

ENGL 431A

Modern American Poetry, 1910–50

Instructor: Luke Carson
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Course description:

Reading the early work of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound praised him as “the only American who has actually trained himself *and* modernized himself on his own.” Pound was only one, though arguably the most vocal, of many writers and artists who were self-consciously attempting to modernize the arts—or, in his words, to “make it new”—in response to the economic, technological and political modernization that seemed to relegate such cultural activities to a bygone era. In a poetics marked above all by invention, these poets incorporated an array of materials their predecessors had rarely considered, and explored the effects of collage and montage, citation and fragmentation (among other formal strategies), demanding of their audience new ways of reading. In this course, we will focus on the major and representative poets of the period and the ways in which, even at this late date, they ask us to think about language and meaning.

Assignments:

2 four-five page papers*	55%
in-class essay	15%
three-hour final exam	30%
5 to 8 quizzes	±5%

Texts:

Coursepack including the following poems:
H. D.: “Oread,” “Sea Rose,” “Hermes of the Ways”
Ezra Pound: “In a Station of the Metro,” *Cathay*; Prose: “Vortex,” “Vorticism”
William Carlos Williams: “Flowers by the Sea,” “Pictures from Brueghel”
Marianne Moore: “An Octopus,” Moore: “Sea Unicorns and Land Unicorns”
Wallace Stevens: “An Ordinary Evening in New Haven”
Gertrude Stein: “Susie Asado,” “Preciosilla,” “A Valentine to Sherwood Anderson”