TEACHING WOMEN AND LITERATURE AND FEMINIST THEORY: A FEMINIST PARADIGM

JULIE GOODSPEED-CHADWICK, INDIANA UNIVERSITY-PURDUE UNIVERSITY AT COLUMBUS

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY

This course is designed to familiarize undergraduate interdisciplinary students with the contributions of women writers to American and British literature and to enable students to be conversant about the contributions of feminist critics to the discussion of women’s feminist philosophy and literature of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The university objective assigned to my own variant of Women and Literature is “understanding society and culture.” As a result, the students and I study very different female authors and works, and one of our objectives, that scaffolds on understanding society and culture, is to engage ourselves in conversations about the authors and texts in order to construct a genealogy or constellation of literary women and their works that speak to issues pertaining to literature and writing, particularly in regard to representations of the female author, female experience, and female identity. Questions we ask throughout the semester include: Is it significant that the author is female? What is feminist about this literary work or piece of criticism? What is being contested or reaffirmed in terms of gender, literary merit, values, philosophy, history, class, and race? Students draw conclusions about the significance of the assigned texts, and they become able to articulate and situate feminist, anti-feminist, and ambivalent attitudes in treatments of female characters and feminist concerns.

Organizing principles of the course include an awareness and understanding of feminist issues, raised in the theoretical articles and explored in the literary pieces through lectures and class discussions, which are amplified by the students’ own experiences and examples. We also interrogate textual representations of women, and, ultimately, we consider power dynamics and other feminist concerns while we explore the implications of feminist, ambivalent, or patriarchal representations in our analyses. In a more traditional manner, we examine and survey the literary, historical, and philosophical trajectories concerning significant women writers. Moreover, in addition to the university learning outcome of coming to a better understanding of society and culture, students should also be able to demonstrate critical thinking, discussion, and writing skills; to engage in close reading; to analyze, assess, research, and synthesize; to establish persuasive and significant connections; to identify, analyze, and interpret feminist issues; to engage in independent and guided investigations of texts; and to take ownership of learning, as evidenced in visits to the campus writing center and in student-initiated meetings with me.

The class as I teach it serves two primary disciplines, literature and women’s studies (though it attracts a large number of students from other disciplines, including education, because it fulfills a diversity
requirement at my university). To compound this built-in need for versatility in the syllabus and in the classroom, the approach to the course needs to be additionally flexible in that it is taught simultaneously as both a lower-level (at the 200-level) and an upper level (at the 300-level) course in a face-to-face setting twice per week. In other words, all sections are run concurrently, and I teach the 200-level and 300-level students in English and Women’s Studies at the same time. However, the design of the course works: indeed, it has proven to be successful in generating student interest and effective in honing their critical reading, thinking, and writing skills, in addition to polishing their understanding of gender and diversity, thereby making them more sophisticated readers and citizens in the world they inhabit. In short, students in this course interpret, analyze, apply, make connections, and synthesize highly stylized texts and complex ideas. The last time I taught the course (I teach it annually), the student course evaluations recorded a global score of 4.92/5.0 from the 200-level students and 4.97/5.0 from the 300-level students.¹

My thinking about this course stems from omissions in my own education as an undergraduate and graduate student. Ultimately, I did not study major (or minor) women writers to the extent that I studied their male counterparts during many formative years of my education in English. It was not until I was already immersed in my doctoral program, thinking about my dissertation, that I realized that feminist recovery work needed to take place in the classroom, too. Research alone cannot perform the cultural work involved in educating students to become informed and critical—liberated, even—citizens. But teaching and education can transform students’ understanding, identities, ideologies, and their position in society. So, initially, this course is indebted to feminist recovery work, which begs the following question: what should belong in our classroom?² Both Paulo Friere and bell hooks advocate the empowerment of students, and their work on pedagogy provides conceptual frameworks to reach this goal.³

Friere’s emphasis on students as subjects is appealing to me because, from here, we can think about how students take ownership of their learning. Like bell hooks, I endorse and attempt to model a participatory model of education, one in which every student is expected to take part.⁴ This type of mandatory participation enables students to come together in a communal fashion: every person in the class has a stake in constructing knowledge for herself and her classmates. This pedagogical practice, wherein students may read or respond to prompts or address other students or their professor, breaks down barriers between those who know and those who do not. And it fosters the desire to explore intellectually, personally, and culturally the myriad ways there are to learn and to know. Lastly, if everyone participates, then unsafe topics can be broached and accessed, and an atmosphere of respect and collegiality may emerge as well.

