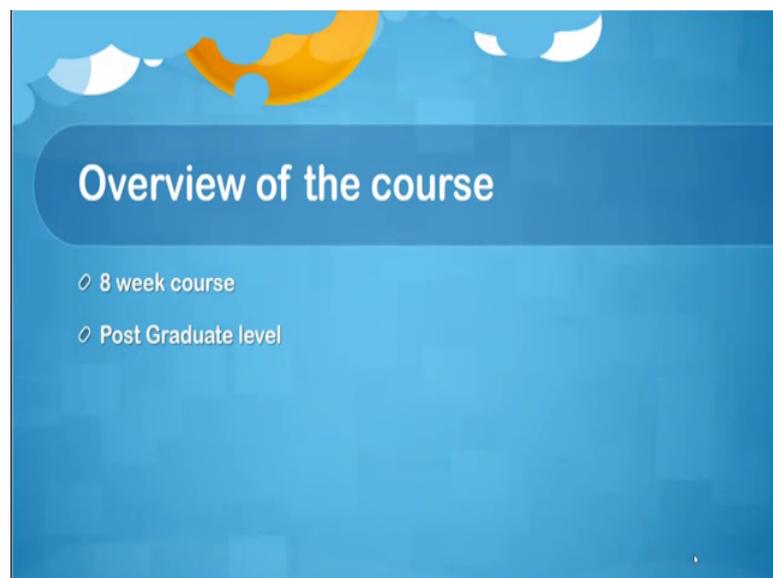


Postmodernism in Literature
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Lecture - 01
Introduction

Good morning everyone, I am very happy to welcome you to this new NPTEL course entitled post modernism in literature.

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This course is a twenty hour course spread across 8 weeks of online learning and teaching and, this is not pitched at the postgraduate level though there are no prerequisites for this course, it is a quite advisable that you have a sense of familiarity with the various friends in English literary studies. And also a familiarity with the ways in which (Refer Time: 00:38) have been developing and literary and statistical appearance have been categorized in dominant canonical history and the outset itself, I think it is very important to give you an object give you on run through the major objectives of this course.

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Objectives of the Course

- To facilitate an understanding of the category of the Postmodern as a historical period, a cultural tendency and a dominant critical practice of the 20th century. *Post-War ↓ 1945 →*
- To introduce the learners to the different philosophical/critical frameworks within which the idea of 'Postmodernism' is located
- To present 'Postmodernism' in the way it is reflected / manifested / represented in 20th century literary sites
- To enable the learners to critically engage with texts, ideas, debates and paradigms in literary studies.

The first objective is to facilitate an understanding of the category of the postmodern as a historical period a cultural tendency and the dominant critical practice of the 20th century. I use these terms rather advisedly and, I think it is important to give you an introduction to these terms and, what I mean by these and how I propose to go about this course in order to achieve these ends.

Firstly we look at the postmodern period as a historical period and, when I say historical period this refers to a particular kind of a period, which is which has a beginning and as a kind of an ending, it has it an another historical setting. In continuation with a various historical trends in various historical periods, we try to present this particular phenomenon known as post modernism in the post war period. And when I say post war I have in mind the post world war.

So, in that sense a historical sense would be the period after 1945. And secondly, we look at post modernism as a cultural tendency and, this is very significant because post modernism cannot be limited in a very historical sense, this is also a dominant cultural tendency a sort of a cultural trend, which was evident in most of the disciplines and most of the practices of the 20th century. And thirdly we look at post modernism as a dominant critical practice, when I say critical practice I have in mind also the intellectual tendencies of the 20th century and also the various phenomena, which came together to describe 20th century life in general.

In this context let me also add the post modernism, now is considered as a an oft used term and, also a very ambiguous term of the 20th century and this is used in diverse ways to talk about multiple things related to 20th century life in general.

The second objective that we have is to introduce a learners to the different philosophical and critical frameworks, within which the idea of post modernism is located though the event of post modernism the phenomenon of post modernism could be located, in various disciplines and various sites, our trust, our focus as part of this course is to talk about the intellectual tendencies to trace a genealogical field lecture trends in the 20th century.

