

What Was Modernism?

This course of lectures, which takes its title from a lecture delivered by the critic Harry Levin as early as 1960, will provide a comprehensive introduction to modernism as a decisive step and turning point in the evolution of modern culture at large. Accordingly, readings of key texts from English and American modernist literature will be embedded in a number of non-literary topics such as, for example, developments in music and painting, the emergence of mass culture, the development of the sciences, the interaction of technological progress and media history, and the linguistic turn in philosophy.

Lecture 1: Placing Modernism: An Introduction

1) Some Definitions

2) Placing Modernism in History

3) Theories of Modernisation

4) Course Overview

1) Some Definitions

OED, 2nd ed., 1989: 'modern'

1. Being at this time; now existing. *Obs. rare.*
2. a. Of or pertaining to the present and recent times, as distinguished from the remote past; pertaining to or originating in the current age or period.
h. Of a movement in art and architecture, or the works produced by such a movement: characterized by a departure from or a repudiation of accepted or traditional styles and values
3. a. Characteristic of the present and recent times; new-fashioned; not antiquated or obsolete.
b. in disparaging use

'modernism'

1. A usage, mode of expression, or peculiarity of style or workmanship, characteristic of modern times
2. Modern character or quality of thought, expression, style of workmanship, etc.; sympathy with or affinity to what is modern.
3. *Theol.* A tendency or movement towards modifying traditional beliefs and doctrines in accordance with the findings of modern criticism and research, esp. a movement of this kind in the Roman catholic church at the beginning of this century.
4. The methods, style, or attitude of modern artists; spec. a style of painting in which the artist deliberately breaks away from classical and traditional methods of expression; hence, a similar style or movement in architecture, literature, music, etc.

Modern/Modernist

- the modern age (die Neuzeit): c.1550 - ? or c.1750 - ?
 - a period marked by particular socio-cultural conditions (emergence of a public sphere marked by social differentiation and a private sphere marked by subjectivity/individuality)
 - modernity/modernisation
 - 1st phase (c.1550-1750): emergence
 - 2nd phase (c.1750-1800): settlement/synthesis (> Romanticism)
("Sattelzeit"/"Epochenschwelle")
 - 3rd phase (c. 1800-1900): evolution
 - 4th phase (c. 1900-1945): 'crystallization' (>modernism)
 - 5th phase (c. 1945-today): postmodernism, 'the postmodern'?
- modernism (c. 1900-1945) as a decisive turning point
 - the paradox of a tradition based on innovation
 - reflexivity

Periods of Modern Literature (Plumpe)

[S = Systemreferenz; U = Umweltreferenz]

1) Romanticism [S vs. (U)]



2) Realism [U]



3) Aestheticism [S]



4) Avantgarde [U vs. (S)]



5) 'Postism' [S ↔ U]

Periods of Modern Literature (Reinfandt)

[S = Systemreferenz; U = Umweltreferenz]

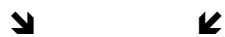
1) Romanticism [S vs. (U)]



2) Realism [U]



Aestheticism [S] ↔ Avantgarde [U vs. (S)]



3) Modernism [S]



4) 'Postism' [S ↔ U]

