

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY
OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

READING AS A WRITER: TWO MODERNIST CLASSICS

Winter Term, February 15 – March 7, 2024

Thursdays, 2:00-4:00 PM

Golden Bear Center, Suite 300

Instructor: Deborah Lichtman

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“You should write because you love the shape of stories and sentences and the creation of different words on a page. Writing comes from reading, and reading is the finest teacher of how to write.”
– Annie Proulx

“As a writer, I am endlessly inspired by the work of others. Each book I read teaches me something about the craft, about the possibilities of language, about the ways a story can be told. Reading is the foundation upon which I build my own writing.”
– Zadie Smith

What can modernist novelists teach us as writers? This course offers some answers as we delve into the literary craft of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. By reading deeply, we'll consider how *As I Lay Dying* benefits from fragmentation, juxtaposition, surprise, and narrative diversity. We'll also see how *To the Lighthouse* works with repetition, time shifts, “plotlessness,” and stream of consciousness. Each class will incorporate lecture, discussion, and in-class writing shared in small groups. The exercises for these impromptu pieces will draw on the literary techniques we find in the reading. At the last class meeting, you may submit a short written piece for feedback from the instructor. I'll give more specifics about this option after the class begins.

You need not be a Modernist to take this course, but you should prepare for it in advance by reading both novels. You'll be able to discern a lot more about the craft in these novels if you read them before class begins, and again while we are studying them. I recommend that you first read Faulkner's novel, and then Woolf's. If you're new to these writers and you find them difficult, you're not alone. Be assured, though, that the more we delve into these novels, the more you'll come to understand. As far as rereading is concerned, consider yourself in good company: “A good reader, a major reader, an active and creative reader is a rereader.” – Vladimir Nabokov

Week 1 – *As I Lay Dying*

Week 2 – *As I Lay Dying*

Week 3 – *To the Lighthouse*

Week 4 – *To the Lighthouse*