So, in that sense it is becomes very important to give a philosophical and critical understanding of this term and, also place it within the dominant intellectual and literary critical aspects. So, we are proposed to do this in multiple ways, and one of those ways is to trace the genealogy of the term through a survey of major sites, major literary works which have tried to define this term.

Now, major theories of the 20th century who have offered a commentary of this term and, also try to place all of them within a single framework, though post modernism cannot be limited to a single definition, we here try to form a systematic discussion, based on the various sorts of things written about post modernism, the various intellectual framework proposed regarding post modernism in the 20th century.

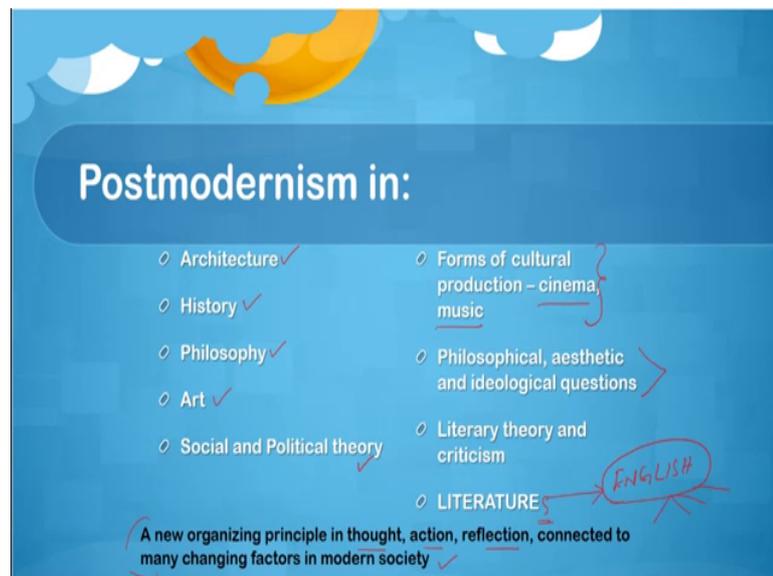
So, the term objective is to present post modernism in the way it is reflected, manifested and represented in 20th century literary sites. The type of this course if you remember is post modernism in literature. So, even when we begin with a general (Refer Time: 04:19) general historical understanding, a general mapping of the intellectual trends related to post modernism, we would eventually narrow this down to a discussion of literary sites. And when I say literary sites I have a range of things in mind it could be literally text, it could be particular kinds of genres, it could also be certain movements, certain major artistic trends that emerged in the 20th century.

So, in that sense we should be looking at schools movements different aspects of a sort, and also particular texts such as novels, poetry, drama and, various commentaries in essays written, and even some the some of the dialogues which were very dominant some of the debates, which were very dominant with the 20th century.

Having said all of this the final objective is related to are all the all the themes of discussion and, also in such ways adding to the general critical acumen of the learners the 4th objective in that sense is to enable the learners to critically engage with text ideas, debates and paradigms and literary studies.

So, here we move on to a different level altogether by facilitating a sort of a critical training. So, that the students. So, that the learners can also know how to engage across these various sites of intellectual trends of historical, periods of dominant, cultural tendencies and how to relate them with particular text, and particular context, how various debates have been framed in literal history and how various paradigms emerged with particular points of time in connection, with these dominant trends tendencies and practices, but these four objectives put together we move on to make sense of this entire course entitled post modernism in literature.

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So, this also brings us to this question where which are the sites, where we can identify post modernism, in where do we find post modernism getting manifested this (Refer Time: 06:17) is also important because, when we talk about other aspects of literary studies when we talk about particular periods of the previous century such as romanticism or for example, certain aspect related to realism or aspects related to pastoral poetry if you take a more precise term.

So, we can say that there are particular texts there are particular sites, where these sorts of movements these draw these ideas, these dominant tendencies could be seen more prominently, but; however, when we come to an understanding of post modernism, we find that this is spread across a range of things. So, those are familiar with a general idea of how the contemporary has been defined in the last few decades. We would also know that post modernism is perhaps the most used term, to talk about most of the practices within our 20th century literature, culture, art you name it anything and anything about post more anything about the 20th century perhaps will fit into this framework related to post modernism.