2) Placing Modernism in History

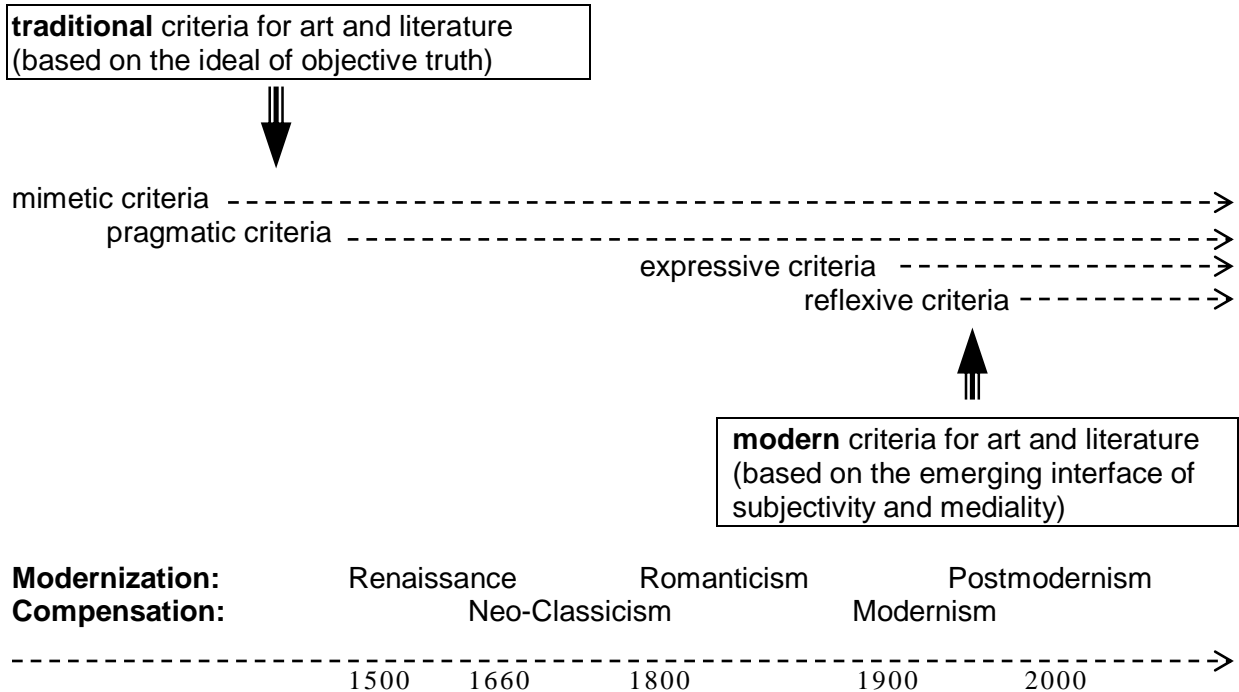
What *Was* Modernism? vs. What *Is* Modernism?

- historical perspective:
modernism as a period term within the larger frame of
modernity/modernisation
- systematic perspective:
characteristic attitudes, devices, features etc.

The Western Tradition

- a) **Antiquity:**
mimetic and pragmatic criteria begin to dominate the production and reception
of art and literature
⇒ the traditional Western attitude
- b) **the Middle Ages:**
break in continuity because of cultural difference perceived as 'poverty' in the
Renaissance period
- c) **Modernity:**
marked by an ongoing negotiation of
traditional "objective", i.e. mimetic and pragmatic dimensions of cultural
meaning
on the one hand and
modern "subjective", i.e. expressive and reflexive dimensions of cultural
meaning
on the other hand

The Basic Outline of a Systematic Approach to Western Literature (c. 1500-2017)



Phases of Media History:

- | | | |
|----------|--------|--|
| A | - 1500 | 'human' media (small groups)
theatre, oral trad., manuscripts |
| B | - 1900 | print media (individual ► mass media)
letters, pamphlets, books, newspapers etc.
photography, phonography |
| C | - 2000 | electronic media (mass media)
telegraph/telephone, film, radio, television, audio/video |
| D | ? | substitution media
computer (digitalization, multimedia), internet |

Principles of Media History:

- 1) accumulation of media > changes of function
 - 2) increasing dynamics (Phase A: 30000 – 40000 years, Phase B: 400 years, Phase C: 100 years, Phase D: ?)
 - 3) mediation between human beings and reality becomes ever more inclusive and complete
- ▶ media convergence, intermediality, media systems comprising language, technology, institutions and products/offerings
 - ▶ mediality (the specific cultural conditions of various media at a given historical stage)

3) Theories of Modernisation

Basic Contours of Modernisation

- modernisation as threat and chance
- sociology emerges in the 19th century as a reaction to the transformation of a traditional, agrarian, hierarchically organised social order into a modern, bureaucratic, industrial, class-based but formally democratic system beginning in the 18th century and gaining momentum in the 19th century
 - sociology as a product of modernisation
 - sociology as a critique of modernisation
 - sociology strives to contain experiences of uncertainty, but by describing and questioning the commonplace it contributes to the typically modern experience of uncertainty

