all students will have read the following texts in full:

Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Suggested edition is Oxford World's Classics.

F Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Suggested edition is Oxford World's Classics.

Ernest Hemingway, 'Indian Camp' in *In Our Time* (the story was first published 1924 and was then included in the collection in 1925). We will supply a copy of the story. If you want to read the rest of the collection you can find it online at

https://archive.org/details/inourtimestories00hemi_1/page/14/mode/1up

or it is available in a Vintage Classics edition of *In Our Time* (2021) (NB. Content warning: this story contains descriptions of suicide.)

Langston Hughes' poem '[The Weary Blues](#)': find it at the Poetry Foundation website

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47347/the-weary-blues>

We will also look at extracts from the following texts. You do not to read these before the course but here are links to online editions if you would like to familiarise yourself with them:

Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (1925) at

<https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks16/1600671h.html>

John Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) at <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/71853>

Alain Locke ed. *The New Negro* (1925) at

<https://archive.org/details/newnegrointerpre00unse/page/54/mode/1up>

Film, music and dance

Again, you do not need to watch / listen to these linked films and songs in full before the course but you may find them interesting for context.

'Heebie Jeebies' by Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five

(<https://youtu.be/lo4IFpJEXHI?si=7izTGjinVXWvDqVsT>)

Josephine Baker dancing the Charleston and clowning around

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEH6eDpjgRw>

'I'm Gonna Hang Around My Sugar' Duke Ellington

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E5q8IBsx8t4>

The Gold Rush (dir. Charlie Chaplin, US, 1925)

https://archive.org/details/the_gold_rush_1925_720p/the_gold_rush_1925_720p.mp4

Battleship Potemkin (dir. Sergei Eisenstein, USSR, 1925)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a_bkBbrdyw

You may find the below recommended reading list of interest to supplement your course.

Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1995)

George Hutchinson ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Craig Monk, *Writing the Lost Generation: Expatriate Autobiography and American Modernism* (University of Iowa Press, 2008)

Donald Pizer, *American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment: Modernism and Place* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996)

Mark Whalan ed. *The Cambridge History of American Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2023) esp. Julian Murphet, 'New Visual Media' and Jessica Teague, 'The Jazz Age'.

Note: Institute of Continuing Education (ICE) students are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current ICE course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

(Information correct as of April 2024)