Eng 784: Topics in Transnational Literature: Global Modernism
Prof. Puskar

Thursday 4–6:40
Curtin Hall 466

In recent years scholars of modernism have broadened its purview well beyond traditional American and European sources, to take in Asian, African, Oceanic, Australian, Arab, and Latin and South American texts too. Modernism has become global modernism, in a way far more substantial than it ever has been before, and even its date range has expanded drastically. This course traces the development of modernist fiction mostly outside the main modernist hubs of London, Paris, and New York. From Eastern Europe to Mexico, from the port of Marseilles to pre-communist Shanghai, the modernist literature we will read reveals rich connections and surprising lines of influence between different stations of a rapidly modernizing world. It also reveals the uneven pace and scope of modernization across the globe, and helps us understand the drastically different ways in which cultures experienced changing technologies, expanding cities, jarring migrations, global wars, and the erosion of traditional ways of life. Larger theoretical questions loom: how can we define modernism in less Eurocentric and presentist ways? Might we conceive of the modern as something that recurs historically, and has occurred many times already over millennia? How do features like orientalism or primitivism in traditional modernist texts relate to what we now recognize as lively modernist projects in India or Africa? Students in this course will gain a fuller sense of the possibilities of global modernism and a thorough grounding in what has been called the “new modernist studies” in recent years.