

ENG430.01E: Studies in Women's Literature

Texas A&M University-Texarkana

Tuesdays (Canvas) / Thursdays 1pm-2:15pm in UC232

Spring 2024

CRN: 20313 / 3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Jaime Cantrell

Office Hours: Thursdays, 12-1pm in UC321D & Wednesdays, 10-12noon on Zoom

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

As the course title signals, ENG430 will introduce you to the wide textual world of women's literature. Our class will read diverse, multi-genre works—including essays, a memoir, and short fiction—to sharpen the critical analysis skills expected of advanced undergraduate English majors and minors. While we will focus primarily on 20th century women's contributions to the literatures of the U.S. South, including their historical, biographical, and literary contexts, we will also engage with women's literatures from an intersectional perspective. Students will consider the interlocking axes of gender, race, sex, and class, asking how those identities are textually represented, silenced, and/or celebrated. We will consider: how have women been portrayed by female writers over the last two centuries? Are there central themes, places, motifs, and movements that can be mapped across works of literature and time? What informs, influences, shapes, and determines canonicity when reading works by and about women specific to a particular region? Selected authors will include Dorothy Allison, Doris Betts, Kate Chopin, Zora Neale Hurston, Flannery O'Connor, Bobbie Ann Mason, Mab Segrest, Natasha Trethewey, and Alice Walker.

REQUIRED COURSE TEXT(S)

- Trethewey, Natasha. *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020.
- A boatload of readings available on Canvas in .pdf format, including excerpts from Susan Mee's *Downhome: An Anthology of Southern Women Writers* (1995) and *Southern Women's Writing: Colonial to Contemporary* (1995) by Mary Louise Weaks & Carolyn Perry, eds.

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.

COURSE POLICIES

Classroom Decorum

Active participation is mandatory, and a significant portion of your grade is determined by the voice you bring to our discussions. Thoughtfulness trumps volume in this regard. I encourage you to be a lively and engaged voice in the discussions and lectures, and I require you to be a respectful one.

Email

If you email me during the semester be sure to address me with respect (this means formally as Dr. Cantrell or Professor Cantrell, because trust me, you wouldn't believe number of "Hey" or "Ms. Cantrell" emails I get from students!). Please also understand that in the interest of a work/life balance, any emails sent during nights and weekends will wait for a response until business hours; allow at least a 24-hour response time for all communications. Be advised that I do not utilize Course Messages on Canvas. As such, you must email me directly at jcantrell@tamut.edu from your university issued email account. Any emails from students with questions and queries that have previously been addressed in this course syllabus will be deleted. **Please note that if your email doesn't include: 1) a salutation, 2) the course information, 3) your name and section number, and 4) a closing, then I will not respond to it. This digital age begs you to not be neglectful of basic email etiquette—all your professors across the university will appreciate this fast and easy courtesy.**

Attendance

We have relatively few class meetings to reckon with the substantial demands of the course; consequently, you will be expected to attend faithfully. Our class will meet face to face on Thursdays this spring semester. You will be expected to complete work on Canvas on Tuesdays; we will not meet in person or virtually on that day. You are allowed two “free” Thursday absences for the term; this is the equivalent of missing a week of class. For every additional absence, ten points will be deducted from your final average. **Be cautious: it is entirely possible to fail this course based on attendance alone.**

Office Hours

I have office hours every week, and I would love to talk with you about the texts we are reading, about your work in the course, or about anything literary or class-related. Many times, people feel like they should not stop by a professor’s office hours unless they have something precise and urgent and finely-tuned to say. This is not my philosophy. I would love to get to know you, so please consider dropping by my office hours early in the term so we can get acquainted—and keep dropping by throughout the semester as needed.

Make –ups & Late Assignments

Assignments are due on the day and time they are scheduled; learning the fine art of time management is one of the many skills necessary to be successful in college. **I will not accept late assignments.** I will sometimes offer extra credit, but not always. If you come to class and complete the assigned readings, you won’t need it.

University Resources & Regulations

Military Personnel and Student Veterans

Thank you for serving our country. Recommended resources include the Manager of our Veterans Services Center (UC 258), Mr. Robert Hernandez (903.334.6602, veterans@TAMUT.edu), Counseling Services (903.223.3186), and your Student Veterans Association chapter officers (TAMUT.SVA@gmail.com).

