

**Relativity and the Avant-Garde in Literature**  
**UC Berkeley OLLI, Winter 2019**  
**Professor Stephanie Wells**

The implications of Einstein's theory of relativity rippled across all areas of thought. Neither a science class nor an art history class, this literature course will be taught concurrently with BAM/PFA's exhibit "Dimensionism: Modern Art in the Age of Einstein." As it showcases the ways in which Einstein's theories affected visual art, we'll investigate how literature grapples with a changing paradigm within this cultural context. We'll read author philosophies, artist manifestoes, cultural essays, poetry, and a novel, focusing primarily on the dimension of time and how artists and writers of Einstein's time responded to the growing understanding that our perceptions of time and dimensionality are limited. We'll also visit the exhibit for curatorial insight into the visual art.

Note that while most of these readings are online in PDF form, you'll need to secure your own copy of Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury.

**Week 1 (1/23)**

Charles Sirato, "The Dimensionist Manifesto," "Mosaic," and two of his "planar poems"  
("Paris," "Autoportrait")

Robert Delaunay, "Light," "Notes on the Construction of the Reality of Pure Painting" (1912)

Wassily Kandinsky, from "The Problem of Form" (1912)

Tristan Tzara, from "Dada Manifesto" (1918)

Wallace Stevens, "On the Road Home," "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," "Not Ideas  
About the Thing but the Thing Itself," "The Curtains in the House of the  
Metaphysician," "The Creations of Sound," "The Poems of Our Climate"

**Week 2 (1/30)**

Museum visit

**Week 3 (2/6)**

Marcel Proust, from Le Recherche du Temps Perdu (excerpt)

Samuel Beckett, "Proust"

Gertrude Stein, "Composition as Explanation," "Objects" from Tender Buttons

Guillaume Apollinaire, "Zone," excerpt from "The Cubist Painters," excerpts from  
Caligrammes

Robert Frost, "Skeptic," "The Master Speed"

Louis Untermeyer, "Rhyme and Relativity"

**No class 2/13**

**Week 4 (2/20)**

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Garden of Forking Paths"

Virginia Woolf, excerpts from The Waves

**Week 5 (2/27)**

William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (chapters 1-2)

**Week 6 (3/6)**

William Faulkner, The Sound and the Fury (chapters 3-4)

Jean-Paul Sartre, "On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner"

Sarah Howe, "Relativity"