

LIT 402: The Literary Tradition: Modernism and Beyond

Spring 2026 (M,W,F 10:30-11:20; RM 200)

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Office hours: by appointment

**Course Description and Purpose Statement:** This final course in the literature sequence presents selected works of the twentieth century that help the student understand and thereby effectively confront the errors of Modernism, while discerning the action of divinity even in times “that seem unpropitious.” Representative authors include T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Evelyn Waugh, Samuel Beckett, George Orwell, Flannery O’Connor, and Walker Percy. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the literature in class discussion and will augment their reading and critical skills through research of literary scholarship, presenting their findings in essays of increasing scope and length. **In this class, you will propose your own paper topics, which I must approve at least two weeks prior to the due date.**

Required Texts:

*The Waste Land and Other Poems*, T S Eliot

*Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett

*Four Quartets*, T S Eliot

*Brideshead Revisited*, Evelyn Waugh

*The Complete Stories*, Flannery O’Connor

Lit 401/402 Course Pack

Policy Points of Note:

- I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. Please come; it is the best way to get something out of the course. Any work missed because of an **unexcused** absence will receive a zero and cannot be made up—this includes work that was due that day. If you have five or more unexcused absences during the semester, I reserve the right to assign you an F for the class.
- Quizzes will generally be given at the beginning of class at least once a week. They may or may not be announced and will demand short written commentary on the material of the previous class or your reading. They are meant to keep you engaged and in the habit of taking and reviewing notes and will never last more than ten minutes.
- Assignments are due at class meeting time on the due date. You will lose a letter grade for each day an assignment is late, and a zero if it is five or more days late. I will be very flexible with you on extensions, **but only if you ask for one more than 24 hours in advance of the due date.** Please work and think ahead and let me know if you need help and/or more time.
- **No electronic devices are allowed in the classroom**—whether powered on or off. If I see one, I will confiscate it and turn it over to the academic dean; if you catch me with one, I will drop the lowest grade of every student in the class. Let’s respect and pay attention to each other whenever we are together.

Plagiarism Reminder:

- NEVER present another author’s published words or ideas as if they were your own. To do so is plagiarism, which is a crime, essentially stealing AND lying, misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own—see the College catalog for the serious consequences of committing this crime. If you wish to use a published comment to support your own argument, please do so, either in a direct quote or a paraphrase, but in either case, give the author credit by mentioning where you found the quote and the author’s name in the context of the quote or in a parenthetical citation. [See your SMC Writer’s Handbook for guidance.]
- NEVER consult a paper-writing service in person or on the internet, including ChatGPT or anything of its kind. These “services” will not help you to develop as a writer and, in fact, pose a moral threat, a temptation to sin by fraudulently presenting as your own what is the composition of another, which is plagiarism. Do not rely upon voice recognition software to enter your work accurately on the computer.

Grading:

Essays:	35%
Midterm	15%
Final Exam:	25%
Quizzes:	10%
Class Participation:	15%

The **Plan** [Items may shift during flight . . .]

Week of:		
Jan 12:	Introduction; <i>Pascendi</i> /Pater review/Joyce	
Jan 19:	Joyce	
Jan 26:	Yeats/"The Waste Land"	
Feb 2:	"The Waste Land"/ <i>Brave New World</i>	
Feb 9:	<i>Brave New World</i> /1984	
Feb 16:	1984/Existentialism / <i>Waiting for Godot</i>	18 Feb: Ash Wednesday
Feb 23:	<i>Waiting for Godot</i>	
Mar 2:	<b>No Classes: SMC Retreat</b>	
Mar 9:	<i>Brideshead Revisited</i>	<b>Essay 1 Due</b>
Mar 16:	<i>Brideshead Revisited</i>	
Mar 23:	<i>Brideshead Revisited</i>	Midterm
Mar 30:	<b>Easter Break</b>	
Apr 6:	<b>Easter Break</b>	
Apr 13:	<i>Four Quartets</i>	
Apr 20:	<i>Four Quartets</i>	
Apr 27:	<i>Four Quartets</i> /Flannery O'Connor	<b>Essay 2 Due</b>
May 4:	Flannery O'Connor	
May 11:	Flannery O'Connor/Final Examinations	Only class is on Monday
May 18	Final Examinations	
23 May:	Commencement Class of 2026	