Spring 2020 Course Description

Instructor: Shawna Ross
Course: ENGL 390
Title: Digital Modernism

Description: This course examines both the ways in which British and American modernist writers responded to emergent digital technologies and networked communication practices and to the ways that modernist literature is perpetuated into the 21st century through the Internet by way of digital editions, viral culture, and amateur digital scholarship. A unit defining modernism precedes units on Telephony and Telegraphy; Writing Machines; Industrial Machines; Early Theories of the Internet; Digital Editions; and Viral Cultures. Readings in modernist literature about digital technologies include poems, short stories, plays, essays, novellas, and novels by writers such as T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Hope Mirrlees, Claude McKay, and Mina Loy. These will be supplemented by literary criticism and academic cultural histories.

The technological content of the course will be complemented by the hybrid methods by which this course is run. Like the authors we read, we will communicate with each other via a rich network of virtual and material interfaces. Rather than meet twice or thrice weekly in the classroom, we meet once weekly to discuss course readings. Before course meetings, you will read course texts, listen to podcasts, and participate in interactive Twitter threads. This way, lively, informed, and lateral discussions (not hierarchical, passive lectures!) will take center stage when we are all together in LAAH.


Henry James, The Turn of the Screw & In the Cage (Modern Library Classics, 9780375757402)

Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, annotated and edited by Melba Kuddy Keane (Mariner, 978-0156034739)

You need to acquire the above texts in this exact physical format. All other course texts are digital surrogates made available for free via hyperlinks and uploaded files on Blackboard.