

UCALL SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

JOSEPH CONRAD AND THE MODERN WORLD

HARRY MARTEN, Edward E. Hale, Jr., Professor of English Emeritus at Union College

Tuesdays, November 6, 13, 20, 27 & December 4, 2018

9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Hale House*

“My task which I am trying to achieve,” Joseph Conrad once famously declared, “is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see... If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm – all you demand – and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.”

Sounds good – both in its earnestness and irony – but what did he want us to hear, feel, see? And how did he go about achieving that goal? Reading Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *The Secret Agent* and *Nostromo*, we will consider such subjects as how the modern novel differed from Victorian fiction, the relationship of the novel to late 19th and early 20th century impressionist and post-impressionist art, Conrad’s response to the unsettled history and politics of the time, to science and religion, to ideas of belonging and alienation, and to definitions of the self in the world. Fair warning – Conrad was not an optimist, nor a straightforward storyteller. His plots can be filled with challenging misdirections, and his language can at times be both abstract and atmospheric. But if you like exquisitely crafted fiction, tales of the sea and exotic locales, the drama and sometimes melodrama of complex human actions and interactions, and explorations of the nature of individual identity and choice in a disturbing and dangerous world, then Conrad is for you.

The goal of this class is good conversation about books that matter by one of the greatest of modern novelists. This is an active discussion group. Participants should read and be prepared to discuss the following works.

11/6/18	Heart of Darkness
11/13/18	Lord Jim
11/20/18	The Secret Agent
11/27/18	Nostromo – Parts I and II
12/4/18	Nostromo – Part III

To register, please contact the UCALL office at UCALL@union.edu or 518-388-6072. In order to allow for an active discussion, registration will be limited to 25 UCALL members.

Coordinated by Linda Doyle

**Location subject to change based on availability*