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ENG 5006-001: Studies in 20th Century British Lit

Chris Wixson
Eastern Illinois University

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Eng 5006: Blitz Modernism and the 1940s in British Fiction

fall 2016 / Section 001

Dr. Chris Wixson



“There is still an astonishingly general belief, or hope, or perhaps a mixture of both, that something will happen. What that something may be remains vague, but it is argued that enough things have happened already to confound anybody who imagined that this war was going to adhere to the rules.” ---Mollie Panter-Downes, *London War Notes* October 29, 1939

“This is a time for *hard* writers.” ---Elizabeth Bowen (1941)

course philosophy

This course is an experiment as it endeavors to stage a meaningful collision between literature and other forms of public writing. It is research-centered, offering opportunities for locating primary sources from digital archives as well as more “traditional” secondary sources of literary criticism and historical scholarship. The endgame is to employ these varied sources in a polished, articulate argumentative 18-20 page essay.

This seminar will begin by exploring five cornerstone novels from the period, written by Elizabeth Bowen, Henry Green, Graham Greene, Patrick Hamilton, and Virginia Woolf. These texts have been chosen not only because they engage with Modernist architecture of time, space, genre, consciousness, and narrative as well as with issues of class, gender, nationality, race, and sexuality but also because they enact configurations of memory, history, identity, and representation that are unique to the period.

The middle section of the course will give seminarians the rare opportunity to pursue archival research (as part of their projects) using the newly digitized Mass Observation Archive, begun in 1937 as a national life writing project about everyday experience in Britain produced by volunteer correspondents. As each seminarian pursues an independent research agenda, class sessions will be used for progress reports, short and feature-length film screenings, and discussions about scholarly research and writing via literary criticism of the five novels.

Following peer review of first drafts, as final revisions and presentations get underway, we will conclude the course by reading together a representation of the period by the contemporary British writer Sarah Waters entitled *Night Watch*.

The work of a graduate-level course is largely self-directed so seminarians are expected to conceive and realize a substantial piece of scholarship throughout the term. Course reading and class discussion are meant to facilitate each seminarian’s writing projects.

Learning Outcomes

1. To demonstrate proficient skill at primary and secondary research, critical reading, analytical thinking, and argumentative writing.
2. To demonstrate classroom citizenship through responsible, respectful, and meaningful participation in class discussion (speaking *and* listening), class presentation, and collaborative inquiry.

course texts

The Heat of the Day (1949), Elizabeth Bowen *Party Going* (1939), Henry Green

The Ministry of Fear (1943), Graham Greene *The Slaves of Solitude* (1947), Patrick Hamilton

Night Watch (2006), Sarah Waters *Between the Acts* (1941), Virginia Woolf

Selected non-fiction from contemporary periodicals and the Mass Observation archive

Selected short stories and short and feature-length films (*The Gentle Sex*, *Brief Encounter*, *The Ministry of Fear*, *Mrs. Miniver*, and *Return of the Vampire*)

contact information

Dr. Chris Wixson

cmwixson@eiu.edu

Coleman Hall 3771

Office Hours: TR 9-10:30, T 2-4, and by appointment



“Fete in Russell Square, 1943”

final grades

Your final grade in the course will be determined by your performance on the following assignments:

Short Critical Papers (three in total, due 9/8, 10/20, and 12/8)	15%
Research Grant Application/Annotated Bibliography	20%
Scholarly Essay (18-20 pages)	50%
DL Presentations/Research Reports/Film Hosting/Meaningful Participation	15%

**All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

attendance

Mandatory.

I expect you to be in class awake and prepared every Thursday afternoon. In other words, arrive on time with your reading/writing assignment completed, prepared to participate in discussion. Because so much in this course relies upon in-class work, absences and habitual lateness will adversely affect your course performance. Attendance will be taken at each class session – you are allowed **one** unexcused absence before your grade is negatively affected. **More than two unexcused absences will result in a “O” for participation. More than four unexcused absences will result in a grade of no credit for the course. Habitual lateness (beyond once) will also affect your grade negatively since it is disruptive and disrespectful.** Please notify me by email if there is unexpected illness or an emergency that causes you to miss class. Any unexcused absence will seriously undermine your success in this course.

class participation

Mandatory.

You should come to class *with an agenda*. Put another way, you should come to each session *prepared to teach* and *prepared to engage*.