So, in that sense we can identify the aspects of post modernism in architecture and, many are also to opinion that just like the modernist period, even during the post modernist a period, architecture is a site where, these changes where the scene in the more immediate fashion in a more concrete way. And this is also evident in the way history has been written the history has been rewritten and also position, in during the various appearance of the 20th century.

Post modernism could also be traced through the various discussions, within the discipline of philosophy and in philosophical engagements with this term post modernism with the idea of post modernism is also something that, we would begin to look at this of course, in rather detail. And this also post modernism in general art this could include various kinds of arts including painting, sculpturing, and it could also include multiple forms of even digital and non digital art in the 20th century as well.

And we find those are the ideas post modernism, also changing the ways in which social and political theory has been framed in the 20th century and, more importantly and especially for very popular and common understanding of postmodernism, it is important to look at the ways in which, post modernism gets reflected in many forms of cultural production, especially this is very very evident in 20th century cinema and, also in the different kinds of pop music or rock music and various (Refer Time: 08:50) music available are today.

And there is also a way in which post modernism could be seen as something, which generally philosophically aesthetic and ideological questions are asked about because, this is not merely about certain manifestations, it is also about how this idea the idea of

post modernism enables is to ask particular questions about the 20th century art, about 20th century culture and placing them within philosophical aesthetic and ideological realms.

And coming to the particular turf that we are addressing as part of this course, we also have a various aspects of literary theory and criticism being influenced by the aspects of post modernism and, we also have literature in general which could again mean a wide variety of genres sub genres in different forms of different kinds of writings available from, all parts of the world. And here we also need to make our one particular distinction when we talk about literature.

In so, far when we have been talking about the history of literature, we are focusing mostly on literature written in English, but in the postmodern period, we realize that it is about literatures written not just in English, but also in various other languages in translations, from different parts of the world, from different cultures, there are also this visibility being given to different forms, without privileging one over the other.

So, although perhaps it would just suffice to say, that postmodern is our provides as with a new organizing principle, in thought action and reflection and this is also connected to many changing factors in modern society.

So, this is very important because, when we talk about most of the other realms or most of the other related aspects of literary studies, we do not find them always connecting well with the real life the real modern contemporary life, but in the case of post modernism here is a term we have which could be used for intellectual discourse and also to talk about certain very mundane aspects of day to day contemporary life.

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Postmodernism/ity

- Postmodernism ✓
- NOT Postmodernity → *general*
- Shift from the general frame of reference TO more limited aesthetic realms

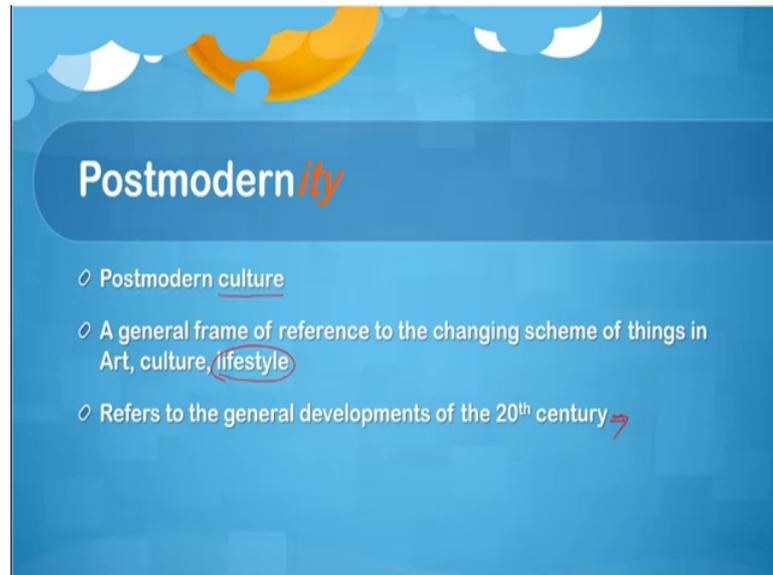
Video inset: A woman with glasses and a blue shirt is speaking.

And also as part of this of course, it also becomes very very important to identify the sort of terms that we are using and the meanings designated to it.