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source, constitute academic dishonesty. **Any submitted assignments discovered to have violated academic integrity will be grounds for a grade of "F" in the course and/or further disciplinary actions.** For additional information see the university catalog.

Academic Integrity Addendum: All work you submit for this course must be original work completed **for this course during this semester.** If you are repeating this class, you must

construct new and original work for your assignments, even if the assignments are similar or the same from previous semesters. Submitting work that you've completed previously is unethical and unfair to other students in the course.

Machine-Assisted/AI Writing

Nearly every time we write today, we do so with the aid of machines. Whether we engage support from autocorrect, predictive text, spell check, or even more advanced platforms like Grammarly or Google Translate, digital computing technologies allow us to compose quickly and, in many cases, more accurately than if we were left on our own. With advances

in artificial intelligence, you might be tempted to cut corners in your academic writing assignments. I would strongly caution you against that; after all, whatever your next step is after completing your degree, strong written communication skills still rank at the top of nearly every employer skills survey out there. My class is a safe place to try new things, to learn from your missteps, and to gain strength and confidence as a writer. Do the work here, *your work*, and you'll be better for it later. Any assignments submitted to Canvas with the assistance of AI-generated work will be addressed by me and the ACME department as an issue of Academic Integrity. Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of 'F' on the assignment/course and/or disciplinary actions.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your final grade will reflect the following components:

200 points	Individual Presentation
100 points	Quizzes
100 points	Fiction Journal (TPQs; questions for reflection on Canvas; homework; etc.)
200 points	Midterm Exam
400 points	Final Expository Essay

Grades will be assigned as follows: 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70 -79% = C, 60-69% = D, below 59% = F.

Requirements Details:

- (1) Individual Presentation

What I am asking you to do: Just once this term you will present on a class reading from the schedule.

How I will grade it: You will be provided with an assignment sheet and evaluation rubric with more details on Canvas.

(2) Fiction Journal and small weekly assignments

What I am asking you to do: Keep a separate notebook on hand and bring it with you to each class meeting. You will also have a “Fiction Journal” component on Canvas discussion boards. Every few class days, either on Canvas or in person, I will administer a short quiz with fact-based questions about the reading assigned for that day. If you have read the material carefully, you will not have any difficulty in securing a perfect score for each quiz. The quizzes might also incorporate questions about critical terms and concepts we have defined and discussed in class, and other lecture material. I will also ask you, from time to time on Canvas or in person, to prepare a brief assignment for class, including a few explications/paraphrasing assignments, questions for reflection, group writing exercises, etc. These brief assignments and exercises are designed to take little time to complete, certainly no more than 45 minutes each, and probably significantly less time.

How I will grade it: Each quiz, small assignment, and close reading exercise will be worth a certain number of points, as I will indicate and ask you to write at the top of each quiz or assignment/exercise; I will add these points at the end of term, then divide that sum by the total possible number of points to determine your grade for this course requirement. You must be in class to take each quiz (or on Canvas); there are no make-up quizzes. You must be present in class to turn in these mini-assignments and exercises. Simple.

What the point is: We are covering a boatload of women’s literature in a short time. I want you to dive in and immerse yourself in this genre, and the only way to do that is to read steadily, attentively, and thoughtfully throughout the term. Plus, we will be spending this term thinking about genre conventions, and that necessarily means that each piece we read will be engaging with each previous work—and the works that follow. This course will make the most sense and be most meaningful to you if you read *everything*.

(3) Final Expository Essay (6-8pp)

What I am asking you to do: Your essay should respond critically and carefully to an essay prompt of your choice from the list I will provide to you later on in the term; the essay should make an argument about the work of literature (how does it say what it says and why does it matter), and provide evidence for that argument based on significant use of paraphrasing, summarizing, and description.

Essays should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, one-inch margins, prepared according to MLA style. Essays should be submitted as Word documents on Canvas.

I am happy to read a draft of each essay and provide **verbal**—but not written—feedback on Zoom if (1) the draft is submitted one week before the due date. Please note that submitting a draft does not guarantee you a better grade than you might be expecting; it only guarantees that, if you take my suggestions, you will write a better paper—and your colleagues who review your essay with you will write better papers themselves, thanks to learning from you and your revision process!