Participation in an inquiry-based, graduate-level course means careful, full preparation of the reading, frequent contributions to discussions, risk-taking in writing and thinking. You should come to each session armed with observations, opinions, questions, and insights, ready to take an active part in the ongoing dialogue about the course materials. Class participation means that you work actively to stretch yourself intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually AND that you work actively to contribute to the class's overall movement and success. (This might mean, for example, moving from merely your position during class discussion to striving to promote dialogue between yourself and other students). In addition to your required short papers, what else you bring to share need not be written out but should refer to specific passages in the reading as the basis for formulating a broader discussion topic or questions.

****It is unethical for graduate students to do either of the following:**

1) Remain in your comfort zone, not talk in class, and justify the silence by saying you are 'just the type of person who likes to sit back and listen to what everyone else has to say.' Certainly, listening is a premium in this class and is a crucial human skill. But real listening only happens in an exchange. Letting everyone else do the talking means that you're not really listening because you are busy keeping yourself safe. Of course, this 'safety' is an illusion.

2) Remain in your comfort zone, not talk in class, and justify the silence because you assume that you don't know enough to participate in class and other people (especially those who talk) do. To approach the class and the work in a way that suggests that one can speak only about what is already known is not only dangerous, but it's also intellectually lazy.

Although I'm likely to talk a bit (that's my character), I won't give lectures, and the content and direction of the class is largely in your hands. In other words, I will serve as a resource and facilitator and occasionally cranky curmudgeon, but it's your class to shape and energize. Individually and collectively, this course (and graduate study in general) carries with it a responsibility **to drive** the inquiry and conversation, not rely on others to do so.

course writing

****The intellectual pre-writing work for our assignments will be challenging and time-consuming. Managing the reading and writing schedule will take dedication and energy. Start early on everything, and it is expected that you will be working closely with me during your writing process.**

****Each paper you submit in this course must be uniformly double-spaced, use Times 12 Font, and employ one-inch margins all around. The paper's heading should only include your name.**

****In all of your papers this term, do not analyze the novel to produce its "theme" or approach it as a puzzle to work out. Do not describe how ideas/images/language in the novel "relate" to your biographical experiences in the past or at the moment. Avoid simplistic platitudes, fortune-cookie aphorisms, and easy Aesopian morals.**

long scholarly paper

Graduate coursework necessitates self-direction and skills of time-management. We will develop this paper through a formalized process, enabling the opportunity for each seminarian to practice various academic genres. Please see separate assignment sheets for the grant proposal and the annotated bibliography in D2L. One approach that is off-limits is biography. Please do not use the novels as vehicles to psycho-analyze their author. Such arguments are specious and speculative, lacking literary insight and rigor.

It is important to identify as early as possible in the term your area of interest for the scholarly paper. I am assuming seminarians are bringing with them critical problems and issues of interest to them from earlier coursework. Reading all five novels right out of the gate is also intended to immerse you in a sea of possible research directions. This paper is a course capstone, a piece of work whose next destination could (or should) be a professional conference. It is imperative to begin immediately to formulate a topic, coupling the interests you bring to the course with you with one of our five novels.

**I had to make difficult choices for the course reading list; if you are interested in working on an author writing during the period not included here (such as Mollie Panter-Downes, Evelyn Waugh, Nancy Mitford, Elizabeth Taylor, or Ian Fleming), let's talk about the possibilities as soon as possible.

**When a topic is chosen, a good place to start is the Oxford Bibliography of British and Irish Literature. You also will need to consider what part primary source material from the MO archives will play.

short critical papers

While active class discussion stemming from close and reflective reading is expected of all members of this seminar, you will also be assigned short pieces of writing (2-3 single-spaced pages, 1-inch margins all around, Times 12 Font) called "excavation" papers in which you will engage with literary criticism. Prompts for these papers are located on the course schedule. Because these papers are primarily to inspire and animate class discussion, **no late "excavation" papers will be accepted, except under extreme, emergency circumstances.**

cell phone and computer use

You may bring your computer to class with you, assuming that you use it in a scholarly and responsible fashion. This means that you will only have applications and windows related to the current discussion open. **You may not check** email, Facebook, or box scores, surf the web, send texts or Tweets, play games, or otherwise distract yourself and those around you from the class conversation with your computer. You are likewise expected to use cell phones in a responsible manner: **turn them off when you come in to class.** If you have an emergency for which you must be available, you must discuss it with me beforehand and keep your phone on vibrate. **Under no conditions are you allowed to** text message, take pictures or video (illegal in class), play games, or use the cell phone in any other manner during class. The nature of our scholarly endeavor together necessitates mutual respect and dedicated attention during the too short time we have to discuss these texts. Violating any of these policies will result in your participation grade being lowered by a full letter grade for each violation.

