

ENG 503 **T. S. Eliot: Poet, Critic, Playwright**
ΑΓΓ 503 **Τ. Σ. Ελιοτ: Ποιητής, Κριτικός, Δραματουργός**

Tuesdays and Fridays 13:30 – 15:00, Room A108 (Kallipolews campus)

Seminar Leader: Dr Christos Hadjiyiannis

Office hours: Tuesdays 16:00-18:00 / Room M106 (Kallipolews campus)

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T. S. Eliot portrait, by Wyndham Lewis (1938) *Durban Municipal Art Gallery*
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Course rationale, content, and learning outcomes

Welcome to *T. S. Eliot: Poet, Critic, Playwright*, an elective course which will introduce you to the work of T. S. Eliot – one of the most influential (certainly the most recognised) Anglophone modernists. During the course of this semester, we will study Eliot’s poetry, his criticism, and some of his drama. By the end of the course, you should:

1. have learnt how to write about poetry in a way that demonstrates an ability to analyse and conduct an argument with appropriately and accurately supplied textual and contextual evidence;
2. have an accurate knowledge of the poetry and some of the prose and drama of Eliot;
3. have developed your ability to respond to the music and form of poetry, not just an ability to paraphrase its content;
4. be able to deploy critical judgment;
5. have an understanding of Eliot’s work which is informed by older and by more recent developments in Eliot’s criticism;
6. have a developed ability to recall and identify complex information and sources, to arrange evidence in a clear and subtle argument, and to interpret a range of paper and electronic resources;
7. have delivered work in good order and in good time.

We will follow Eliot's work in rough chronological order – beginning from the earliest poetry which he wrote during his student days and his first collection, *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1915) right through to *The Waste Land* (1922), *The Hollow Men* (1925), *Asb Wednesday* (1930), the beautiful and moving *Four Quartets* (1942), and occasional verses composed in his late years. Alongside his poetry, we will study some of his most significant literary essays: 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 'The Metaphysical Poets', and 'Ulysses, Order, Myth', among others. We will also read one of Eliot's verse dramas, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935).

Set texts

It is important that you purchase and bring the following two books with you to all seminar meetings. I've asked Parga bookshop (on new campus) to bring copies of the set reading; you can buy them from there, or make different arrangements. You are expected to read them in their entirety, and to refer to them in your response papers, presentations, and group discussions:

T. S. Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969 or 2004)

T. S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975)

In 2015, the London publisher Faber (where Eliot worked as editor for many years) brought out in two volumes, a newer, complete, and expertly annotated edition of Eliot's poems: *The Poems of T. S. Eliot: Collected and Uncollected Poems* (vol. 1) and *Practical Cats and Further Verses* (vol. 2), both co-edited by Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue. I won't ask you to buy these volumes as they are expensive (and heavy!), but, if you were somehow able to source them, then I would highly recommend that you read through them. Occasionally, I may photocopy some of the poems collected in these volumes for you. I've also asked the librarians to order one copy each, so, at the very least, wander to the short loan section and browse through them.

The last few years have also seen the serial publication of *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot*, a project that will ultimately bring together all of Eliot's prose (all 1 million words of it): student papers, lectures, essays, articles, reports, reviews. The several volumes (some already published, some forthcoming) are available only online. If you ever get the chance to, do explore it; it is a great resource.

Course structure and workload

The seminars for this course have been designed – and are intended to be – forums for discussion, where the seminar leader facilitates conversation and ensures that everyone gets a chance to speak, as opposed to talking at students (which is what happens at lectures). You are all expected to participate – and to come prepared to comment and ask questions.

Some of the seminars will require you to write short responses (of approximately 300 words) to 2-3 questions on the assigned reading. The rationale behind this exercise (which is compulsory and assessed) is to check that we all have at least a good understanding of the texts, and also to ensure that, at all times, you are prepared to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. You will be asked to hand your short responses to the seminar leader at the beginning of each class (so you may want to bring two copies with you).

In addition to these occasional response papers, you will each have to do one group presentation on an assigned text (or texts). During your presentation, which must last 20 minutes, you must work with the other group members to offer, jointly, an interpretation of the text that pays attention to its content, argument, and historical, cultural, and biographical context. You should also try to relate the text to Eliot's poetry: i.e. explain how, if at all, the text on which you are

presenting helps us read Eliot's creative work. You will be assigned texts and split into groups by week 3.

Assessment

As well as occasional short response papers and one group presentation each, all students taking the class must write a 2,500-word (excluding bibliography but including notes) essay on a topic of your choice (which must be, however, approved by me). The deadline for handing in this essay is the date that will be assigned by the university for the final exam. By **Tuesday 2 April**, you have to hand in to me a provisional title of your final essay and a short abstract of not more than 150 words (in which you expand on your research question and the texts that you will be studying). You are, of course, welcome to discuss this with me during my office hours.