The 'classic' understanding of modernisation:

- modernisation as an ambivalent phenomenon (liberation vs. loss, freedom vs. fragmentation)
- a radical break with/from the past? (simple and poor agrarian societies → complex and rich industrial societies)
- economic growth (mass consumption and welfare state as the economic basis of processes of modernisation → saturation?)
- political development (emergence of states/nations → national identity/suffrage/ democracy/social security/individual rights)
- socio-cultural conditions

→ industrialisation, rationalisation, secularisation, democratisation, emancipation, pluralisation, urbanisation, mass consumption, increased social mobility

Problems:

- ethnocentrism
- purely internal perspective which fails to acknowledge the impact and effects of imperialism in terms of inequality and heterogeneity
- complete interdependence of various spheres not a given
- tradition and modernity can (and do) overlap
- the notion of 'progress'

→ **modernisation as a paradoxical process:**

STRUCTURE: differentiation = specialisation + fragmentation

CULTURE: rationalisation = pluralisation + generalisation

PERSON: individualisation = liberation + disorientation

NATURE: domestication = emancipation + dependency

→ the 'ambivalox' dialectics of modernisation (Degele/Dries, 23-33)
(ambivalence as central structural feature of modernisation, paradox at the heart of its immanent contradictions)

additional dimensions:

acceleration (between PERSON and CULTURE)

globalisation (between STRUCTURE and NATURE)

integration (between PERSON and STRUCTURE)

gendering (between CULTURE and NATURE)

Temporal Frame from a Sociological Point of View:

(cf. Degele/Dries, 35-39)

1500	'Epochenschwelle' Pre-Modernity > Modernity
1500-c.1800 (1789)	Early Modernity
1800-c.2000 (1970)	Modernity proper (‘Hochmoderne’, ‘Industriemoderne’)
1970-	Late Modernity (Beck: ‘reflexive’, ‘potenzierte’ ‘Zweite Moderne’) (‘Postmodernity’?)

Differentiation

- differentiation as an essential ingredient of modernisation
 - modern society is marked by the division of labour (Durkheim)
 - modern society is divided into spheres with their own rationalities, but under the umbrella of economic rationality (Weber)
 - the principles of segmentary differentiation as characteristic of archaic societies and stratificatory differentiation as characteristic of medieval/‘Old-European’ Western societies are superseded by the modern principle of functional differentiation (Parsons, Luhmann)
- the emergence of a modern understanding of class (Marx)
→ the emergence of new social roles (specialisation, gendering, alienation)

Problems:

- the comparatively recent emergence of processes of ‘de-differentiation’?
- the complex mechanisms of individual participation (inclusion/exclusion, socialisation, rational vs. irrational motivations)
- the possibility of collective participation (power, autonomy, monopolies etc.)

Individualisation and Domestication

a) Individualisation

- the 'I' as social effect
- individualisation in the modern sense refers to a detachment of people from traditional forms of life through processes of differentiation
- close social relations (family, classes) are replaced by social networks which are anonymous and more or less freely chosen
- pluralisation of life-styles
- new liberties are accompanied by new constraints, e.g. the felt necessity to use the new freedom

Central Developments:

- trade over long distances
 - urbanisation
 - centralisation of power
 - weakening of traditional authorities through scientific discoveries
 - invention of the printing press
 - the Reformation
- society evolves as individuals meet, i.e. in a permanent interaction between individuals, groups, organisations, states (Simmel)
- modern culture is focused upon the problem of how generalise individual experience into cultural relevance/authority (subjectivity ↔ writing)
- integration vs. alienation

b) Domestication

- the containment of nature (in the senses of
 - > the natural environment of human beings
 - > the human organism/body as part of nature
 - > the philosophical 'nature' of human beings)
- the taming of natural and biological forces
 - > the process of civilisation (Elias)
- the appropriation and optimisation of natural and physical forces
- dependency on nature > emancipation from nature/ subjugation of nature
- subject[ifical]ion + objectification
 - ↓
 - ↓
 - culture ↔ technology
- discursive codification, surveillance (Foucault)