academic integrity

Any paper with your name on it signifies that you are the author—that the wording and major ideas are yours, with exceptions indicated by either quotation marks and/or citations. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use (appropriation and/or imitation) of others' materials (words and ideas). We will discuss how to avoid it. Evidence of plagiarism will result in one or more of the following: a failing grade for the assignment, an F in the course, and a report filed with the Student Standards Office.

special needs and situations

If you have a *documented* disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.



discussion leader (DL) responsibilities

While active class discussion stemming from close and reflective reading is expected of all members of this seminar, you will be assigned to be a discussion leader **three** times during the semester. In this position, you will lead discussion through thoughtful questions and activities that are text-specific for you and your colleagues to facilitate engagement and to make connections to other authors and ideas.

Keep in mind that a discussion leader does not lecture. Instead, you are facilitating discussion. Your role is to get your colleagues talking about the article in a fruitful and responsible way. You're not filling people's heads (the banking concept of education) via lecture, so you need to direct an engaging discussion that is thoughtfully planned and carefully plotted. Please avoid broad, open-ended questions that tend to forestall good conversation such as "What did you all think about this article?" or "Did you agree or disagree with this argument?" Instead, make your goal *teaching through discussion*. You should plan to use 15-20 minutes for directing discussion and/or activities related to the article you're assigned.

When assigned to a contemporary critical essay, leaders are responsible for (1) presenting the article to the class in a way that summarizes the argument therein and that facilitates discussion, and (2) hazarding some ideas about how the critical work might re-shape our understanding of the material --- or even how the perspective it develops might be limiting in certain ways. Meeting this second requirement requires

that presenters take the critical framework developed in the essay to bear upon a passage from our course readings *not discussed in that essay*. Since the critical works will be complex, leaders should supply handouts outlining the argument and highlighting key passages. (These should not provide a “script” for the presentation, however — presenters should not simply read from a text for their report. Instead, you should show the ability to “talk to” the material. In other words, you should understand the essay well enough to talk about it on your feet.) **All** seminar members must read the critical essay by the night during which it is discussed. Leaders may collaborate on in-class discussion and activities or not.

For film “hosting,” please provide a short introduction to the film, providing relevant background information and even some guidance on what to look for during the screening. Afterwards, lead a discussion of the film specifically situating it within the context of our course.



Modernism – three working scholarly definitions

“The starting point of Modernism is the crisis of belief that pervades twentieth-century western culture: loss of faith, experience of fragmentation and disintegration, and the shattering of cultural symbols and norms.”—Susan Friedman

“Modernism refers to “the tendency of experimental literature of the early twentieth century to break away from traditional verse forms, narrative techniques, and generic conventions in order to seek new methods of representation appropriate to life in an urban, industrial, mass-oriented age.” It staged “an artistic and literary response to a widespread sense that the ways of knowing and representing the world . . . distorted the actual experience of reality, of art, and of literature.” That is to say, modernism marks “a crisis in what could be represented and a crisis in how it should be represented.” --Pericles Lewis

“Modernism is a cultural movement that rebelled against Victorian mores, a culture that emphasized nationalism and cultural absolutism. Victorians placed humans over and outside of nature. They believed in a single way of looking at the world, and in absolute and clear-cut dichotomies between right and wrong, good and bad, and hero and villain. Further, they saw the world as being governed by God's will, and that each person and thing in this world had a specific use. Finally, they saw the world as neatly divided between "civilized" and "savage" peoples. According to Victorians, the "civilized" were those from industrialized nations, cash-based economies, Protestant Christian traditions, and patriarchal societies; the "savage" were those from agrarian or hunter-gatherer tribes, barter-based economies, "pagan" or "totemistic" traditions, and matriarchal (or at least "unmanly" societies).

In contrast, Modernists rebelled against Victorian ideals. Blaming Victorianism for such evils as slavery, racism, and imperialism—and later for World War I—Modernists emphasized humanism over nationalism, and argued for cultural relativism. Modernists emphasized the ways in which humans were part of and responsible to nature. They argued for multiple ways of looking at the world, and blurred the Victorian dichotomies by presenting antiheroes, uncategorizable persons, and anti-art movements like Dada. Further, they challenged the idea that God played an active role in the world, which led them to challenge the Victorian assumption that there was meaning and purpose behind world events. Instead, Modernists argued that no thing or person was born for a specific use; instead, they found or made their own meaning in the world. Challenging the Victorian dichotomy between "civilized" and "savage," Modernists reversed the values associated with each kind of culture. Modernists presented the Victorian "civilized" as greedy and warmongering (instead of being industrialized nations and cash-based economies), as hypocrites (rather than Christians), and as enemies of freedom and self-realization (instead of good patriarchs). Those that the Victorians had dismissed (and subjugated) as "savages" the Modernists saw as being the truly civilized-responsible users of their environments, unselfish and family-oriented, generous, creative, mystical and full of wonder, and egalitarian. These "savages," post-WWI Modernists pointed out, did not kill millions with mustard gas, machine-guns, barbed wire, and genocidal starvation.” --Catherine Lavender

tech support

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the "My Home" page after logging in to D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available on the same page. For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-581-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, contact your instructor.

