English 5313: Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury
Prof. Wendy Faris: Carlisle Hall 203B; x25484; wbfaris@uta.edu

January 18  Introduction(s)

January 25:  Beginnings

Andrew Mc Neillie, “Bloomsbury” (coursepack)
Virginia Woolf, “Old Bloomsbury” in Moments of Being
“A Bloomsbury Party” (coursepack)
Maynard Keynes “My Early Beliefs” (coursepack)
Discussion: Patrick Brantlinger, “‘The Bloomsbury Fraction’ versus War and Empire” (coursepack)
Optional (for general orientation): J.K. Johnstone, “Bloomsbury” (coursepack)

February 1  Victorians and Post-Victorians / Biography Renewed

Woolf, “22 Hyde Park Gate” in Moments of Being
Woolf, excerpt from Between the Acts (coursepack) (This is somewhat confusing to have just a snippit, but I thought you would enjoy Woolf’s parody of a Victorian picnic.)
Lytton Strachey, Eminent Victorians, preface and chapters on Florence Nightingale and Dr. Arnold
Barry Spurr, “Camp Mandarin: The Prose Style of Lytton Strachey” (coursepack)
Discussion: Simon Joyce, “On or About 1901: The Bloomsbury Group Looks Back at the Victorians” (coursepack)
Optional: Christine Froula, “On French and British Freedoms: Early Bloomsbury and the Brothels of Modernism” (coursepack)

February 8  The English Countryside and Personal Relations

E.M. Forster, Howards End
Virginia Woolf, “The Novels of E.M. Forster” (coursepack)
Read the essays by Stape and Widdowson in your volume
Discussion on one of those essays
February 15  **The Colonial Question and Emotional Life**

Forster,  *A Passage to India*
Anita Desai, excerpt from *Baumgartner’s Bombay* (an account of a similar experience from an Indian woman’s point of view)

**Discussion:** Antony Copley, “Forster and the Krishna Cult” (coursepack)

February 22  **The Colonial Question: (Pre-Bloomsbury) Bureaucracy**

Leonard Woolf,  *Growing*
Please bring  *A Passage to India* to class again in case we want to make comparisons.

**Short papers due on a subject of your choice.** Approximately 5 pages. Please be prepared to describe in a few sentences the most interesting point you discovered in writing your paper.
Optional: section on “Woolfian uncertainty” from Elleke Boehmer,  *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*

March 1  **The Visual Arts: The French Connection**


Art Show: Bloomsbury Painting and the French Post-Impressionists

**The Visual Arts: Theory and Practice at Home**

Woolf, “The Cinema” (coursepack)

**Discussion:** Isabelle Anscombe, “Roger Fry and the Foundation of the Omega Workshops” (coursepack)

March 8  **Two Generations / Art and Domesticity (and a literary masterpiece!)**

Woolf,  *To the Lighthouse*
Brandy Brown Walker, “Prefiguring the Psychoanalytic Subject” (coursepack)

**Discussion:** Paul Goring, “The Shape of *To the Lighthouse*: Lily Briscoe’s
March 15

SPRING VACATION

March 22

“A Virginia Woolf Miscellany,” or, Digesting and Discussing To the Lighthouse

Erich Auerbach, “The Brown Stocking” (coursepack)
Elizabeth Abel, “Spatial Relations: Lily Briscoe’s Painting” (coursepack)
Christine Froula, “Civilization and ‘my civilization’: Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde,” and “Picture the World: The Quest for the Thing Itself in to the Lighthouse” (coursepack)
Tonya Krause, “’I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess’: Lily Briscoe, Mrs. Ramsay, and the Postmodern Sublime” (coursepack)

Discussion: J. Hillis Miller, “Mr. Carmichael and Lily Briscoe: The Rhythm of Creativity in To the Lighthouse” (coursepack)
Optional: Gillian Beer, “Hume, Stephen, and Elegy in To the Lighthouse” (coursepack)

March 29

Narrative Collectivity / (Another) Portrait of the Artist

Woolf, The Waves
Woolf, “Modern Fiction” (coursepack)

Discussion: Jane Marcus, “Britannia Rules The Waves” (coursepack)

