
Decadentism, Eroticism, and the Diseased Imagination

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Portuguese

Fall 2015 Graduate Seminar
Friday 9.05-12.05pm; Sackett 113

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L'Incantation (1878), Félicien Rops

OBJECTIVE

Welcome! This course will examine various cultural expressions of the body, sexuality, science, and technology put forward during the modernist period in art and literature. We will analyze their key social and aesthetic implications and inquire into how they deepen our understanding of the complex, multi-layered relationship between the corporeal and the spiritual, the sensuous and the intelligible, and the self and the other. Of particular importance in this course is analyzing the so-called decadent mentality and the notion of social and moral degeneration that pervaded the *fin de siècle* and the first few decades of the twentieth-century.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This is a reading-intensive, discussion-based seminar. Each three-hour session will focus on presentations and discussion of assigned texts. Students will be evaluated on the basis of their preparation, attendance, critical engagement with course themes, and research projects.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- D’Annunzio, *Pleasure* trans. by Lara Gochin Raffaelli.
- Valle-Inclán, *Autumn and Winter Sonatas* trans. by Margaret Jull Costa.
- Asunción Silva, *After-Dinner Conversation* trans. by Kelly Washbourne.

The majority of the readings for this course are supplied and can be accessed on Angel.

EVALUATION

- 1) **Attendance and Participation**—All students are expected to attend class meetings prepared to discuss the required readings. This is a discussion-based class, and all students should regularly and productively contribute to class discussions. Attendance at all class meetings is essential. You are also expected to attend the Comparative Literature Luncheon presentations listed in this syllabus.
- 2) **Final Paper**—All students will engage in independent, original research on a topic relevant to course themes. The final paper should be submitted Monday, December 14. A one-paragraph topic prospectus must be submitted in class on November 20 or before.
- 3) **Kick-off Readings**—Each week, one or more students will kick off and lead the discussion of the required readings. This should not be organized as a summary of the readings per se. Instead, the kick-off should be framed around drawing attention to salient points in the reading(s), making connections with other texts, bringing something new to the text(s), or posing discussion questions to the group. You can be as creative or straightforward as you like.
- 4) **Presentation**—Each student will deliver a 20-minute presentation to the class in the final two weeks of the semester. The presentation can introduce the topic of the student’s final paper or can explore an author or topic explored in the course.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Participation:	40%
Paper (pp. 12-15, MLA):	30%
Kickoff Readings:	20%
Presentation:	10%

GRADING SCALE

A = 95 to 100; A- = 90 to 94.9; B+ = 87.9 to 89.9; B = 83.33 to 87.8; B- = 80 to 83.32; C+ = 75 to 79.9 C = 70 to 74.9; D = 60 to 69.9 and F = 59.9 and below. The Penn State grading scale does not allow the option of awarding grades of C-, D+ or D- grades.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Penn State University defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Accordingly, ... students are not permitted to take credit for or represent as one's own work anything that in fact is the work of other persons, whether classmates, published authors, or anonymous contributors on the internet. Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that include, but are not limited to: all forms of ... plagiarism and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Violations of the University policy on academic integrity will result in appropriate penalties.

DISABILITY ACCESS STATEMENT

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

CALENDAR

INTRODUCTION

—Friday, August 28

1. Outline course objectives
2. Berman—"Modernity-Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *All That is Solid Melts into Air*—pp. 15-36
3. "Modernism," pp. 1-7
4. Critic fin de siècle—"What is fin de siècle?" p. 9

—Friday, September 4

1. Weir—Preface, Definition of Decadence, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism*, pp.xi-21
2. Symons—"The Decadent Movement in Literature," pp. 858-869
3. Facos—"Beginnings," *Symbolist Art in Context*, pp. 9-37
4. Baudelaire—Selection of *Flowers of Evil*
5. Bourget—"The Example of Baudelaire," pp. 1-9