If you notice in the course, we have used the term post modernism and not post modernity. So, we do have a very conscious distinction in mind between post modernism and post modernity, the general agreement is that, we can identify a shift from post modernity to post modernism, in the sense that there is a shift from the general frame of reference was modernity being more general in nature, we find a shift from the general frame of reference to a more to more limited aesthetic realms.

So, as part of this of course, what we are looking at is a set of limited aesthetic realms, we are not talking about post modernity in general, we are not talking about life in general culture in general, but we are limiting a discourse, we are limiting your discussion to certain aesthetic realms, which could be mapped and covered within the gamut of a course.

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And it is also important to then spend a little time talking about what post modernity is. Post modernity is a term used to refer to the general postmodern culture in the 20th century. And this could be a this could be used as a general frame, to talk about the changing scheme of things not just an art culture and so, it is very profound things, but also about lifestyle in general. It could mean a range of things when we say the lifestyle has become postmodern, it could mean that it is change radically from the modernist times, it could also mean that it is more contemporary in nature that it defies all conventions and that it is very difficult to classified.

It has also been increasingly used as a term to talk about things when they do not really fit, within any particular definition or any particular category. And post modernity as a we have mentioned, this is nowadays used mostly to refer to the general development of the 20th century, regardless of a particular idea, regardless of a particular discipline, or regardless of one particular scheme of things, it is a general reference which we shall be avoiding throughout this course we shall be focusing more on this term post modernism.

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Postmodernism

- A set of theories, frameworks sought to make sense of the Postmodern age
- Mostly refers to a critical school – though there is no single movement or a logical, linear progression of ideas
- Developments mostly in culture and the arts

texts
movements
literary
tendencies

So, when we talk about post modernism what comes to our mind is a set of theories of frameworks and, these are all important because they help us to make sense of the postmodern age.

So, one of the objectives of this course is also perhaps to make sense of this term, known as post modernism through a discussion of the series of texts being made available to us and, when we talk about a post modernism again, we also talk about a certain literary schools maybe we cannot talk about a single literary movement or a logical linear progression of ideas and other presentation of text, but nevertheless we are talking about schools of thought.

We are talking about critical paradigms and, we are also talking about development in developments in the culture and arts and mostly the kind of developments which could be identified in particular texts, particular movements, and literary tendencies and these significantly are not too gentle.

These are things which could be narrowed down to particular aspects as (Refer Time: 14:33) as a dominant practices as a popular culture. So, we have moved from post modernity to post modernism, we have moved from the general towards more limited particular understandings and, limited discourses and limited frameworks. And when I say limited this is not in the negative sense at all this is also to make sense of the term, make sense of this academic pursuit within the gamut of a of a particular course.

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So, when we talk about a post modernism and, when we say that this is an intellectual framework that we are talking about that this is a an academic discourse and, and a series of similar trajectories that, we are dealing with we are also made aware of the post modernism is a continuation of the more radical aspects of your American modernism. And instantly this was the same such modernism which was prevalent in the British is as well and here, the term continuation deserves a little more attention because, even as part of literary of history even as part of literate critical studies, one of the things that English literary studies focuses on is the aspect of continuity the aspect of tradition as earlier would put it which has been inherently built into all kinds of introduction .

So, even when we approach post modernism, it is very important for us to see the continuity within which is also located. So, maybe this is also a continuation of the radical aspects of modernism and for example, we can talk about reflexivity and irony which we are part of the modernist trends as well.

But on the other hand maybe this is not just continuity maybe, there is also a sense of rupture which you know which emerges maybe there is a sense of rupture that emerges with post modernism and, maybe for example, there is a there are dominant tendencies related to the modernist ahistorical bent or the yearning for autonomy and closure.

So, this could be either a continuation from the modernist period, or it could be a rupture from some of the aspects related to modernism.

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And coming to the question of what exactly constitutes post modernism, which are the sites which would most perfectly address in the aspect of post modernism perhaps, we have no silly easy answer, whether it is aspects of the architecture the illusory kind of architecture. Whether it is a kind of a digital painting popularized by Andy Warhol whether those are particular kinds of readings of literary texts, or postmodern art or kinds of poetry exemplified in the beat generation, or the general sense of architecture itself.