My teaching style most closely resembles what Elaine Showalter identifies as an “eclectic” approach to teaching.⁵ My teaching consists of a mixture of teacher-centered lectures and student-centered discussions because I have found that my students profit most from an integrated approach to teaching. Lectures give background and context and allow me to clarify difficult concepts or offer an introduction to or interpretations of a work, to which students respond. Discussions are used as a springboard for conversations between the students, although I work to facilitate (or create if necessary) a balanced discussion. As such, I am amenable to what Gerald Graff calls “teaching the conflicts,” proposing opposing points of view to what has been presented by myself or my students.⁶ While I articulate my positions, I believe that discussions provide a space for students to try on and examine their ideas and those of their peers. Active learning is what I desire for my students, and I work to model active learning in the classroom. Students are expected to participate in class discussions, and a fraction of the overall grade in my courses is dedicated to participation effort. As such, in this course, I designed “the
discussant activity” assignment, in which students model what professors do at professional conferences. Research shows that discussion is a particularly effective teaching tool in enabling students to “reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic,” enhancing “participants’ self-awareness and their capacity for self-critique,” fostering “an appreciation among participants for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly,” and prompting those involved to “take informed action in the world” (Brookfield and Preskill qtd. in Howard “What Does Research Tell Us About Classroom Discussion” 2). Because active participation leads to active learning, students in this course sign up to be discussion leaders for a particular author and text, and they come to class on the assigned day prepared: they have three strong discussion questions that they will pose to the class, but they also have reflected on the material and prepared their own responses to those questions, which they have written down and I collect at the end of class (and return with comments and a grade after reading the discussant paper and taking into consideration their role as discussant). Discussants are free to pose any good questions (read: questions that begin with “how” or “why”—not “what”); as the semester progresses, they pick up on my example of establishing a theoretical frame that will orient our analysis and discussion of the literature. I always connect the theorist and her theories with the assigned reading for that week, but we also will allude to what we have already read, thereby forecasting what the students will do in their canon paper. In this way, each student is responsible directly for co-directing the conversation with me, and the other students rally to answer, debate, or offer further questions because there is a sense of community and camaraderie: they all have to serve as the discussant, and no one wants to be in a position where there is not any engagement and the conversation falls flat. In regard to classroom discussion, I do not rely on a point system wherein I keep strict oversight of how many contributions a student makes. Instead, I do my best to ensure (by relying on my roster) that I call on every student before class is over. Everyone participates in some fashion, even if it is simply reading aloud a passage under discussion because the student is unsure of the question or unable to respond to the prompt. I then attempt to guide the student to a more developed response, or I return to the student with something more open-ended later, knowing he or she can respond. As a result of this model, attendance is factored into participation: one cannot participate if one is not in class, though I have not yet figured out how to best account for absences and penalties. Currently, the final letter grade for the course is affected if the student misses an excessive amount of classes (the number excused is three, which constitutes a week and a half of the course). Typically, I have not encountered attendance problems in this class, maybe because the students are engaged or because follow-up e-mails about attendance and the policy about attendance usually work. Because students know they will be called upon to respond in every class, they tend to come prepared. The nature of our questions and discussions make it apparent when a student has not read, and students tend to apologize and ensure they are ready for the next class. Instituting reading check quizzes would promote regular reading, as I have discovered in other classes in which I use this technique. Currently, I do not use quizzes to promote reading because the reading time for my students in this course is relatively heavy, and I want them to read as much as they can without being discouraged that they have not finished and will be penalized in class. My experience has been that students tend to read, maybe because they are “put on the spot” every class and/or because I emphasize repeatedly that they will be able to make better connections and, therefore, have a better canon paper, as a result. The course assignments are paced and designed in such a way that students cannot easily cheat, and the professor is able to assess how much they understand of course content because the assignments are braided in with the eclectic mix of texts, lectures, and discussions we have had, and students choose how to approach the assignment (i.e., construction of a theoretical framework, selection of issues to
Students are expected to read everything assigned on the course schedule and to come to class prepared to discuss what they have read. I ask students to delineate the connections between the theory and literature, and I model this technique for them every day in class through lectures and discussions, but I am always impressed and surprised by the creative connections they make. Hence, I have the opportunity to learn from them in what (I hope is and try to foster as) a collaborative learning environment. As such, there are not subheadings for the grouped readings because I want to see what connections the students can make. The readings are paired together for specific reasons each week, as I will outline, with a primary organizational strategy for the literary texts being chronology. The topical outline of the course reading schedule follows:

- **Week 1**: Virginia Woolf and modern(ist) feminism and feminist literature, an introduction to first wave feminism is presented.
- **Week 2**: Hélène Cixous’s French poststructuralist/female embodiment (with a hint of essentialism) essay on women’s writing and bodily experience is paired with the important realist writer Edith Wharton and other realist and regional writers (Sui Sin Far, Mary Austin, and Dorothy Richardson), who detail women’s material conditions.
- **Week 3**: Judith Butler’s poststructuralist essay on gender performance is paired with stories by Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, who are major writers (hence the full days devoted to them) and who treat gendered expectations of women (and men).
- **Week 4**: Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s literary-historical essay on the plight of women writers is coupled with Amy Lowell’s poems and Gertrude Stein’s work, both authors who circumvent traditional ways of writing. Note: Gilbert and Gubar’s essay provides an accessible and concrete way into the analytical paper on Lowell's “The Sisters” for students who find the other theorists daunting.
- **Week 5**: Paula Gunn Allen’s essay on correct and incorrect interpretive approaches to ethnic women’s literature is read with several pieces by ethnic women (Alice Dunbar-Nelson and Zitkala Ša), in addition to a short play (Susan Glaspell) and a short story (Radclyffe Hall) by white women that treat the knottiness of interpretation and gendered identity.
- **Week 6**: Elaine Showalter’s essay on feminist poetics is paired with poems by Mina Loy, Anne Spencer, Edith Sitwell, and H.D. A short prose piece by Djuna Barnes on the forcible feeding experienced by suffragists accompanies the poetry because, chronologically, it makes the most sense to teach Barnes in tandem with H.D. and Loy.
- **Week 7**: Lillian Robinson’s piece on canonicity anticipates the assessment paper on Zora Neale Hurston’s short story “Sweat” that students will write. The other writers (Marianne Moore, Katherine Anne Porter, and Edna St. Vincent Millay) can certainly be discussed in terms of a literary canon.
- **Week 8**: Nina Baym’s article treats the exclusion of women writers from the canon, and students read Rebecca West, Dorothy Parker, Jean Rhys, Louise Bogan, and Laura Riding—all women whose featured texts foreground issues pertaining to representations of women and the politics that undergird those portrayals.
- **Week 9**: Students conduct research for the annotated bibliography
- **Week 10**: Toril Moi’s chapter from her book on sexual and textual politics pertains to stereotypical representations of women, and the women writers (Eudora Welty, Elizabeth Bishop, Mary McCarthy, and Carson McCullers) featured in this unit focus on identity and the material conditions (read: embodiment) of their female characters and speakers.
- **Week 11**: Barbara Smith’s essay on black feminist criticism is paired with contemporary African American writers (Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and Lucille Clifton).
• Week 12: Two pieces of criticism are read in this unit: Audre Lorde’s essay is overarching in its concern with age, race, class, and sex and the literature assigned (Grace Paley, Flannery O’Connor, and Toni Morrison), but we read criticism by Morrison in tandem with her short story “Recitatif.”

• Week 13: Susan Bordo’s chapter on the female body and the reproduction of femininity ties in with each text by Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich, and Louise Glück. We also read theory by Rich in connection with her literary work.

• Week 14: The excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa’s _Borderlands_ nicely frames writers who mediate between or among different ethnic cultures (Maxine Hong Kingston, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker, Jamaica Kincaid, and Joy Harjo).

• Week 15: Annette Kolodny’s essay provides an overview of issues and topics we have addressed or skirted throughout the semester. “We end with a cluster of important multi-ethnic American writers (Rita, Dove, Sandra Cisneros, and Louise Erdrich).

• Week 16: We read either read Lessing’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech alongside her short story or we engage in-class workshopping and conferences. (Note: I have alternated between these options over the years and intend to give students the option of choosing which will be more beneficial to them when I teach the course the next time.)

In terms of assignments, students write five papers: three (i.e., the discussant activity, the analytical paper, and the assessment paper) that require close reading, with the latter two requiring the synthesis of feminist theories in addition to the critical thinking inherent in responsible and strong close readings of primary texts in the Norton anthology of literature by women. Students also complete an annotated bibliography, and that assignment requires research and an evaluative response from them: in essence, they secure three to five secondary sources pertinent to the author selected for research, and they write a summary of each as well as a critique of each. The last paper, the canon paper, is the most intensive of the assignments because it is the culmination of all of the writing skills students have honed thus far in the course: writing that demonstrates the ability to be critical, analytical, and responsive when asked to summarize, identify, critique, synthesize, and formulate a creative, substantive, responsible, and original thesis statement and argument. Students select a writer they have not studied, read a selection of the author’s primary work, connect that writer and her text to the works by other writers we did study in class, and then incorporate relevant theory from the work of the theorists that we had read. Ultimately, the students create a genealogy or constellation of women writers, comprised of creative writers, theorists, and their attendant significant issues or concerns, that are bound together through the students’ framing and mapping of writers and their philosophical and stylistic ideas and positions. The canon paper is the most important assignment, hence the heavy weight attached to it concerning grading and assessment. Altogether, students write more than 25 pages during the course of the semester.