Assessment for the course will be calculated as follows:

Response papers and class attendance/contribution – 30%

Group presentations – 20%

2,500-word essay – 50%

Attendance, Participation, and Punctuality

Attendance is obligatory, as are participation and timely completion of all assignments in good order. In the exceptional cases you are not able to attend class, you must inform the seminar leader in time and (in cases where you have been assigned a response paper), you must also submit your response papers by e-mail before class or very soon thereafter. At all times, you must let me know in good time whether you are not able to attend. It is also imperative that you show up on time.

Introductory reading

As an introduction to the course, start by reading the following book (which is available online, through the university library, as an electronic text):

Steve Ellis, *T. S. Eliot: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum, 2009)

If you wanted to read about Eliot's life, a good place to start would be either Lyndall Gordon's *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: Norton, 1998) or Robert Crawford's *Young Eliot: From St Louis to 'The Waste Land'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2015), which is excellent on Eliot's early years.

Course Syllabus (with Essential Reading & Questions)

** It is imperative that you do all the assigned reading and come to class prepared to discuss ALL the texts you've been asked to read.

Texts marked with * will be given to you as handouts a week in advance (but many of these are available online, so you may want to search for them)

Week 1 **Tuesday 15 January**
Welcome & Introduction

Friday 18 January
Early poems: 'First Caprice in North Cambridge'*; 'Second Caprice in North Cambridge'*; 'Interlude in London'*

Although you don't have to write a response paper for this class, read carefully (and more than once) through these short poems. Consider the tone, rhyme, metre, and other formal characteristics – what do you notice? Which one do you like the best – and why? With which themes does Eliot deal at this early stage in his career?

Week 2 **Tuesday 22 January**
'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and Arthur Symon's essay on Jules Laforgue*

You do not have to write a response paper this week either, but you must come to class ready to discuss the opening poem of the collection *Prufrock and Other Poems*, entitled 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

You must also read Arthur Symon's essay on Jules Laforgue (which Eliot read and which, as he admitted, he found very influential). You will already have been given photocopies of this essay, but it is also available on the web: search for Jules Laforgue, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, and scroll down to his chapter on Laforgue.

Think about the following questions: Who was Jules Laforgue, and what do you think his influence on Eliot might have been? Regarding Eliot's poem, who talks in it, what narrative technique does the poem use, and what do you think the poem is about? Read it out loud paying attention to the formal breaks – how does it feel reading it?

Friday 25 January
'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'; 'Reflections on *Vers Libre*'; Hulme, 'A Lecture on Modern Poetry' (excerpt)*

Again, no response papers for this week, but, as with the previous week, read the two poems and Eliot's essay carefully. Pay attention to the poems' form, metre, rhythm, rhyme (their musicality) and think about what they might mean. Do you have any favourite moments? Is there one metaphor that strikes you in particular? Come to class prepared to discuss them. At the same time, read Eliot's essay: what are his views on the use of rhythm, rhyme, and metre in English poetry? What

about Hulme? What does he propose as the method of modern poetry? Can you see this method executed in Eliot's poetry?

Week 3

Tuesday 29 January

'Gerontion'

Read the poem carefully. Don't lose courage if you find it difficult. Mark any words you don't know and try to find out what lies behind the poems' many allusions. Why do you think Eliot uses so many allusions? What do you think 'Gerontion' is about?

Friday 1 February

'Tradition and the Individual Talent'

Response paper:

This 1919 essay is perhaps Eliot's most famous contribution to modernist poetics. Read it carefully and try to reconstruct its argument. Write a short response (about 300 words in total) addressing the following questions:

- 1) What does Eliot mean by 'historical sense'?
- 2) Who, according to Eliot, should decide which poets are important?
- 3) What is the relationship between 'tradition' and a poet's 'individual talent'?

Remember to hand a copy of your response paper to me at the beginning of class.

Week 4

Tuesday 5 February

The Waste Land, parts I & II

Read Eliot's most famous poem in its entirety (even though this week we'll only be discussing sections I & II). Don't worry about understanding every reference in it, and don't be put off if it appears nonsensical: think instead about what this poetry seems to be trying to do, and what seems innovative about it to you. There are many line-by-line guides available, which you may want to consult – the best of these (such as B. C. Southam's *A Student's Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* (Faber, 1994)) elucidate the references without imposing a fixed interpretation on it. Remember that what you should be after is *informed* (and for this the guides can help) *interpretations* of the poem (and the interpretative lens I am interested in is yours alone).