We do not know what sort of a site represents the represent the idea of post modernism in the most perfect form in the 20th century. And I am not even sure, whether we would attempt to answer these questions as part of this course because, the intention is not to find an answer for the puffed answer for which are the perfect sites of post modernism, but what are the ways in which post modernism gets reflected gets manifested in 20th century, disciplines and different art forms.

Here I also take you through a brief journey through a certain sites certain texts, certain figures, in certain movements identified as predominantly postmodernist, certain iconic moments if I may put it that way within this post modern art trajectory.

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So, first thing that would come to our mind is perhaps Marcel Duchamp's a h idea of conceptual art, those sort of installations that he had in mind their way in which during the modernist period Marcel Duchamp's lived during the modernist period in history.

So, we are also talking about the ways in which Marcel Duchamp transforms certain very ordinary things into art maybe, the most shocking and the most of controversial installation that he had as part of his conceptual art exhibition, in the early 20th century as this exemplary what now, known as at the fountain what Duchamp did was as most of you know, during the modernist period he shut the entire art world by placing an inverted the urinal as part of a an art exhibition.

And he also had named it r mutt r nutt and this happened in 1970 and he also had done a very cheap reworking of the of the postcard image of a a Monalisa by giving her an additional decoration of a mustache and also giving a title LHOOQ, which reportedly is also a Vulgurous expression talking about the sexuality of Monalisa. And many keeping these details aside maybe are of the opinion in the contemporary that Marcel Duchamp perhaps was responsible for opening the road to the postmodern predicament.

So, whether it is a predicament or sort of a thing to be celebrated in the contemporary it is a question that, we will come back to discuss is the later point, but now I hope you are getting all you are also getting a sense of what post modernist art is what not to expect as postmodern art, how postmodern art deliberately defies all kinds of conventions and

how, there is a way in which the ordinary, the (Refer Time: 20:05) and the otherwise non arty elements and the non arty objects are immediately transformed into very worthy art installations or very pricey pictures.

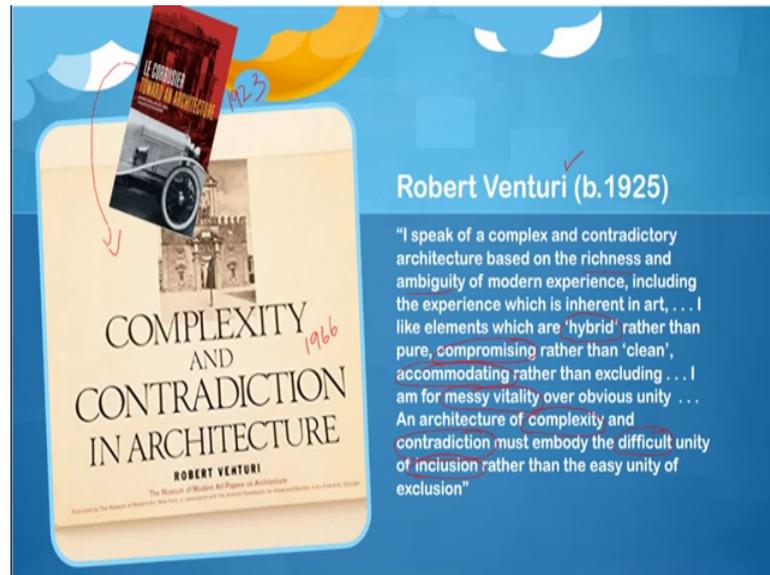
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And also in architecture where this is in the most evident, we find a very direct transformation from the modernist dictum less is more, towards Robert Venturis claim that less is a bore, during the post modern times we also find a very irreverent rejection of many of the modernist friends which was seen as dictums. So, in post modern architecture it is said that you know we can also find a coming together with the classical elements and, the modernist elements to celebrate our ornamentation to celebrate, the decoration which was seen as a completely obnoxious thing during the modernist times because, they were advocates of the modernist architects, where advocates of a minimalist sense in all kinds of their execution.

So, in the 1917 we find within this phase of architecture most of these architects moving away, from the functional doctrines of modernism, towards a more decorative, towards a more pronounced, towards a more loud form of projections.