Because there is not time allotted for the study of how to write in this particular course, I direct students to the writing center, both in my advocacy of it in class and on the syllabus under the expectations heading and descriptions of assignments. I argue that going to the writing center promotes students’ ownership of their work, which I articulate on the syllabus as a learning objective. Additionally, I write painstakingly detailed and individualized comments on the assignments, explaining to students when I pass back work that I expect them to reflect on the comments and incorporate the suggestions in their next assignment. There are enough assignments distributed throughout the course with significant points attached to each that students can bounce back from an assignment if they have writing problems (and remedy them) or are unclear about my expectations.
Due to the community emphasis, both in the classroom and among the texts we study, I state my expectations clearly, but I try to provide reasonable accommodations for students who struggle for various reasons. As a result, I do accept late work until the end of the semester, but I dock one letter grade. Some semesters I will allow any student to rewrite any assignment (with the exception of the last one, the canon paper). I also record every class session I teach with a digital voice recorder, and I post these sound files on the course management program we use (e.g., Blackboard) in the Resources folder. Students can listen to any class session for a refresher or to catch up on material that was missed in class due to absence. One semester I allowed absent students the opportunity to receive attendance credit if they listened to the sound file and transcribed the main points of my lecture and our class discussions and provided personal feedback to it—making that student an asynchronous class participant. The availability of the digital sound files has helped in retaining my students, I suspect. It also shows students that I am genuinely invested in their progress, which I also try to demonstrate by allowing students to meet with me outside of my office hours (if I am available and on campus, although I will schedule meetings with students to accommodate schedules that do not dovetail with my office hours). These little bits of extra effort resonate with my students. They are willing to overlook my more stringent policies of asking them to submit all of their written work to turnitin.com, a plagiarism deterrent database, and of requesting them to read long, dense work before every class session. They know that I take their work seriously because I reiterate that I will fail students who plagiarize. I tell them that their own ideas are better than what they can find from a student who is willing to sacrifice ownership of and pride in her work to a paper mill and that the readings and assignments pose opportunities for them to investigate real-world issues that impact them, whether male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, white or black, or from wealthy or working class backgrounds. They get to investigate representations of identity, and, by extension, they cannot help but examine their own lives in the process. As such, I allow students to use the first-person voice in papers sparingly, and they are permitted to introduce personal experience as an example or building block upon which to engage in analysis or assessment.

Because literature represents worldviews, I maintain that it is necessary to equip students with the abilities and skills required to read and interpret texts in order to successfully navigate in the real world. My responsibilities as a teacher are to elucidate the different components and conversations of academic works and to foster examination of the literary, cultural, philosophical, political, and historical contexts from which the works emerge. Students need to learn how to interpret texts in order to better understand their world and its texts, as well as to cultivate an appreciation of beauty and rhetorical effectiveness. Moreover, the methods and abilities students learn when interpreting and evaluating texts become skills that aid in the understanding and appreciation of beauty and the beauty of ideas that are inherent in literature, critical thinking and philosophies, and good writing. And, in studying women and literature and feminist theory, students are empowering themselves to identify, approach, access, interpret, analyze, synthesize, and understand from their own perspectives, but a perspective informed by diverse voices and issues that matter to them and to their world.

1 The differences in expectations are noted on the syllabus in the assignment descriptions, but briefly, I expect more sophisticated integration of theory in the work of the 300-level students, and I expect them to produce longer and more elaborate papers, which I also grade with a higher level of expectation than I do the work of the 200-level students.

2 It is important to note that the Society for the Study of Women Writers Conference will hold teaching sessions, called Creative Conversations, for the first time in October 2012. One such session is titled
“Extending Our Ideas of What ‘Belongs’ in Our Classrooms.” This topic is a timely one in professional conversations on women writers and pedagogy.

3 In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire writes, “Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of men in their relations with the world (79). For Freire, in considering the teaching paradigm associated with the oppressed, he considers what belongs and what should not in the classroom. He is very straightforward: no banking model of education, in which knowledge is presumably deposited into students, is just. Instead, students need an education that pivots on critical thinking and liberation. Students, in Freire’s purview, are subjects, not objects.

