Texas A&M University-Texarkana

English 430: Images of Women in Literature
Course Syllabus
Spring 2012

Instructor: Dr. Doris Davis
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Course Number: English 430
Course Title: Images of Women in Literature
Time: MW 11:00-12:15
Catalog Description: This course focuses on the images of women primarily in nineteenth and twentieth-century literature.

Fuller Description: This course provides a thematic approach to reading works written by and about women, focusing on the following themes: (1) “engendering language, silence, and voice” (2) “writing bodies/bodies writing” (3) “rethinking the maternal” (4) “identify and difference” and (5) “resistance and transformation.” It includes representative works from novels, poetry, plays, short stories, nonfiction, and literary criticism. It offers students opportunities to write about the literature.

Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston ISBN: 978-0061120060
The House on Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros ISBN: 978-0679734772

Student Learner Outcomes

Students who complete this course successfully will:
(1) develop an understanding of how various factors contribute to the differing images of women in literature and demonstrate this understanding through class discussions and the written discourses required for the course.
(2) obtain and display a knowledge of various literary terms as they relate to selected literature by effectively applying such terms in class discussions and in written discourse

(3) assess the style, theme, properties, and effectiveness of literary works focusing on women, by writing analytical papers on selected works

(4) articulate an informed response to women’s literature by reading example works and by applying a critical approach to literary pieces in assigned papers

(5) develop an aesthetic appreciation for women’s literature by reading highly regarded examples as measured by class discussions and written assignments

Requirements:

A. Three tests. A test may be made up only if you have received permission for rescheduling prior to the test.

B. Three analytical papers, each of about 5 typed (double-spaced) pages, plus a works cited page. The papers must be written on either a work listed on the syllabus or a poem read and discussed in class. (Poems generally are not listed on the syllabus.) You must submit your papers to turnitin.com to receive a grade. The enrollment password is TBA.

C. Class attendance. The format of this class depends on your participation in discussions of the literature we read. Absences may result in a lower final grade.

Final Grade:

The final grade is an average of the requirements as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three tests</td>
<td>3 x 15%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three papers</td>
<td>3 x 15%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
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Bring your book to class. Do not leave class except for an emergency. Be on time. No phone calls! Be professional. As noted above, class attendance and participation constitute 10% of your grade.
**Academic Honesty Statement**
Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and copying or undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty, and may be grounds for a grade of “F” in the course and/or disciplinary action. The student is responsible for reading and understanding the University Policy on Academic Integrity.

Do not copy material from the internet or any other source without documentation. This act constitutes plagiarism. **Please be advised that I will report any academic dishonesty to the Dean. For more comments on avoiding plagiarism, see page 7 of this syllabus.**

**Disability Accommodations** Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M Texarkana Disability Services Office by contacting Mr. Carl Greig (903-223-3062).

**E-Mail Statement:** After applying to and being accepted into a program by Texas A&M University-Texarkana, an individual will receive an A&M-Texarkana e-mail account. Instructors and university officials will deliver official university correspondence to this account. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via his or her university e-mail account, and each individual must check his or her official A&M-Texarkana e-mail account completely and frequently. Faculty members and students must use their university e-mail accounts when communicating about coursework.

**Reading Schedule**
In addition to the works listed below, we will read poetry (both handouts and in the text). All of these are short.

| January | 18 | Introduction to course  
|  |  | “Engendering Language, Silence, and Voice”  
|  |  | Poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950): [handout]. |
Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966): “Bella Fleace Gave a Party” [handout];
Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960): from Dust Tracks on a Road, pp. 289-91, and “Sweat” [handout].

Maxine Hong Kingston (1940- ): “No Name Woman,” pp. 308-15;


PAPER I DUE BY NOON, FEBRUARY 24

Test I

“Writing Bodies/Bodies Writing”


Sandra Cisneros (1955- ): The House on Mango Street and selected poetry

The House on Mango Street continued

12-16 Spring Break

Mary Lavin (1912-1996): “The Story of the Widow’s Son” [handout];
Kate Chopin (1851-1904): The Awakening, pp. 696-778


PAPER II DUE BY NOON, APRIL 6

April

4 Test II

9 “Identity and Difference”


PAPER III DUE BY NOON, APRIL 27

25 “Resistance and Transformation”


May

2 Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960): Their Eyes Were Watching God

7 Their Eyes Were Watching God, continued

Final Exam Schedule

Test III
Opportunities for Writing

Paper I
Write an analytical paper about any of the literature (poems(s), short stories, or novel) listed under Part I, “Engendering Language, Silence, and Voice,” using part (or all) of this theme for a general focus. In your discussion, employ the ideas of one or more of the theoretical essayists (Virginia Woolf, Bell Hooks, George Eliot, Alice Walker, Barbara Christian or Elaine Showalter) in developing your thesis. For instance, using Barbara Christian’s observation that Alice Walker “turned the idea of Art on its head”(347), what kind of artist does Evelyn Waugh depict in “Bella Fleace Gave a Party”? To what extent does Bella find a voice? You will need to think metaphorically as well as literally. (See pages 345-46 for more ideas for writing.) Develop this paper by thinking and writing logically and analytically about the literature. Length: Five pages plus a works cited page listing the materials used from our text. Each work will need a separate listing. To document handouts, use the page numbers on the handouts and document them as though they came from our textbook. If you wish, you may use additional secondary sources from the library for this paper, but doing so is not required. If you use additional secondary sources, use either library books or articles acquired through a search of the library’s electronic database. All electronic sources must be of an academic nature, published by a university or peer-reviewed academic journal. If you use non- or quasi- academic sources, you will lose points on your paper.

