**Twentieth-Century English Novel**

**ENGL 4374/5374**

**CRN 19435/19472**

**Fall Semester, 2014**

**Irby 313**

**2:40-3:55 TTh**

**Richard Gaughan**

**Course Syllabus:**

The twentieth century saw the flowering of what has come to be called the “art novel,” by which is usually meant a kind of novel that manifests a great deal of self-consciousness about the nature, possibilities, and limitations of language and narrative. The “art novel” is usually contrasted with the nineteenth-century “realistic” novel which, in the minds of the writers of the twentieth century, was a bit too concerned with entertaining and instructing mass audiences and not sufficiently concerned with artistic exploration and integrity. Naturally, this view of things is slanted in favor of the early Modernists who were struggling to free themselves from the imposing shadows of writers like Dickens, Thackeray, Eliot, and Trollope. Still, even when the “anxiety of influence” is factored in, there was an important change in the way the novel came to be regarded by its practitioners. Following the lead of writers like Gustav Flaubert, who aspired to make the novel as carefully made as a poem, the novelists of the twentieth century saw the novel not just as a way to tell an interesting story but also as a way to express and, in some ways, dramatize and embody the decline, disintegration, and fragmentation that was widely felt to be plaguing Western culture and even the individual human psyche. Experiments with tone, point of view, the treatment of time, the many and sometimes conflicting sides of individual personality, the interplay of conscious and unconscious forces in the human psyche all found their way into the novels of the Modernists. Instead of seeking wide audiences the way a Dickens or a Thackeray had, the Modernists eschewed popularity for the sake of artistic exploration and risk. Novelists no longer saw themselves primarily as moral guides or agents of social change, as did the Victorians. Instead, they saw themselves as isolated “culture heroes” trying to give shape to their vision in a hostile or indifferent world.

(It is also worth noting that some people who think about these things believe that the twentieth-century novel is really a return of the novel to its playful, skeptical, and disreputable origins. After all, they argue, *Don Quixote*, the novel widely regarded as the first modern novel, is about the main character’s bizarre attempts to “read” his world as a chivalric romance. Cervantes even has characters in the second part of the novel recognize Don Quixote from their having read the first part, thereby complicating already baffling questions of fiction and reality. These thinkers believe that just as the epic form expresses the fullness and coherence of a culture’s values and beliefs (like Achilleus’ shield in *The Iliad*) and tragedy expresses divisions and irreconcilable conflicts within those values and beliefs (Aristotle’s noble character who must nevertheless suffer horribly through no real fault of his own), the novel expresses a culture that has come to doubt whether there are any absolute or authoritative values at all (a rational and scientific culture). As a result of its intrinsic skepticism, as it were, the novel is more flexible than any other form and is given to playing with ideas about what can be known, what is real, and whether language and literature are lenses on an objective world, independent realities of their own, or just games we play to block out the nothingness of life.)

Much of this course will concentrate on some of the great works by some of the most influential of these twentieth-century novelists. We will begin by reading works by the great Modernists—Joseph Conrad, the great Polish-born writer who looked at the seemingly insoluble moral crises of the time, James Joyce, the great Irish writer who turned personal memory into myth and myth into low comedy, Virginia Woolf, who tried to capture in exquisite detail the dynamic and sometimes painful shifts and changes of everyday experience, and E. M. Forester, who wrote about friendship in the midst of colonialism’s blundering. Next, we will read a couple of works from the generation of novelists who followed the Modernists—Samuel Beckett’s *Molloy*, a novel about a tramp seeking both silence and his mother, and Flann O’Brien’s *The Third Policeman*, a crazy novel about life, death, literary obsession, and what footnotes really mean. To finish things off, we will read Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, a controversial novel about holy books, iron fists, and identities that just won’t stop changing.

**Reading List:**

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*

James Joyce, *Dubliners*

----------, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

E. M. Forester, *A Passage to India*

Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*

Flann O’Brien, *The Third Policeman*

Salman Rushdie, *Satanic Verses*

**Reading and Exam Schedule (approximate):**

*Heart of Darkness*: 3 classes

**Exam**

*Dubliners*: 3 classes

*Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: 4 classes

**Exam**

*To the Lighthouse*: 6 classes

*A Passage to India*: 6 classes

**Exam**

*Molloy*: 4 classes

*The Third Policeman*: 3 classes

**Exam**

*Satanic Verses*: 9 classes

**Final Exam**

There will be five essay exams in all. Needless to say, these exams will test your ability to analyze and interpret the novels we will be reading. Your grade will be based on the clarity and substance of your essays. Your final grade for the class will be based primarily on these exams, though class attendance and participation can figure in as well. Graduate students will also have to write an additional paper that involves some research and will have to endure a tutorial. This tutorial will involve the graduate students meeting with me once a week or so to discuss the works in greater depth (nod, nod, wink, wink) and talk about graduate student things.

Since this is an upper division course, I will forego my usual list of rules, rants, and threats. I expect that you will attend class regularly. If you don’t, I will notice and this might affect your final grade. I expect you to do your own work and not to plagiarize or cheat in any other way. Be nice to each other. You never know when you might need each other. Be nice to me. I control your future. Check out the *Student Handbook* for all the relevant policies on academics (starting on page 25) and sexual harassment (on page 93). Below, you will find the official words. Read them and stand in awe.

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university’s Academic Integrity Policy, as approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student’s acceptance of the university policy.

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans With Disabilities Act. If you need accommodations under this act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at 450-3416.

**Title IX disclosure**: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to “student-on-student” or “employee-on-student”), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved.  Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation.  Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances.  The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator.  For further information, please visit:  <https://uca.edu/titleix>.  *\*Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

Richard T. Gaughan

Office: 410 Irby

Office Phone: 450-5128

Office Hours: MWF 11-1, TTh 11-12 and 1:30-2:30, and by appointment

e-mail: [gaughanr@uca.edu](mailto:gaughanr@uca.edu)

Evaluations (Fall & Spring)  
Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the twelfth week of instruction [insert date] through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.