Friday 8 February

'Ulysses, Order, Myth'

Presentation

For this week, group 1 must present the argument of Eliot's essay on Joyce in detail, giving, where necessary, relevant background information about its composition and reading back from it onto Eliot's poetry (e.g. how does Eliot's reading of 'contemporary history' in the essay play out in his poetry? – etc.) It is important that all members of the group speak.

All participants (irrespective of whether they are presenting or not) must read the essay and come to class ready to discuss it and ask questions.

Week 5**Tuesday 12 February**

The Waste Land, parts III, IV, & V

Re-read the poem in its entirety. As last week, don't worry about understanding every reference in it. Read it out loud to yourself or to a friend. Think about its formal structure – what is Eliot trying to do and show? Have you been consulting his notes? Do they help?

Friday 15 February

'The Metaphysical Poets'

Presentation

For this week, group 2 must present the argument of Eliot's essay in detail, giving, where necessary, relevant background information about its composition and reading back from it onto Eliot's poetry (e.g. does Eliot's notion of 'dissociation of sensibility' help us read some of his poetry? etc).

Week 6**Tuesday 19 February**

The Hollow Men

Response paper:

In 300 words, explain what, in your opinion, the poem's main theme is. Elucidate how this theme is conveyed (e.g. through language, metaphor, allusion, form).

Friday 22 February

'Ash Wednesday'

No response papers today, but, as in every other week, read the poem carefully and come ready to discuss it. What do you think its meaning is? Think especially about what the poem is trying to say about time, belongingness, and community. Eliot described it as being about the 'experience of man in search of God' – how is this experience presented in the poem?

Week 7**Tuesday 26 February**

'Religion and Literature'

Presentation

For this week, group 3 must present the argument of Eliot's essay in detail, giving, where necessary, relevant background information about its composition and reading back from it onto Eliot's poetry (e.g. what do you think Eliot means by religious poetry? Can you think of any examples of your own?)

Friday 1 March

'Journey of the Magi' and 'Marina'

No response papers, but read the two poems carefully and come to class ready to discuss them. What are they about? What are your favourite parts? Why?

Week 8**Tuesday 5 March***Four Quartets*: 'Burnt Norton'

There will be no response papers or presentations during the two weeks when we'll be studying Eliot's long poem, *Four Quartets*. But you must read carefully and be ready to discuss the section assigned for each week. In class, we will be focusing on some sections together, and you will all be expected to contribute.

Friday 8 March*Four Quartets*: 'East Coker'**Week 9****Tuesday 12 March***Four Quartets*: 'The Dry Salvages'**Friday 15 March***Four Quartets*: 'Little Gidding'**Week 10****Tuesday 19 March**

Eliot's politics: From *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (the excerpts in *Selected Prose*, ed. by Kermode)

Presentation

For this week, group 4 must present the argument put forward by Eliot in these excerpts, giving, where necessary, relevant background information about their composition. Try also to relate it to Eliot's poetry, especially *Four Quartets*.

Friday 22 MarchGUEST LECTURE

Dr Anna Kwiatkowska (UWM, Poland), who'll be at UCY for a teaching exchange visit, will give today's class. Dr Kwiatkowska has been invited to speak on Eliot and Katherine Mansfield and/or visual culture. Please be there on time and please be on your best selves.

Week 11**Tuesday 26 March***Murder in the Cathedral*

During today's class we will think about the main themes of the play and the ethical and political questions that Eliot addresses in his play – and if we have time we'll act some of it in class. this class, come ready to act out!

Friday 29 March

TODAY, INSTEAD OF COMING TO CLASS, WE'LL MEET AT THE LIBRARY. THE AIM IS TO BROWSE BOOKS AND THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO WRITE YOUR FINAL ESSAY ON. BY THE END OF CLASS, YOU SHOULD COME UP WITH A PROVISIONAL TITLE AND DRAW UP A LIST OF BOOKS/ARTICLES/WEBSITES YOU WILL BE USING. THE DEADLINE FOR HANDING IN YOUR PROVISIONAL TITLE AND ABSTRACT IS **TUESDAY 2 APRIL**.

Week 12 **Tuesday 2 April**
‘The Social Function of Poetry’ *

Presentation

For our last presentation this semester, group 5 must present the argument of the excerpt of Eliot’s essay, giving, where necessary, relevant background information about its composition and connecting it to Eliot’s own poetry.

Friday 5 April – DOUBLE CLASS

The final class will be a double session. We’ll spend the first part reading some fun stuff from *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*.

The second session will be a revision class, and our last chance to discuss – as a class – any lingering questions. We’ll finish off with the Grand T. S. Eliot Quiz! Winner takes home a prize.