How I will grade it: I will supply you with the table below, in which we will assign a score of 0, 1, 2, or 3 points to each of five categories of evaluation. In addition to assigning you that score, I will provide brief comments explaining that score.

Category of Evaluation	Score (0-3)	Comments
Argument: your paper has a provocative thesis, an original and persuasive argument, and an exciting So What; your paper demonstrates creativity and rigor of thought, and you take on challenging material in intellectually bold ways		
Organization: your paper is organized logically, and its argument is structured so as to be maximally clear and inviting to your reader		
Evidence: you incorporate robust close readings of primary texts; you do not paraphrase material but rather engage with it critically and analytically		
Expression: your paper is elegantly written in lucid prose, and it avoids infelicities of word choice and punctuation; your paper demonstrates a clear investment of time and effort		
Format/Editing: your paper is formatted according to MLA guidelines, and it meets the requirements of the assignment (e.g., is neither too long nor too short); your paper is free of typographical errors		

Your letter grade (and its numerical equivalent) for the essay will correspond to the 0-15 score you receive for the paper, as follows:

Score (sum of individual scores for five categories of evaluation)	Numerical grade (will be multiplied by four as per the assignment point allocations)
15	A/96
14	A-/92
12 or 13	B+/89
10 or 11	B/86
9	B-/82
7 or 8	C/76 or C+/79
5 or 6	D/69
4 or lower	F/59

Late papers will not be accepted, and they will register a 0 for the purposes of calculating the final grade. I grade with an eye toward intellectual courage and improvement. I might bump up your grade a little if you are willing to go out on a limb and take on especially challenging material, or if I see you putting in the time and effort to improve between the first and second papers. These paper grades reward thoughtful risk-taking and energy investment.

What the point is: Writing clearly and persuasively is a key career skill in ANY field you choose. Whether or not you are an English major, gaining facility in many different forms of writing will serve you well in your future work. Writing essays involves engaging a work of literature, thinking through it in and with attention to detail, and expressing an original and nuanced account of it with clarity, concision, and style. Once you write this kind of paper well, you can produce virtually any other sort of written work with ease and aplomb. Like any skill, writing requires practice. The two goals of this class are to hone your close reading acuity and to develop your writing; this paper helps you do both.

Note: Unless otherwise instructed, all written assignments should be submitted BY class time on the due date specified **and** submitted via the SafeAssign drop boxes on Canvas. When you submit assignments, cc yourself and check that the attachment works; assignments submitted with a missing, wrong, or unopenable attachment will not be accepted. *Be sure to properly format the headings* for each of your papers according to MLA format; I will not accept a paper if the formatting is incorrect.

- (4) Midterm exam: The midterm exam will be administered in our F2F class meeting in mid-March. It will cover readings and material from the first half of the term. Exam

format might include T/F, a short identify section with texts/authors, definitions, essay questions, explication/paraphrasing exercises, etc.

Disability Accommodations: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal nondiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this law requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Office of Student Life in UC room 125, or call (903) 223-1351. For additional information visit **Disability Services**.

Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date, a student must complete a ***Drop/Withdrawal Request Form***, located on the University Registrar's webpage or obtained in the Registrar's Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an "approval" to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar's office for processing in person, email **Registrar@tamut.edu**, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140).

For University policies on Academic Integrity, A&M-Texarkana Email Address, and the Drop Policy, please refer to the Syllabus Policies.

For questions on *all web-enhanced and online courses*, please refer to Technology Innovation and Digital Education (TIDE).

* http://bit.ly/TAMUT_SyllabusPolicies

** http://bit.ly/TAMUT_OnlineEducation

*** http://bit.ly/TAMUT_DisabilityServices

This syllabus is subject to change, but all modifications will be announced in lecture meeting and/or via the Announcements tab on Canvas. It is your responsibility to be aware of possible alterations and adjust accordingly.

Reading Schedule (have texts read by this date):

THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH (to 1861)

January 16th (Canvas day): Read the course syllabus posted on Canvas. Respond to the Introductions discussion board post. Download all .pdf readings to your computer and/or print for easy access.

January 18th (F2F day): Read “Women Writers, Beginnings to 1820” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Eliza Wilkinson, from *Letters of Eliza Wilkinson, During the Invasion and Possession of Charlestown, S.C., by the British in the Revolutionary War*.