4 In her classroom, hooks requires students, even those “who are afraid to speak” to “assert themselves as critical thinkers” (53). She enacts this praxis by calling on students and expecting participation in the classroom; students cannot “refuse to read paragraphs” when asked to do so in class (54).

5 See Showalter’s *Teaching Literature*, especially chapter three.

6 See Graff’s *Beyond the Culture Wars: How Teaching the Conflicts Can Revitalize American Education*.

7 Jay R. Howard encourages us to approach discussion in the classroom as an important, even critical, learning tool for students. See “What Does Research Tell Us About Classroom Discussion” in *Discussion and the College Classroom* and “Getting Students to Talk—Leading Better Discussions” in *First Contact* (with Nancy A. Greenwood, pp. 99-113). In these texts, he provides insight and strategies on how to successfully use discussion as a pedagogical strategy because, as he observes, “The challenge for instructors is to determine how best to engage students with the material in a way that will facilitate reflective thinking about it” (“What Does Research Tell Us” 2).

8 In the five years I have taught the course, no student has ever duplicated another student’s canon paper, the constellation of women writers that the canon paper requires students to create.

9 At both universities where I have held professorships, one in the Deep South and one in the Midwest, the majority of my students are first-generation college students and about half of them are nontraditional (age 25 or older). The majority of the students I have taught balance schoolwork with part-time or full-time jobs, and many of them have children. This demographic of students, I have found, requires a delicate balancing act between strictness and flexibility concerning classroom rules and policies in order for them to be successful in the classroom, and my syllabus reflects the evolution of my position and accommodation to this demographic.
SYLLABUS: STUDIES IN WOMEN AND LITERATURE AND FEMINIST THEORY

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Selected critical essays on our online course management program

OVERVIEW

This course is designed to familiarize students with the contributions of women writers to American and British literature and to enable students to be conversant about the contributions of feminist critics to the discussion of women’s literature of the twentieth century. We will study very different female authors and works, and one of our objectives is to engage ourselves in conversations about the authors and texts in order to construct a genealogy of literary women and their works that speak to issues pertaining to literature and writing, particularly in regard to representations of the female author, female experience, and female identity. Questions we will ask throughout the semester include: Is it significant that the author is female? What is feminist about this literary work or piece of criticism? What is being contested or reaffirmed in terms of gender, literary merit, values, philosophy, history, class, and race? Students will draw conclusions about the significance of the assigned texts, and they will be able to articulate and situate feminist, anti-feminist, and ambivalent attitudes in treatments of female characters and feminist concerns upon successful completion of the course.

Principle of Undergraduate Learning Objective to Be Emphasized: Understanding Society and Culture. See additional discussion of this objective (as well as other learning objectives) on the last page of our syllabus.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Understanding society and culture is demonstrated by the student’s ability to

a. compare and contrast the range of diversity and universality in human history, societies, and ways of life;
b. analyze and understand the interconnectedness of global and local communities; and
c. operate with civility in a complex world.

After successful completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate critical thinking, discussion, and writing skills; to engage in close reading; to analyze, assess, research, and synthesize; to establish persuasive and significant connections; to identify, analyze, and interpret feminist issues; to engage in independent and guided investigations of texts; to take ownership of learning, as evidenced in visits to the campus writing center and in student-initiated meetings with me.
Note: More sophistication (complexity and nuance) and development of ideas and writing is expected of the 300-level students than the 200-level students.

PRINCIPLES OF UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES AT OUR UNIVERSITY

In Studies in Women and Literature and Feminist Theory, many of the principles of undergraduate learning of our university are addressed. The particular PUL that receives the most emphasis in this course is “understanding society and culture.”

The definition of “understanding society and culture” is as follows: The ability of students to recognize their own cultural traditions and to understand and appreciate the diversity of the human experience.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discussant activity 50 points
2. Analytical paper 200 points
3. Assessment paper 200 points
4. Annotated bibliography 200 points
5. Canon paper 350 points

For all written assignments, include a Works Cited page. Use the MLA style of documentation. The tutors at the writing center can help, too.

DISCUSSANT ACTIVITY (DUE ON THE STUDENT’S DESIGNATED DAY)

You will prepare three discussion questions on an assigned text, and you will serve as a discussion leader on the day the text is assigned. You will submit the questions to me, along with your typed responses to these questions, on the day we cover the given work. Your questions and individual responses should be no more than one page, single-spaced. I will distribute a sign-up sheet, so you will know in advance which author and text you will discuss.

