

## The Major Novels of E. M. Forster

### English tradition and the challenges of modernism

<b>Course #</b>	20FMA
<b>Format:</b>	Seminar
<b>Moderators:</b>	Bobbie Reitt, Joan McKelvey
<b>Date and Time:</b>	Wednesday, 9:30-11:30 10 weeks, starting September 23
<b>Location:</b>	Rockridge, Northampton meeting room
<b>Maximum number of participants:</b>	18
<b>Auditors accepted:</b>	Yes, 1 (expected to do the required reading)

**Purpose:** This seminar's purpose is to enhance participants' appreciation of Forster's most admired novels and deepen their understanding of his insights (in fiction and perhaps criticism) into the challenges of emerging modernism to traditions of pre-WWI English life.

**Description:** Forster's novels *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, *A Passage to India*, and *Maurice*, all written by 1924, have enjoyed renewed popularity because of the prize-winning films of these works by Merchant and Ivory or David Lean. The settings are Edwardian England, and the issues Forster addresses are subtle, complex, challenging, and relevant today.

Forster (1879-1970) enjoys a solid reputation as both novelist and critic. His most famous critical work is *Aspects of the Novel*. Though he wrote all his fiction before 1924, he withheld *Maurice* from publication until after his death, believing its positive portrayal of homosexuality made it unpublishable during his lifetime. His works address difficult issues confronting Western culture as it entered the modern period: the repressiveness of the British world against the openness of cultures of the Mediterranean and the Far East, the rising dominance of urban and suburban life, the emergence of liberal humanism, and the conflicts of class, gender, and sexuality.

**Role of participants:** Participants will either 1) lead one of the reading discussions or 2) report on a background topic of their own choosing. Moderators have prepared a list of suggested topics and are willing to consider other relevant topics suggested by participants.

**Resources:** Required: Any edition of the novels *A Room with a View*, *Howards End*, *Passage to India*, and *Maurice*. Very highly recommended: *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster* edited by David Bradshaw. DVDs of film adaptations are available from moderators.

**About the Moderator:** Bobbie Reitt, retired book editor, has been in LIR since 2003 and has led more than a dozen seminars on literature and history. Joan McKelvey is a retired social worker who practiced family therapy for 32 years and has co-moderated previous seminars.