—Friday, September 11

1. Lynn—*Dysgenics*, pp. 5-11
2. Nordau—*Degeneration*—BOOK I—Chapters 1 (pp. 1-7) and 3 (pp. 15-33);

- BOOK II—Chapter 3 (pp. 100-115); BOOK V—Chapter 2 (pp. 550-560)
3. Hake—"Who is the Critic?" *Regeneration: A Reply to Max Nordau*, pp. 17-19
 4. Shaw, Selection from *The Sanity of Art*, pp. 20-22
 5. Allbutt—"Nervous Diseases and Modern Life," pp. 263-267
 6. Galton—"Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope and Aims," pp. 329-33
 7. Huysmans—*Against the Grain*—Chapter 1

*Monday, September 14

1. Comparative Literature Luncheon: Elena Coda, Purdue University
"Woman, Geniality, and Modernity in Haydée's *Faustina Bon*"
102 Kern, 12.30pm
2. Seminar with Elena Coda—Time and place tbd

THE AESTHETICS OF "DECADENTISMO"

—Friday, September 18

1. D'Annunzio—*Pleasure* (trans. Lara Gochin Raffaelli)—Foreword,
Introduction, First Book
2. Spackman—*Decadent Genealogies*—Preface, The Island of Normalcy, pp. vii-
32

—Friday, September 25

1. D'Annunzio—*Pleasure* (trans. Lara Gochin Raffaelli)—Second, Third and
Fourth Books
2. Mazzarello—"Cesare Lombroso: An Anthropologist between Evolution
and Degeneration," *Functional Neurology* 26.2 (2011): 97-101

*Monday, September 28

1. Comparative Literature Luncheon: Leslie Harkema, Yale University
"Saplings and Crustaceans: Figuring Youth and Age in Spanish Modernist
Poetics"
102 Kern, 12.30pm
2. Seminar with Leslie Harkema—Time and place tbd

—Friday, October 2—No class

DECADENCE AND THE FEMALE SUBJECT

—Friday, October 9

1. Showalter—*Daughters of Decadence*—vii-xix; Chopin—"An Egyptian
Cigarette;" Cross—"Theodora: A Fragment," Levenson—"Suggestion,"
Schreiner—"The Buddhist Priest's Wife," Gilman—"The Yellow
Wallpaper," Grand—"The Undefinable: A Fantasia," Lee—"Lady Tal."
2. Dowling—"The Decadent and the New Woman in the 1890s," *Nineteenth-
century fiction* 33.4 (1979): 434-453

—Friday, October 16

1. Darío—*Thistles* (Section one); *Profane Hymns*; Short stories: “The Death of the Empress of China,” “The Veil of Queen Mab.”
2. Barringer and Rosenfeld—“Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-garde,” pp. 9-17
3. Varas—“Pre-Raphaelite Female Imagery in Spanish American Poetry,” *Victorian Review* 30.1 (2004): 72-91

—Friday, October 23

1. Asunción-Silva—*After-Dinner Conversation: Diary of a Decadent*
2. Fernández-Medina—“The Modern Self as Subject: The Structure of Crisis in José Asunción Silva’s *De sobremesa*.” *LALR* 69 (2006): 59-82.

VALLE-INCLÁN’S UNIVERSE: DEATH, LOVE, AND CORPOREALITY

—Friday, October 30

1. Valle-Inclán—*Autumn Sonata*
2. Valis—“Valle-Inclán’s *Sonata de otoño*: Refractions of a French Anarchist,” *CLS* 22.2 (1985): 218-230

—Friday, November 6

1. Valle-Inclán—*Winter Sonata*
2. Smith—“Dandy Elements in the Marqués de Bradomín,” *HR* 32.4 (1964): 340-350

ON DEGENERATION AND THE WILL

—Friday, November 13

1. Baroja—*The Tree of Knowledge*—First, second, and third parts
2. Schopenhauer—Excerpt of *World as Will and Representation*
3. Tom Kerns—Lecture on Schopenhauer

—Friday, November 20

1. Baroja—*The Tree of Knowledge*—Fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh parts
2. Nietzsche—*Will to Power*—Sections 618-19 (pp.332-333); sections 640-675 (pp. 341-357)
3. Lacewing—“Nietzsche on the Will to Power,” pp. 1-5

Thanksgiving – November 22-28

—Friday, December 4—Presentations

—Friday, December 11—Presentations—Classes end

—Monday, December 14—Final paper due