Rationalisation and Acceleration

a) Rationalisation

- social action and interaction are framed by considerations of efficiency and calculation rather than motivations derived from custom, tradition or emotion
- coincidental, unsystematic and occasional acts are replaced by standardised, organised, systematic ones administered by bureaucracy
- reality is rendered predictable and controllable by means of regulation and organisation
 - > the disenchantment of the world (Weber) (de-mystification, scientification, secularisation)
- belief in reason, rationality, empiricism, technological progress
- 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' (Weber)
- 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer)

Problems:

- the reductivism/one-sidedness of the focus on rationality
- possibilities of political intervention?

b) Acceleration

- time-awareness: natural (day/night), social/cultural (rites), individual
- time as a symbol for change
- time as a norm (orientation/discipline)
- areas of acceleration:
 - technological (communication, traffic, commerce)
 - social (fashions/styles, jobs, relationships)
 - individual (fast food, speed dating)
- the acceleration ambivalox: people *acquire* more time but end up *having* less
 - > unburdening vs. excessive demand on individuals
- motors of acceleration: economy, functional differentiation, ideology
- originality/innovation as cultural signposts of modernity

Globalisation and Integration

a) Globalisation

- a historical transformation process with a tendency towards creating a single space/place (McLuhan: 'global village')
- phases of globalisation:
 - 1500-1750 expansion of trade, beginnings of colonisation, slave trade
 - 1750-1880 colonialism into imperialism, increased dynamics fuelled by industrial revolution
 - 1880-1945 stagnation of globalisation process in WW I and II
 - 1945- second wave of political globalisation (UN, NATO, USSR/Warsaw Pact) coinciding with de-colonisation movement, centre of globalisation shifts from politics to economy/communication

Problems:

- 'glocalisation':
 - the making of global culture simultaneously promotes regional cultures
- hybridisation vs. homogenisation?
- clash of cultures (Huntington)?
 - > isolation models vs. visions of world society

b) Integration

- countermovement to differentiation/rationalisation etc.
 - systems vs. lifeworld (Habermas)
 - mediation as a basic concept, aimed at
 - > the interaction of different rationalities and logics
 - > avoiding devastating side effects like unemployment, pollution
 - integration aims at avoiding circumstances in which operations in one subsystem lead to unsolvable problems in another
- > integration as a necessary condition for differentiation which is, however, increasingly sidelined by the dynamics of differentiation?
- > a theoretical acknowledgement of the interdependency of difference and equivalence as two sides of one coin is necessary (cf. Currie 2004)

4) Course Overview

Introduction

26th Oct Lecture 1 Placing Modernism: An Introduction

Part 1: Contexts of Modernism

2nd Nov Lecture 2 The Cultural Contexts of Modernism

9th Nov Lecture 3 Modernism and the Sister Arts

16th Nov Lecture 4 Modernism and Photography

Part 2: Modernist Fiction

23rd Nov Lecture 5 The Turn of the Novel

30th Nov Lecture 6 Short Fiction

7th Dec Lecture 7 Virginia Woolf

14th Dec Lecture 8 James Joyce

Part 3: Modernist Poetry

21st Dec Lecture 9 Imagism into Vorticism,
(Ezra Pound, T.E. Hulme, H.D. and others)

11th Jan Lecture 10 Modes of American Modernism
(William Carlos Williams/Marianne Moore)

18th Jan Lecture 11 The Romantic Legacy
(Wallace Stevens/William Butler Yeats)

25th Jan Lecture 12 T.S. Eliot

Conclusion

1st Feb Lecture 13 What Was/Is Modernism?

No lecture on Feb 8!

Please note that there will be **no written exam** for this lecture course.