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And in continuation with this it is also important to recollect how, there is a transition from le Corbusier toward an architecture towards Robert Venturi's complexity and contradiction architecture and, while this work was published in the 1920s, we find complexity and contradiction of architecture getting published in 1966 and we find this transition becoming very important, very seminal and also underlying a transition in most of the other aspects related to 20th century art and architecture as well.

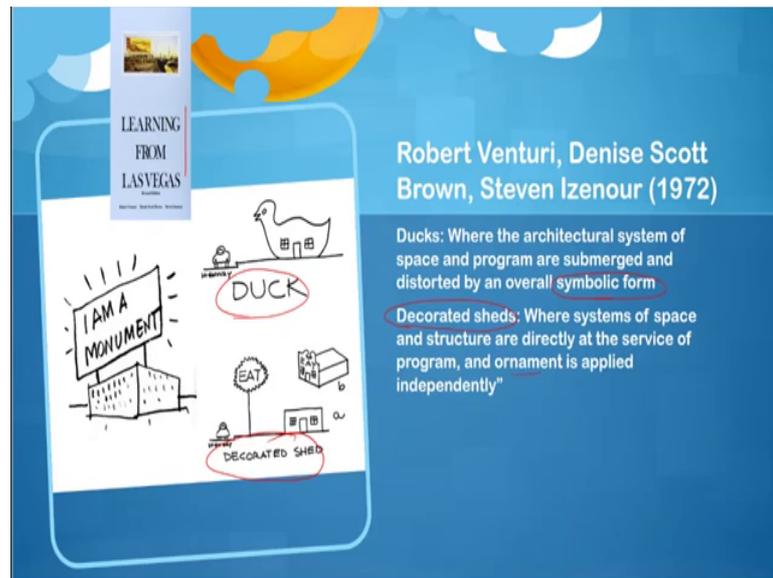
So, to draw Robert Venturi I speak of a complex and contradictory architecture, based on the richness and ambiguity of modern experience, including the experience which is inherent in art, I like elements which are hybrid rather than pure, compromising rather than clean, accommodating rather than excluding, I am for messy vitality over obvious unity, an architecture of complexity and contradiction must employ, must embody, the difficult unity of inclusion, rather than the easy unity of exclusion.

So, look at these very interesting terms, hybrid, compromising, accommodating, messy, vitality, complexity, contradiction, difficult, inclusion those were not terms which were involved during the modernist period. In fact, the modernist almost feared all these things which they thought were almost nearing them in the 20th century.

They were also reacting against the various aspects of the 20th century, they were also reacting against the aspects of war the mortality of the 20th century various political and economic phenomena, but at the same time we find the modernist struggling to bring in a

certain sense of unity, which is completely rejected in a very irreverent fashion by architects such as Robert Venturi. And this also becomes a certain kind of post modernist trend itself, moving out of this fear of architecture to various other disciplines in various other art forms and also into a general life style of 20th century itself.

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And continuing with Robert Venturi for a few more minutes we also find that they came up with it together Robert Venturi Dennis Scott brown, who also happens to be his wife and Steven Isenour in 1972, they published another important iconoclastic work learning from Las egas and here, they also made a very significant distinction between ducks and decorated sheds and ducks were according to them very very modernist and, in that was the sort of spaces in which architectural system of space and program are submerged and distorted by overall symbolic form yeah.

So, if you remember the modernist were more concerned about the symbolic form not just in architecture, but also in various forms of writings. And decorated sheds which are more of a mid 20th century a phenomena more of a postmodern phenomenon, Robert Venturi argues where systems of space and structure and directly at the service of program and ornament is applied independently.

So, ornament was seen as an obnoxious thing as something to be rejected during the modernist period and, this idea of the decorated sheds become more celebrated in the

postmodern period and, not just in this phase of architecture I reiterate, but also across various forms of writing various forms of culture and even the general life style.

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And keeping in tune with a sort of rejection, with a sort of irreverence and the unconventional, techniques used in art and architecture, when we come to the space of literature, we find that the similar kind of an attitude is reflected.

So, here we I briefly introduce to you a very very significant work published in 1969 by Kurt Vonnegut, it was titled slaughterhouse 5 or childrens crusade a duty dance with death. So, here we have a protagonist Billy pilgrim and, this work is also a celebration of non-linear events and it also deliberately employs an unreliable narrator, but here I want to introduce to you another significant aspect about this work.

ah let us read that read this out together, there are almost no characters in this story and almost no dramatic confrontations because, most of the people in are in it are so, sick and so, much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war after all is that people are discouraged from being characters.