ANALYTICAL PAPER (DUE SEPTEMBER 11, 2012)

This assignment presents you with the opportunity to analyze and write about Amy Lowell’s poem “The Sisters” before we study it in class. This paper should be three pages, double-spaced for L207 students and three to five double-spaced pages for L378 students. It should provide a thoughtful engagement with the reading. You may begin by asking the following: What is a feminist issue at stake in the poem, how is it manifest in the text, and why is it important? You should analyze the poem and explore its significance, rather than simply providing a summary of it. The best responses will be those that incorporate the criticism of Woolf, Cixous, and/or Butler. You may find it helpful to read ahead and refer to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship” in addition to the critics we have already discussed.
ASSESSMENT PAPER (DUE OCTOBER 4, 2012)

Most of the literature we are reading for this course is part of what Lillian Robinson calls a “female countercanon” in her essay “Treason Our Text.” Robinson alludes to the fact that Zora Neale Hurston is an author who has been recovered by Alice Walker and subsequently embraced by various feminist scholars. In a three-page, double-spaced paper (for L207 students) or in three to five double-spaced pages (for L378 students), explain why Hurston’s short story “Sweat” may be appealing from a feminist point of view. Why should (or shouldn’t) we read “Sweat”? The best papers will make use of concrete examples and quotations from the story.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY (DUE NOVEMBER 6, 2012)

The students enrolled in L207 should find three secondary sources about an author and/or her work that we have covered in class, and they should describe and evaluate each source in three or more paragraphs. The students enrolled in L378 should find five secondary sources about an author and/or her work that we have covered in class, and they should describe and evaluate each source in five or more paragraphs. About an annotated bibliography.

CANON PAPER (DUE DECEMBER 6, 2012)

Select and read a work we have not studied together in our anthology. In a six-page, double-spaced essay (for L207 students) or a 10-page, double-spaced essay (for L378 students), consider whether your selected work should be included in the reading on this syllabus in the future. Why should we read the piece you have chosen? If you don’t think that your text should be included, explain why. Please provide a description of the work you’ve selected and incorporate quotations from it and from other works you’ve read for this course as support for your argument. The best papers will compare and contrast the work we did not discuss with literature and/or criticism that we did study. In other words, situate the text you’ve chosen within the genealogy we’ve constructed of women writers and their works.

EXPECTATIONS

Attendance: I expect you to be present and prepared for class. It is my discretion to consider you absent if you are late or unprepared for class discussion. You may have three absences; after three absences, your grade for the course will lower and will continue to drop with additional absences. Please do not come to class if you are ill: you may transcribe the digital audio recording on our course management program from our class session for credit.

Submitting Assignments: You will turn in your assignment in two ways: 1.) a hardcopy to me in class; 2.) an electronic copy uploaded to our course management program, under the proper assignment heading in the Assignments section, which will automatically be submitted to turnitin.com site, a plagiarism deterrent database. To receive credit for the assignment, you must submit your work to me and to that course site. Be sure that your paper's filename has an extension (e.g., .doc, .docx) when you upload it. On a Mac, check Append file extension when you save your file.

Late assignments: If I do not have your assignment in hand when I collect them, then I consider the work late. One letter grade will be docked for late assignments. Please plan ahead and plan your time
accordingly. If you will be absent the day an assignment is due, please see me to schedule an earlier deadline.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is academic dishonesty. It is unacceptable to pass off someone else’s work or ideas as your own because it is stealing. You must properly cite sources when you directly or indirectly reference the words, ideas, or intellectual property of other people. You will want to give credit when you copy, summarize, or paraphrase printed materials or electronic media. Furthermore, you should refrain from recycling and reusing a paper from another course for this one or from giving unwarranted help to a student on an assignment. Academic dishonesty requires disciplinary action. Students who plagiarize may fail the course. Students are required to upload their papers to our course management program and have it submitted to turnitin.com to earn credit for assignments, and I reserve the right to submit your work to turnitin.com.

**Students with disabilities:** Students needing accommodations because of a disability will need to register with Adaptive Educational Services (AES) and complete the appropriate forms issued by AES before accommodations will be given.

**Communication:** I expect you to check your university e-mail account for messages and our course management site for updates regularly. Send e-mail messages to me at xxxx. If you prefer to send me a message through our course site, do tick the box that will direct the message to my university e-mail account.