Eng 5006: 1940s British Fiction

Fall 2016

Dr. Chris Wixson

course calendar

**Because this schedule can and probably will change, it is imperative that you bring it to every class session so as to make the appropriate revisions. Secondary readings are available either via D2L (book chapters) or via Booth Library scholarly databases (usually JSTOR or Project Muse).

** These writers and filmmakers extend to their readers and viewers unique and often profound experiences that will be seriously undermined by introductory essays, Wikipedia entries, Google searches, and Sparknote resources. Consider this statement a formal Spoiler Alert.

August 25 Excerpt from Green's *Party Going* (1939)

Thomas S. Davis, "Late Modernism and the Outward Turn" (pp. 1-14)

Three Working Definitions of Modernism (located on course syllabus)

**In addition to reading, please research Henry Moore's shelter drawings, spend some time with them, and be prepared to talk about ways in which they speak to the novel in content and form

September 1 The "Phoney War" / "The Bore War" (September 1939-May 1940)

Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Britain*, pp. 39-44

Excerpt from *Wartime Women: A Mass Observation Anthology* (73-122)

Woolf's *Between the Acts* (1941)

**Look especially for relationships that emerge between the novel and Muriel Green's diary

**In-class screening Humphrey Jennings' *London Can Take It* (1940) / *Listen to Britain* (1942) / *Words for Battle* (1941) (@45 minutes total)

8 The "Blitz" (September 1940-May 1941)

Bowen's "The Demon Lover" "The Mysterious Kôr" "Oh, Madam" * "In Pink May," and "The Inherited Clock"

Anna Kavan's "Glorious Boys" and excerpts from "Our City"

Bowen, "London, 1940" and Preface to "The Demon Lover" (D2L)

Deborah L. Parsons, "Souls Astray: Elizabeth Bowen's Landscape of War" (1997) (*Women: A Cultural Review*) DL: Thornton

Sara Wasson, Introduction to *Urban Gothic of the Second World War* (2011) DL: ??Lamb

Thomas S. Davis, "Elizabeth Bowen's War Gothic" (*Textual Practice*) DL: Picken

**In-class screenings of Lew Landers' *Return of the Vampire* (1944); 69m. Host: Kastl

Optional Reading: Rick Worland's "OWI Meets the Monsters: Hollywood Horror Films and War Propaganda, 1942-1945." *Cinema Journal* 37:1 (1997)

PROMPT: In a 2-3 page single-spaced essay, enter the scholarly conversation around the neo-Gothic by effectively integrating the work of these scholars into your critical prose as you make an argument about one of Bowen's stories and one of Kavan's stories. *Show your understanding in the way you respond and use other critical ideas while making your argument rather than by telling (mere summary).*

15 Bowen's *The Heat of the Day* (1949)

**When she was asked by interviewers in 1959 what the relation of writing to the world was, Bowen replied: "Just as in an air raid, if you were a warden, which I was, you stomp up and down the streets making a clatter with the boots you are wearing, knowing you can't prevent a bomb falling, but thinking, 'At any rate I'm taking part in this, I may be doing some good.'"

Excerpt from *Hearts Undefeated* (pp. 393-420)

**First half of novel due -- intro to MO archive and discussion of sociology versus literature

22 *The Heat of the Day*

Claire Seiler's "At Midcentury: Elizabeth Bowen's *The Heat of the Day*"
(*Modernism/Modernity*)

Anna Teekell's "Elizabeth Bowen and Language at War" (*New Hibernia Review*)

Kristine A. Miller's "'Even a Shelter's Not Safe': The Blitz on Homes" (*Twentieth Century Literature*) DL:

**In-class group writing project: James Harker, "Misperceiving Virginia Woolf" *Journal of Modern Literature* 34:2 (2011) -- (Apply to Bowen)

29 Hamilton's *Slaves of Solitude* (1947)

Marina Mackay, "Is Your Journey Really Necessary?: Going Nowhere in Late Modernist London"
PMLA (2009) DL: Kastl

John Mepham, "Varieties of Modernism, Varieties of Incomprehension" DL:Lamb??