So, here we have a novel, which does not pretend to be oblivious to the fact that it is a normal. So, here is a complete rejection of the ideas of the willing suspension of disbelief which literatures so, celebrated in the romantic and even during the Victorian period.

So, here we find a complete rejection of whatever we had understood as part of literature, a complete rejection of the ideas of a story telling that we had and here, we have an author addressing the readers and telling us that there are no characters in the story and, that the characters are so, sick. And that they are discouraged from being characters a sense of an agency is being given to the characters and, there is no omission on the potent reliable narrator who is controlling these characters over here.

There is only one in the samples that I am presenting before you and, we would be certainly having a lot of discussions about these interesting texts and in the in the coming weeks.

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If on a winter's night a traveller (1979)
Italo Calvino (Italian writer)
Postmodern metafiction
About a reader trying to read a book called *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller*
Second-person narrative
Challenging the ways that stories are 'supposed' to be told

"You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice -- they won't hear you otherwise -- "I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" Maybe they haven't heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell: "I'm beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel!" Or if you prefer, don't say anything: just hope they'll leave you alone."

An another important text another sample text that I want to introduce to you, as part of how post modernism manifests in 20th century is a very impressive work by Italo Calvino *if on a winter's night a traveler*.

So, this title itself is very in conventional it is a very challenging title and, if you notice this is not even on title case, the entire title is on a it is written out in a sentence case and even in the original work, it is its present in the same way. And we have a title of novel in sentence case totally defined the conventions of how novels is or even text could be made.

This work was published in 1979 by Italo Calvino, an Italian writer. It is a perfect example of postmodern metafiction and, these are some of the terms that we shall be coming back to talk about in detail. And these work if on a winter's night a traveler is about a reader trying to read a book called if on a winter's night a traveler.

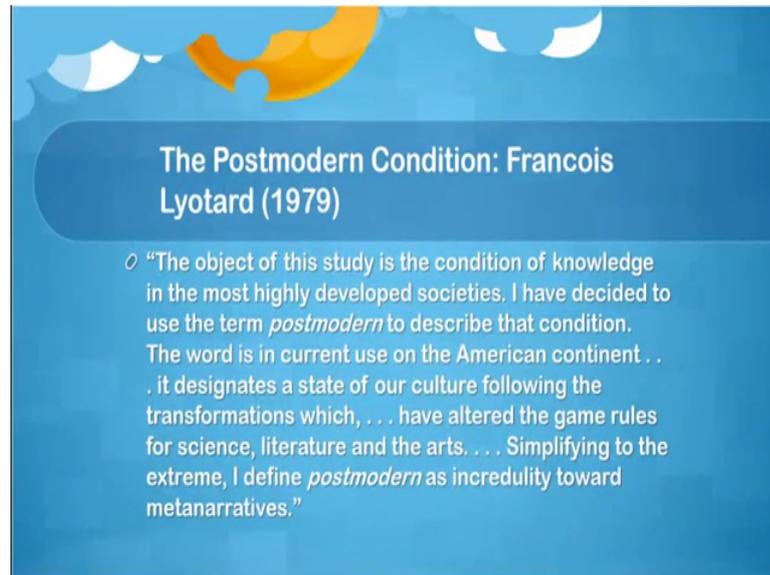
So, it is about a story within a story, a story very conscious of the fact that it is a story. And conventionally all stories are written either in the first person narrative, all in the third person narrative, these are some work this is perhaps one of the earliest lessons that we are taught about stories and about storytelling, but here we have Calvin completely challenging even the fundamental aspect of storytelling by narrating a story in the second person narrative.

So, how does it work then? So, here is the beginning paragraph from Calvino's novel if on a winter's night a traveler, you are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel if on a winter's night a traveler relax, concentrate, dispel every other thought let the world around you fade best to close the door the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, no I do not want to watch TV raise your voice, they would not hear you otherwise. I am reading I do not want to be disturbed maybe, they have not heard you with all that racket speak louder, yell I am beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel, or if you prefer do not say anything just hope they leave you alone.