**Courteousness:** I expect you to be courteous to your classmates and to your professor by listening respectfully and considering thoughtfully the ideas of others.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

**WEEK 1**

Tuesday: Opening festivities, feminist poetry activity

**Thursday:** Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own [Shakespeare’s Sister]” (pp. 237-244), “Professions for Women” (pp. 244-247), and “The Death of the Moth” (pp. 248-249)

*Virginia Woolf’s “A Room of One’s Own [Shakespeare’s Sister]”*

**WEEK 2**

Tuesday: Edith Wharton’s “The Angel at the Grave” (pp. 31-43)

*Hélenè Cixous’s “The Laugh of the Medusa”*

**Thursday:** Sui Sin Far’s “Mrs. Spring Fragrance” (pp. 57-65), Mary Austin’s “The Walking Woman” (pp. 66-71), and Dorothy Richardson’s “Death” (pp. 122-123) and “Women and the Future” (pp. 123-127)

**WEEK 3**

Tuesday: Edith Wharton’s “The Other Two” (pp. 43-56)

**Thursday:** Willa Cather’s “Coming, Aphrodite!” (pp. 93-120)

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**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday:** Amy Lowell’s “The Letter,” “Venus Transiens,” “Madonna of the Evening Flowers,” “The Weather-Cock Points South,” “Opal,” “Decade,” “Summer Rain,” excerpts from *A Critical Fable*, and “The Sisters” (pp. 129-140), **analytical paper due**

*Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship”

**Thursday:** Gertrude Stein’s “The Gentle Lena” (pp. 143-163), “Picasso” (pp. 163-164), “Ada” (pp. 165-166)

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**WEEK 5**

**Tuesday:** Alice Dunbar-Nelson’s “Mr. Baptiste” (pp. 167-171) and “I Sit and Sew” (p. 171), and Zitkala Ša’s “The Trial Path” (pp. 174-177)

*Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s “Infection in the Sentence: The Woman Writer and the Anxiety of Authorship”

**Thursday:** Susan Glaspell’s “Trifles” (pp. 178-187) and Radclyffe Hall’s “Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself” (pp. 188-200)

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**WEEK 6**

**Tuesday:** Mina Loy’s “Gertrude Stein,” excerpt from “Three Moments in Paris,” “The Widow’s Jazz,” “Omen of Victory,” “Songge Byrd,” and “Feminist Manifesto” (250-257), Anne Spencer’s “White Things” and “Lady, Lady” (pp. 259-260), and Edith Sitwell’s “Still Falls the Rain” (pp. 306-307)

*Elaine Showalter’s “Toward a Feminist Poetics”

**Thursday:** H.D.’s “Orchard,” “Oread,” “Sea Poppies,” “Garden,” “Eurydiche,” “Helen,” and “The Master” (pp. 283-300), and Djuna Barnes’s “How It Feels to Be Forcibly Fed” (pp. 460-463) and “Cassation” (pp. 463-468)

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**WEEK 7**


*Lillian Robinson’s “Treason Our Text: Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon”
Thursday: Zora Neale Hurston’s “Sweat” (pp. 349-357) and “How It Feels to Be Colored Me” (pp. 357-360), and Edna St. Vincent Millay’s “First Fig” (p. 445), “Second Fig” (p. 445), “Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word” (pp. 445-446), “I, being born a woman and distressed” (p. 446), “The courage that my mother had” (p. 457), and “I will put Chaos into fourteen lines” (p. 458), assessment paper due

WEEK 8

Tuesday: Rebecca West’s “Indissoluble Matrimony” (pp. 468-486), Dorothy Parker’s “Résumé” (pp. 487-488), “One Perfect Rose” (p. 488), “News Item” (p. 488), “Song of One of the Girls” (pp. 488-489), and “The Waltz” (pp. 490-493)

*Nina Baym’s “Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors”

Thursday: Jean Rhys’s “Mannequin” (pp. 499-503), Louise Bogan’s “Medusa” (p. 505), “Women” (p. 506), “The Crows” (p. 505), “Cassandra” (p. 506), and “Several Voices out of the Cloud” (p. 508), and Laura Riding’s “The Maps of Places” (p. 542), “The Troubles of a Book” (p. 543-544), and “Eve’s Side of It” (pp. 544-551)

WEEK 9

Tuesday: No class, fall break

Thursday: Library day for research and introduction to the annotated bibliography

* work on annotated bibliography

WEEK 10

Tuesday: Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path” (pp. 598-604), Elizabeth Bishop’s “The Man-Moth” (pp. 605-606), “The Fish” (pp. 610-612), “In the Waiting Room” (pp. 614-616), “One Art” (p. 617), and “Gender and Art” (p. 618), and Mary McCarthy’s excerpt “Names” from Memories of a Catholic Girlhood (631-637)