April 5

Genders

Woolf, A Room of One’s Own
Sandra Gilbert, “Woman’s Sentence, Man’s Sentencing: Linguistic Fantasies in Woolf and Joyce” (coursepack)

Discussion: Laura Marcus, “Woolf’s Feminism and Feminism’s Woolf” (coursepack)
Optional: Carolyn Heilbrun, “The Androgynous Vision in To the Lighthouse” (coursepack)
April 12  **Woolf the Essayist**


**Discussion:** Makiko Minow-Pinkney, “Virginia Woolf and the Age of Motor Cars” (coursepack)

Bette London, *The Appropriated Voice*, chapters 5 and 6 (coursepack)

Optional: Leonard and Virginia Woolf, “Are Too Many Books Written and Published?” (coursepack)

April 19  **Biography Revolutionized: The Androgynous Hero/ine**

Woolf, *Orlando*

Excerpt by Vita Sackville-West from Nigel Nicholson’s *Portrait of a Marriage* (coursepack)

**Discussion:** Suzanne Young, “The Unnatural Object of Modernist Aesthetics: Artifice in Woolf’s *Orlando*” (coursepack)

Optional: Lisa Rado. “‘A Toy Boat on the Serpentine—It’s Ecstasy. Ecstasy—Woolf’s Sublimating Sublime’” (coursepack)

Finale: E.M. Forster “Virginia Woolf” (coursepack)

April 24, May 1  **Student reports on final seminar papers**

May 1  **Final Seminar Papers due**


Course Description:

This course will study the influential group of literary and visual artists and intellectuals in early 20th century London known as Bloomsbury. Bloomsbury constituted a nucleus of literary and artistic innovation, and its texts mark the shift between 19th and 20th century cultures and styles, a shift that included the questioning of established ideas about sexuality and gender, the move toward non-objective painting, and experiments in narrative technique that ventured beyond realism in fiction.

Because the most important literary figure in Bloomsbury is Virginia Woolf, we will read several of her works. While our primary project will be to closely analyze Woolf’s masterful and innovative fiction, in which she portrays life as a “luminous halo, a transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end,” we
will also follow a number of critical narratives that have grown up around her work, including psychoanalytical interpretations, feminist and postcolonial perspectives, cultural studies that describe the way Woolf’s work reflects its age of mechanical reproduction, and trace the growth of a contemporary ”Virginia Woolf Icon” (as one scholar has phrased it), in order to understand the imbrication of this work in modern and contemporary culture. Woolf’s innovative fiction is balanced by the stylistically more traditional (yet sexually and intellectually adventurous) novels of E.M. Forster, whose Howards End and A Passage to India are masterpieces of late realism, and reflect contemporaneous issues concerning gender roles, industrialization, and colonialism.

Leading members of Bloomsbury also made important contributions to other disciplines, so that as our study broadens out from these central literary figures, it becomes an interdisciplinary investigation of early 20th century British and European culture and society. Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own is a seminal contribution to modern feminist thought. Leonard Woolf’s autobiography provides a polemical inside view of the work and problems of the final phase of colonialism in India. Lytton Strachey revolutionized the art of biography with his (often hilarious) and iconoclastic portraits of Eminent Victorians. The aestheticians Clive Bell and Roger Fry introduced the Post-Impressionist painters to England and theorized modern aesthetics, laying down the foundations for the formalism that contemporary criticism is now (partly) deconstructing. Those activities influenced the paintings of Bloomsbury painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, as well as Woolf’s fiction. That painterly influence will allow us to engage in some interartistic work, comparing Woolf’s fiction to the painting that influenced it.

Course Objectives: To gain an understanding of the Bloomsbury Group, both its texts and cultural contexts, especially the innovative fictions of its most important literary member, Virginia Woolf, and to increase skills in reading, discussing, and writing about literature and culture.

Requirements: In addition to reading the texts and participating in seminar discussions (including the leading of one discussion on a critical text for about 20 minutes—see syllabus where “discussion” is indicated) (20%), students will write one short paper of about 5 pages (15%), and one final seminar paper of approximately 20 pages (65%), including library research, and present a short report (ungraded but required) on that paper to the seminar.

Attendance policy: More than two unexcused absences will lower the course grade by one letter.
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