So, who is a character here right at the outset we get to know that this is a very direct reference to the reader. So, the reader is the protagonist reader is the main character of this novel. So, how much more interesting can it get. So, Calvino is totally challenging the ways, in which the story is supposed to be told, he is challenging the reader, he is challenging the text, he is challenging the very fact that the story is not about something else, the story is not about somebody else the story is about you about the about the reader.

So, these are some of the things that we shall be taking a look at as part of this of course, we shall be looking at how these various aspects have been theorized and, why on earth somebody had to use such a technique to talk about something happening in the 20th century.

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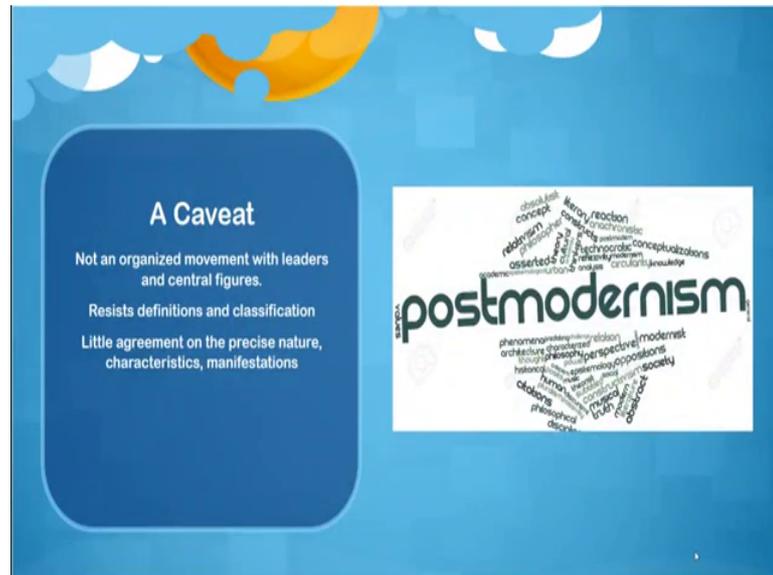


There were also multiple ways in which many have attempted to theorize post modernism to define post modernism. In fact, one of the important works that we should also be looking at later in detail is a work named postmodern condition published in 1979 by Lyotard. And in this work he gives a definition of post modernism which is also been generally accepted as want to be a significant commentary is about the idea of post modernism, the object of this study is a condition of knowledge, in the most highly developed societies, I have decided to use a term postmodern to describe that condition.

The word is in current use on the American continent, it designates the state of our culture following the transformations which have altered the game rules of for science literature and the art, simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredibly toward meta narratives.

So, we have seen we have taken a look at a series of things, where post modernism is manifested and, we also have seen how some of them have attempted to define post modernism. So, this course is about journey through these various sites, where post modernism has got reflected, has a manifested and also how various aspects of post modernism is practically used and, also about these sort of texts such as Lyotards texts and Barthes texts and a number of others who have attempted to give commentaries to give a descriptions to attempt definitions about the postmodern age.

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So, coming to the end of our discussion today, I also windup this with this caveat that post modernism is not an organized movement, but leaders and central figures throughout a discussion we would see a complete absence of one particular figure emerging on one particular site being privileged, as the postmodernist the post modernist element. And post modernism is also a site which deliberately addresses definitions and classification.

So, though we would be making a number of attempts to define, a number of attempts to talk about the term and frame this in various aspects we would see that, post modernism would continue to defy all of these attempts and would, not lend itself to a single sort of a definition or a single framework for classification. And throughout these discussions we would also see that, there is very little agreement on the precise nature, the characteristics and the manifestations of post modernist and we will only have a general trend being visible a general sort of the genealogy on being unraveled, otherwise it could be a rather difficult exercise to pin it down to particular elements to particular characteristics.

Nevertheless throughout this course through our journey of particular texts particular tendencies, in dominant trends in the characteristics we should also be trying to map the terrain called post modernism.

So, in the next few lectures we shall be talking about post modernism in literature in greater detail and, delving into deeper into their text deeper into the various phenomena and, also critically analyze in the text and domains available to us. Thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing you in the next class.