*Toril Moi’s “‘Images of Women Criticism’” from Sexual/Textual Politics

Thursday: Carson McCullers’s “The Ballad of the Sad Café” (pp. 740-779)

WEEK 11

Tuesday: Gwendolyn Brooks’s “the mother” (p. 781), “a song in the front yard” (p. 782), excerpt from “The Womanhood” (p. 786), “We Real Cool” (p. 787), “The Bean Eaters” (p. 787), and “The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till” (p. 789-790), “Malcolm X” (p. 790), and Maya Angelou’s excerpt from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (pp. 926-931)

*Barbara Smith’s “Toward a Black Feminist Criticism”

WEEK 12

Tuesday: Grace Paley’s “My Father Addresses Me on the Facts of Old Age” (pp. 853-859), and Flannery O’Connor’s “Good Country People” (pp. 893-907), annotated bibliography due

*Audre Lorde’s “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”

Thursday: Toni Morrison’s “Recitatif” (pp. 996-1009) and excerpt from Unspreakable Things Unspoken (pp. 1009-1025)

*excerpt from Toni Morrison’s Unspreakable Things Unspoken

WEEK 13

Tuesday: Anne Sexton’s “Her Kind” (pp. 919-920), “The Moss of His Skin” (pp. 920-921), “Housewife” (p. 921), “Woman with Girdle” (pp. 921-922), “Sylvia’s Death” (pp. 923-924), and “In Celebration of My Uterus” (pp. 924-926), and Sylvia Plath’s “The Arrival of the Bee Box” (p. 1052), “Wintering” (pp. 1056-1057), “Daddy” (pp. 1057-1059), “Ariel” (pp. 1059-1060), “Lady Lazarus” (pp. 1062-1064), and “Edge” (p. 1065), work on the canon paper

*Susan Bordo’s “The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity”

Thursday: Adrienne Rich’s “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” (p. 965), “Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law” (pp. 965-969), “I Am in Danger—Sir—” (pp. 969-970), excerpts from Twenty-One Love Poems (pp. 973-974), and “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” (pp. 982-994), and Louise Gluck’s “The School Children” (pp. 1283-1284), excerpt from “Dedication to Hunger” (pp. 1284-1285), and “First Memory” (p. 1287)

*Adrienne Rich’s “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision”

WEEK 14

Tuesday: Maxine Hong Kingston’s “No Name Woman” (pp. 1229-1237), Gloria Anzaldúa, “Tlilli, Tlapalli/The Path of the Red and Black Ink” (pp. 1255-1262), and Leslie Marmon Silko’s “Yellow Woman” (pp. 1332-1339)

*Gloria Anzaldúa’s “Tlilli, Tlapalli/The Path of the Red and Black Ink”

Thursday: No class, Thanksgiving break

WEEK 15

Tuesday: Rita Dove’s “The House Slave” (p. 1385), “Parsley” (pp. 1385-1387), “excerpt from Thomas and Beulah” (pp. 1387-1389), “Persephone, Falling” (pp. 1389-1390), “Rosa” (pp. 1390-1391) and “I have...
been a stranger in a strange land” (p. 1391), Sandra Cisneros’s “Woman Hollering Creek” (pp. 1400-1408), and Louise Erdrich’s “The Shawl” (pp. 1409-1413)

*Annette Kolodny’s “Dancing through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism”

**Thursday:** Alice Walker’s “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens” (pp. 1296-1303), Jamaica Kincaid’s “Girl” (pp. 1339-1340), and Joy Harjo’s “Deer Dancer” (p. 1377-1379), “Mourning Song” (pp. 1379-1380), and “The Naming” (pp. 1380-1382)

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**WEEK 16**

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**Tuesday:** Doris Lessing’s “One off the Short List” (pp. 810-827) and 2007 Nobel Lecture (http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/2007/lessing-lecture_en.html) or Conferences, workshopping on canon paper in class

**Thursday:** Closing festivities, reflective writing, **canon paper due**

*Supplemental Feminist Theory Essays

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**WORKS CITED**


Anzaldúa, Gloria. “Tlilli, Tlapalli/The Path of the Red and Black Ink” is included in your anthology.


Morrison, Toni. Excerpt from Unspeakable Things Unspoken is included in your anthology.

Rich, Adrienne. “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” is included in your anthology.


Woof, Virgina. “A Room of One’s Own [Shakespeare’s Sister]”