Recommended Reading

Primary

Until the *Complete Prose* (now available online) comes out in print form in a few years’ time, if you wanted to read more of Eliot’s prose you would need to get hold of the following books:

The Sacred Wood (London: Methuen, 1920)– Eliot’s first book of criticism; includes essay ‘Hamlet and his Problems’

For Lancelot Andrewes (London: Faber & Faber, 1928) – the Preface features Eliot’s formulation of ‘classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion’.

The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry, ed. Ronald Schuchard (London: Faber & Faber, 1993) – lectures from 1926 and 1933 which show Eliot constructing his tradition.

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber & Faber, 1933)– lectures from the early 1930s which include (as section VI) Eliot’s lecture on Matthew Arnold where he discusses ‘the auditory imagination’.

After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London: Faber & Faber, 1934) – Eliot’s most controversial prose; he did not allow it to be reprinted.

Notes towards the Definition of Culture (London: Faber & Faber, 1948) – a valiant attempt, perhaps, but to many less important than the literary criticism.

Selected Essays, Third Enlarged Edition (London: Faber and Faber, 1951) – Eliot’s own largest selection of his prose

On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber & Faber, 1957) – contains, e.g., ‘Poetry and Drama’ (Digitized) and essays on ‘The Music of Poetry’, Milton, Kipling, and Yeats.

To Criticize the Critic (London: Faber & Faber, 1965)– includes the revealing ‘What Dante Means to Me’ and two good 1917 essays, on Ezra Pound and on ‘Vers Libre’.

The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts, ed. Valerie Eliot – a superb resource, giving access to the manuscripts and typescripts now held in the Berg Collection of New York Public Library; very revealing, and with a most useful introduction.

The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot’s Contemporary Prose, ed. Lawrence Rainey (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) – interesting but notorious for errors.

The Idea of a Christian Society, Second Edition (London: Faber & Faber, 1982) – reveals Eliot’s thinking at the start of World War II.

The Letters of T. S. Eliot, edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton (London: Faber & Faber,

2009) – richly revealing and readable, with great photographs of the younger Eliot.

Secondary

There are hundreds of books on Eliot. Here's only an indicative list:

Biographies

- Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1984)– impressive, not least because Ackroyd was forbidden to quote much of Eliot's work.
- Robert Crawford, *Young Eliot: From St Louis to 'The Waste Land'* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2015). By far the fullest account, and nicely written.
- Lyndall Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life* (New York: Norton, 1998) – my favourite, especially attentive to Eliot's religious life, and slightly novelistic.

Critical commentaries

- Richard Badenhausen, *T. S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) – connects Eliot with Pound and other writers.
- Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, *Reading The Waste Land* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990) – good on the experience of reflecting on that poem.
- E. Martin Browne, *The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) – an old, but sometimes insightful book by someone who worked with Eliot in the theatre.
- Ronald Bush, ed., *T. S. Eliot: The Modernist in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)– a useful essay collection containing such theoretically-informed essays as Michael North's classic 'Eliot, Lucaks, and the Politics of Modernism'
- David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) – an innovative look at popular and high culture in Eliot's work.
- David Chinitz, ed., *A Companion to T. S. Eliot* (Chichester: Wiley- Blackwell, 2009) – a compendious collection.
- John Xiros Cooper, *The Cambridge Introduction to T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) – a thoughtful survey.
- Robert Crawford, *The Savage and the City in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987) – on Eliot's bringing together of his interests in anthropology and so-called 'primitive' societies with his concerns with modern urban life.
- Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in 'Four Quartets'* (London: Routledge, 1991) – interesting on Eliot and English national identity, and on links with the visual arts.
- Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London: Cresset Press, 1949) – one of the first critical studies, but still illuminating, addresses the 'auditory imagination'.
- Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets* (London: Faber & Faber, 1978) – sets out the MSS and Eliot's revisions, with commentary.
- Anthony Julius, *T. S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and Literary Form: New Edition with a Preface and a Response to the Critics* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003) – the most famous modern critique Eliot to lay out the charges of anti-Semitism.
- Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (London: W. H. Allen, 1960) – an acute and influential early book on Eliot.
- Cassandra Laity and Nancy K. Gish, ed., *Gender, Desire and Sexuality in T. S. Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) – Eliot intelligently viewed from such perspectives as feminism and queer theory.
- Lawrence Rainey, *The Annotated Waste Land with Eliot's Contemporary Prose*, Second Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) – a very useful edition with notes on the 'Notes!'
- Christopher Ricks, *T. S. Eliot and Prejudice* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988) – brilliant and provocative close-readings; tackles anti- Semitism accusations.