October 6 Graham Greene's *The Ministry of Fear* (1943)

Petra Rau, "The Common Frontier" *Literature & History* 14:1 DL: Picken

Leo Mellor, "The Haunted City" (D2L) DL: Villarreal

Amy Bell, "Landscapes of Fear: Wartime London 1939-45" (2009) DL: Thornton

**In addition to reading, please go to the British Pathé films website, search "Blitz," and peruse the 38 newsreel shorts housed there. Choose one or two and be prepared to provide some insights as to their relevance to our understandings of Greene's novel.

13 Introduction to the Mass Observation project (short readings and library session)

Nick Hubble's Introduction to *Mass-Observation and Everyday Life: Culture, History, Theory*

20 In-class screening of Ealing's *Dead of Night* (1945) – 104m. Host: Lamb

Critical Panel on Woolf and *Between the Acts*

Patricia Klindienst Joplin, "The Authority of Illusion: Feminism and Fascism in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*" *South Central Review* 6:2 (1989)

Alex Zwerdling, "*Between the Acts* and the Coming of War" *Novel* 10:3 (1977)

Marina Mackay, "Putting the House in Order" *MLQ* 66:2 (2005)

Marina Mackay, "Virginia Woolf and the Pastoral Patria" from *Modernism and World War II* (2007)

PROMPT: In 2-3 single-spaced pages, situate yourself critically in relation to the articles due for this session. Academic professionals often find themselves in the position of "respondent" on a conference panel. That person is given the papers presented on the panel a month or so early and asked to relate the papers together, identifying convergences and divergences, and (most importantly) synthesizing their arguments together to produce an original point. In other words, the respondent answers the question: "The arguments of all these papers taken together, so what?" So your task here is not simply to respond to each article ("I agree with..." / "I don't agree with...") but, again, to synthesize them together to help build a larger argument all your own. What larger interpretive implications in relation to our understandings of Woolf's novel do these articles have when considered together?

27 In-class screening of Leslie Howard's *The Gentle Sex* (1943) - 92m. Host: Villarreal
Grant Application Due / Peer Review

November 3 In-class screening of Fritz Lang's *The Ministry of Fear* (1944) - 86m. Host: Thornton
MO "Research Report" Pecha Kucha

10 In-class screening of David Lean's *Brief Encounter* (1945) - 86m; Host: Picken
Annotated Bibliography of Long Scholarly Essay Due

17 In-class screening of William Wyler's *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) - 133m. Host: Wixson
First Draft of Long Scholarly Essay Due

HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!!

December 1 Waters' *Night Watch* part one
Maria Margaronis' "The Anxiety of Authenticity" DL: Villarreal
Calder:

8 *Night Watch* Part Two

Katharina Boehm's "Historiography and the Material Imagination in the Novels of Sarah Waters," *Studies in the Novel* 43:2 (Summer 2011).

Linda Hutcheon's "Irony, Nostalgia, and the Postmodern"

PROMPT: In 2-3 single-spaced pages, enter into conversation with these two critical voices and our literary texts by responding to the following question: Looking backwards at fictional texts by Elizabeth Bowen, Graham Greene, and/or Patrick Hamilton through the lens of *Night Watch* and Hutcheon's argument, to what extent is 1940s fiction about the Blitz itself ironic? nostalgic? postmodern?

**Last Session: Thursday, December 15th, 7:15-7:15
Final Draft of Long Scholarly Essay Due / Presentation

Lecture: 1940-41 – the Battles for Britain and the Blitz

General:

A. Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-45* (London, 1992 [1969])
(old but still best overall book on Britain in the war)

J. Gardiner, *Wartime: Britain 1939-1945* (London, 2004)
(good on experiences of normal Britons)

R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain in the Second World War* (Manchester, 2002)

Essential Reading

G. Field, 'Nights Underground in Darkest London: The Blitz, 1940-1941', *Cercles* 17 (2007), 181-217,
Calder, *People's War*, Ch. 4, 6, 7, 9
Gardiner, *Wartime*, Ch. 2, 9, 10-15

Wider Reading

T. Harrison, *Living Through the Blitz* (1976) Ch. 1-4, 9-17
R. Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain in the Second World War* (2002)
A. Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (1993)
C. Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (1990)

Although our focus is on period representations of the Blitz, there is a useful repository of memories gathered by the BBC in the first decade of the 21st century that can also be a resource:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/categories/>