January 23rd (Canvas day): Read “Letters” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Sarah Grimké, from *Letters on the Equality of the Sexes and the Condition of Woman, Addressed to Mary S. Parker, President of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society*. Respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

January 25th (F2F day): Read “Plantation” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Fanny Kemble, from *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation in 1838-1839* “Women in Slavery”.

THE POSTBELLUM SOUTH (1866-1917)

January 30th (Canvas day): Read “Women Writers 1820 to 1900” from *Companion to Southern Literature* along with Kate Chopin, “A Respectable Woman” and “The Story of an Hour”. Complete Canvas quiz on Kate Chopin and respond to Questions for Reflection on “The Story of an Hour” in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

February 1st (F2F day): Read “Miscegenation”, “Creole”, and “Local Color Fiction” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Kate Chopin, “Desiree’s Baby”.

THE MODERN SOUTH (1918-1960)

February 6th (Canvas day): Katherine Anne Porter, “The Grave”. Complete Canvas quiz and respond to Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

February 8th (F2F day): No class

February 13th (Canvas day): Flannery O’Connor “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and excerpted reading from *Mystery and Manners*. Complete Canvas quiz on O’Connor’s *Mystery and Manners* and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

February 15th (F2F day): Read “Zora Neale Hurston” from *Companion to Southern Literature* along with Hurston’s short stories, “Isis” and “Sweat”.

February 20th (Canvas day): Read Eudora Welty, “A Visit of Charity”. Complete Canvas quiz on Welty and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

February 22nd (F2F day): No class or readings due; away at a conference. Watch lecture video “How To: What You Should Know About Individual Presentations” on Canvas.

THE CONTEMPORARY SOUTH (1961 to the present)

February 27th (Canvas day): Read “Women Writers 1900 to World War II” and “Women Writers World War II to Present” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

February 29th (F2F day): Read “African American Vernacular English” and “Quilting” from *Companion to Southern Literature* along with Alice Walker, “Everyday Use.”

March 5th (Canvas day): Read “African American Literature, 1919 to Present” from *Companion to Southern Literature* along with Alice Walker, “The Black Writer and the Southern Experience”. Complete Canvas quiz and respond to Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

March 7th (F2F day): Midterm Exam

March 12th (Canvas day): No class, Spring Break holiday

March 14th (F2F day): No class, Spring Break holiday

March 19th (Canvas day): Read “Feminism” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Bobbie Ann Mason, “Shiloh”. Complete Canvas quiz and respond to Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

March 21st (F2F day): Read “Lesbian Literature” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Mab Segrest, “Southern Women Writing: Toward a Literature of Wholeness”. Guest Speaker TBA.

March 26th (Canvas day): Read “Snake Handling” and “Gospel Music” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Dorothy Allison, “Gospel Song”. Respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

March 28th (F2F day): Read “Televangelist” and “Evangelical Christianity” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and Doris Betts, “The Ugliest Pilgrim”.

April 2nd (Canvas day): Read “The Past” from *Companion to Southern Literature* along with Elizabeth Spencer, “First Dark”. Complete Canvas quiz and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

April 4th (F2F day): Individual Presentations by Chloe Fincher, Alison Head, Samantha King, Malone Lewis, and Allison Wade

April 9th (Canvas day): Natasha Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*, I, [], Prologue, 1. Another Country, 2. Terminus, [] (the first page through p. 74). Respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

April 11th (F2F day): Individual Presentations by Kayra Wickliffe, Heather Vaughan, Shaundra Ray, Kathryn Newman, and Emma Garrison

April 16th (Canvas day): Read Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*, p. 75-106.

April 18th (F2F day): Read Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*, p. 107-140.

April 23rd (Canvas day): Read Trethewey, *Memorial Drive*, p. 107-140 and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

April 25th (F2F day): NOTE that we will meet SYNCHRONOUSLY on Zoom at our class time and not in person (see Zoom access link on Canvas). Read *Steel Magnolias* by Robert Harling and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

April 30th (Canvas day): Read “Lady”, “Debutante”, “Belle”, and “Steel Magnolia” from *Companion to Southern Literature* and respond to the Q4R in your Fiction Journal on Canvas.

May 2nd (F2F day): Excerpted screening of *STEEL MAGNOLIAS*. Final Expository Essay due / no readings assigned.