If you need credits outside of the modules offered by the English Department (which combine lecture courses with seminars in oral examinations), you will have to hand in a portfolio by Feb 8 at the latest. The portfolio will provide bullet-point summaries of three assigned texts, each ending in a brief critical assessment (c. ½ page per text). In a final section you should identify a work of art or cultural 'text' (in the broadest sense of the term) which strikes you as particularly modernist, and briefly sketch why against the background of your reading. The portfolio should not be longer than 5 pages (A 4, 1.5-spaced, 12 pt). Don't forget to put your name, Matrikelnummer and the title of the course on it.

Texts for Portfolio

(provided on Moodle, password 'reinf1718')

- 1) Levin, Harry, "What Was Modernism?" *The Massachusetts Review* 1.4 (1960): 609-630.
- 2) Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*." *Modernism/modernity* 8.3 (2001): 493-513.
- 3) Lathan, Sean, and Gayle Rogers. *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015: 1-66.

Bibliography Lecture 1:

1) Introductions:

- Ayers, David, *Modernism: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Armstrong, Tim, *Modernism: A Cultural History*. Cambridge: Polity, 2005.
- Bradbury, Malcolm, James McFarlane, eds., *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976.
- Butler, Christopher, *Modernism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010.
- Childs, Peter, *Modernism*. The New Critical Idiom. London/New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford. "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*." *Modernism/modernity* 8.3 (2001): 493-513.
- Gay, Peter, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy from Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond*. London: Heinemann, 2007.
- Kalliney, Peter J. *Modernism in a Global Context*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016.

Lathan, Sean, and Gayle Rogers. *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

Nichols, Peter, *Modernisms: A Literary Guide*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995.

Sherry, Vincent, ed., *The Cambridge History of Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016.

Stratton, Matthew, "Modernism." In: Timo Müller, ed., *Handbook of the American Novel of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2017: 21-34.

2) Anthologies:

Faulkner, Peter, ed., *A Modernist Reader: Modernism in England 1910-1930*. London: Batsford, 1986

Kolocotroni, Vassiliki, Jane Goldman, Olga Taxidou, eds., *Modernism: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998.

Rainey, Lawrence, ed., *Modernism: An Anthology*. Malden, MA/Oxford: Blackwell, 2005.

Scott, Bonnie Kime, ed., *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1990.

3) Encyclopedias

Poplawski, Paul, ed., *Encyclopedia of Literary Modernism*. Westport, CT/London: Greenwood, 2003.

4) Systems-Theoretical Approaches to Literary History:

Plumpe, Gerhard, *Epochen moderner Literatur: Ein systemtheoretischer Entwurf*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995.

Reinfandt, Christoph, *Der Sinn der fiktionalen Wirklichkeiten. Ein systemtheoretischer Entwurf zur Ausdifferenzierung des englischen Romans vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1997.

Reinfandt, Christoph, "Reading the Waste Land: Textuality, Mediality, Modernity." In: Hannes Bergthaller, Carsten Schinko, eds., *Addressing Modernity: Social Systems Theory and U.S. Cultures*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2011: 63-84.

Reinfandt, Christoph, "Systems Theory." In: Martin Middeke et al., eds., *English and American Studies: Theory and Practice*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2012: 231-237.

Stöckmann, Ingo, *Vor der Literatur. Eine Evolutionstheorie der Poetik Alteuropas*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2001.

5) Theories of Modernisation

- Currie, Mark, *Difference. The New Critical Idiom*. London/New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Degele, Nina & Christian Dries, *Modernisierungstheorie. Eine Einführung*. München: Fink (UTB), 2005.
- Elias, Norbert, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* [1939]. 2 Bände. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1997.
- Elias, Norbert, *Die Gesellschaft der Individuen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1987.
- Junge, Matthias, *Individualisierung*. Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 2002.
- Luhmann, Niklas, *Theory of Society* [1997]. 2 vols. Trans. Barrett Rhodes. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2012/2013.
- Ritzer, George, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, rev. ed. 1996.
- Robertson, Roland, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage, 1992.
- Robertson, Robert, Kathleen E. White, eds., *Globalization: Critical Concepts in Sociology*. 6 Vols. London: Routledge, 2003.
- Rosa, Hartmut, *Beschleunigung: Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2005.
- Schimanek, Uwe, *Theorien gesellschaftlicher Differenzierung*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2000.