Paper II
Write an analytical paper about any of the literature (poems(s), short stories, play, novels) listed under Parts II and III, “Writing Bodies/Bodies Writing” and “Rethinking the Maternal,” using one of these overall themes for a general focus in your paper. As with the first paper, employ the critical ideas of Helene Cixous, Nancy Mairs, Margit Stange and/or Paula Gunn Allen in designing your thesis. For instance, in “The Laugh of the Medusa” Helene Cixous states that “by writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display.” How might the narrator in “My Man Bovanne” be “reclaiming the body”? Again, you’ll need to extend your thinking. (See pages 582-83 and 875-86 for ideas.) The length is the same as the first. Secondary sources beyond our text are not required, but may be used following the requirements as stated under Paper I.

Paper III
This final paper allows you to focus on any literary work listed on the syllabus, including material in handouts. You may use literary theorists from our text (e.g., Margit Stange, Barbara Christian, or Elaine Showalter) if you choose. But for this paper, you must include secondary sources from the library: at least two books and two academic articles. (Check out the sources listed in “Notes” used by Elaine Showalter on pages 371-74, and the additional “Works Cited” on pages 1384, 1399-1400, and 1417-1418. Additionally, look at “Selected Bibliographies,” pages 1419-49. Although we will not have all of those texts in our library, you can obtain what you need through Inter-library loan if you begin early enough. You may also use the introductory sections to authors in our textbook as additional secondary sources (not part of the
two books/two articles requirement) and for critical ideas. As with the other papers, this paper should be five pages in length plus the works cited page.

**General Information on Papers**
The papers assigned for this class offer you the chance to write about selections on the syllabus that interest you. Papers demand that you think critically and organize your ideas clearly and effectively.

While you will use secondary sources (including those in our text and beyond), above all papers should reflect your own ideas and responses to the literature. I strongly urge you to think for yourself and base your papers on your own analysis. (Consider using the library early in the semester for academic sources and inspiration. It has a lot of books! Going there may be an enlightening experience.) The ASK Center is also available to help you.

Use MLA (Modern Language Association) style for documentation. To quote from the work itself—the primary or secondary source—place the page or line number in parentheses after the quote. Use page numbers for prose, line numbers for poetry. For example: In “Life in the Iron-Mills,” Rebecca Harding Davis creates an atmosphere of gloom. As the story opens, the sky before morning is “muddy, flat, immovable” (2411). Place the author’s last name in the parentheses if the source of the quoted material is unclear. For instance, Bell Hooks write, “To speak then when one was not spoken to was a courageous act” (73). Or one theorist notes the following: “To speak then when one was not spoken to was a courageous act” (Hooks 73).

Remember that quotations are most effective when brief and few. You should have a reason to quote. You should not quote long passages or material that would be just as effective in your own words.

All secondary material—including words and ideas—must be documented. Documentation means putting quotation marks around words you are quoting and indicating whose words these are. (University policy mandates a failing grade for any plagiarized work—whether it be in the form of phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas.)

Each paper should have a controlling idea—a thesis. A thesis statement should appear in the first or second paragraph. It need not be formally stated as in—”The purpose of this paper is to . . .”—but it should indicate what you intend to accomplish. Your paper should offer more than a plot summary.

**Finding a thesis**
The first two papers assigned in this course, restrict the nature of the thesis as stated under “Paper I” and “Paper II.” Paper III allows more flexibility in your selection of topic. The following comments reflect some general considerations about selecting a topic and thesis. First, select a piece of literature that interests you. (If you didn’t like it the first time you read it, why spend time rereading it and reading about it?)

Your paper will reflect a critical approach to the literature—such as feminist, psychological, Marxist, or formalist. Whatever approach you take, you’ll want to consider the
theme(s) of the primary work (the poem, story, novel, etc. you’re writing about). Your purpose in the paper is to contribute to the reader’s fuller understanding of the literature—possibly to offer an interpretation of the ambiguities and subtleties of literature and language—but at any rate to point out something about the piece that interests you.

Try to avoid the obvious in developing a thesis. Consider the following: “Frost often writes about nature in his poetry.” This is not a good thesis because anyone reading the poems easily realizes this fact. It is not a claim that anyone would deny. It doesn’t offer the reader any insight. But it’s a beginning. The next step is to focus more narrowly. You may find it helpful to ask yourself some questions about the work. For example, “What philosophical ideas do Frost’s nature poems reveal?” Or, “How does Frost modulate his tone in the nature poems?” Or, “What use does Frost make of dialogue in the nature poems?” Asking questions such as these will allow you to use what is self-evident to develop a more interesting thesis. The point is that good essays often don’t start with intricate ideas, but develop through the writer’s sensitive use of the obvious.

Works Cited
All papers should include the Works Cited Page. For example, to quote from the editor’s introduction to a story, poem, or play, use the following format in the Works Cited.


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