

## **WMST 7320: Women and Multicultural Expression**

University of Memphis, Fall 2008

Tuesdays 5:30-8:30

215 Clement Hall

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Office hours: Tuesday 4-5, Thursday 1-2, and by appointment

### **DESCRIPTION:**

This course will examine diverse forms of women's expression—literary, artistic, filmic, philosophical, critical, and polemical—in order to understand how women have sought to negotiate (or, in some cases, obscure) other social differences in addition to gender. In the process, we will critically examine many of the terms through which “difference” itself is figured, including “gender,” “culture,” “race,” “nation,” “sexuality,” and “class.” Considering both the ideological and material impact of these concepts—i.e., the way in which they shape understandings of the world as well as the way in which they influence the rights and resources available to persons in the world—we will examine how women have sought to disrupt or challenge their effects and also the difficulties women have noted in the process. For concrete examples of conflict between and efforts to produce coalition among women, we will focus several class sessions on southern U.S. history and expression. We will also consider how globalization and efforts at global organizing repeat and revise previous problems in multicultural feminism.

### **TEXTS:**

Available from University Bookstore:

- Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*
- Cheryl Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman* (DVD)
- Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts*
- Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*
- Sindiwe Magona, *Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night*
- Sally Potter, *Orlando* (DVD)
- Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*
- Eudora Welty, *The Golden Apples*

Available online:

- Ellen Douglas, *Can't Quit You, Baby* (1988) (used at amazon.com; also 9 copies at Benjamin Hooks Central Public Library)
- Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988) (amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com)

Available through our ECourseware site: All other readings/images. This site can be accessed through SpectrUM (under “ECampus Resources” tab) or through the “Quick Links” drop menu on the university's home page. You will be prompted to log in with your regular UUID and password.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

- Regular attendance and vigorous participation in class meetings
- 3 short response papers
- One research paper, with prospectus and annotated bibliography
- One class presentation based on research paper
- Final exam

**POLICIES:**

- Attendance and active participation are mandatory. If you miss more than two classes, you will fail the course. More than one unexcused absence will lower your grade. Because this is a graduate seminar, you are expected to come to class ready to discuss the texts.
- Plagiarism of words or ideas, if detected, will result in a failing grade for the course. You can find further information regarding plagiarism and penalties at my web page: <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/www/studentinfo/plagiarism.html>.
- You must complete all assigned work to pass this class. All written assignments should be submitted to the appropriate dropbox in ECourseware.
- Bring the relevant texts (except for films and images) to every meeting of class!
- You are expected to be civil to others in the class. Discussion is an important element of this course, and our assignments include some disturbing representations as well as controversial topics. You are encouraged to express your concerns and opinions, but please be aware that other members of the class share this right. We will be able to work through the more upsetting elements of this literature most effectively by communicating both candidly and in a manner that demonstrates respect for all classroom participants. Civility includes other forms of professional behavior: for example, turn off your cell phone.
- Your grade will be assessed according to a +/- scale. At the University of Memphis, an A- earns 3.84 out of 4 possible points; all other +/-s indicate a .33 distance from the nearest integer (i.e., a B+ = 3.33, and a B- = 2.67).
- Your final grade will consist of a weighted average:
  - Class participation: 25%
  - Short essays: 15% (5% each)
  - Research paper: 25%
  - Annotated bibliography: 5%
  - Presentation: 10%
  - Final exam: 20%
- The university's expectations for academic integrity and student conduct are described in detail on the website of the Office of Student Judicial and Ethical Affairs (<http://saweb.memphis.edu/judicialaffairs>). Please take a look, in particular, at the sections about "Academic Dishonesty," "Student Code of Conduct and Responsibilities," and "Disruptive Behaviors." Students are expected to be aware of these guidelines and to conduct themselves accordingly.
- Any student who may need class or test accommodations based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately to discuss your specific needs. Students with disabilities should also contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 110 Wilder Tower, 678-2880. SDS coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

**SHORT ESSAYS:**

- **Length: 1-2 pages each**
- **Due: 9/9, 9/23, 10/7 before class (NO EXTENSIONS!)**
- **Format: Typed, double-spaced** (NOTE: For any writing submitted to me, use a 12-point font—approximately the size of Times New Roman 12. If you are unable to hit or hold yourself to the allotted page limit on any assignment, do not attempt to obscure this problem by adjusting your font.)
- **Objectives:**
  - To provide students the opportunity to reflect on course readings and discussions in print (including, if students so choose, the opportunity to compare course materials to other aesthetic works)
  - To facilitate preliminary consideration of possible topics for the course research paper
  - To provide students the opportunity to receive feedback on writing before the research paper
- **Content:** For any given paper, students may focus on readings/discussions for either that week (sharing the paper's due date) or the previous week. The following suggestions are intended to provide starting points—not limits—for reflection.
  - **Sept. 9 (week 3):** Briefly describe one problem (conceptual, stylistic, or pragmatic) facing theorists and practitioners of multicultural feminism. You may choose to challenge some models of these problems as provided in course reading, but you are encouraged to provide an example from your own reading or experience.
  - **Sept. 23 (week 5):** Using JSTOR and/or the MLA Bibliography, find one critical resource on Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, briefly summarize it, and explain how it helped you to understand the novel. (Note that, even if you disagree vigorously with the essay you have chosen, that dissension should promote insight.) If your source is available via electronic media, please upload a copy along with your paper.
  - **Oct. 7 (week 7):** Feminism has long sought to counter limiting conceptions of collective female identity, but, in its effort to produce sustaining narratives and a sense of shared purpose for the movement, feminism, too, has produced restrictive images of its participants. Multicultural feminists are particularly attuned to this paradox, which appears in other movements that seek to procure justice for marginalized groups as well. Focusing on one example, briefly discuss the usefulness and/or danger of attempting to represent a collective.

**RESEARCH PAPER AND PRELIMINARY DOCUMENTS:**

- **Length: 15 pages**
- **Due date: December 8<sup>th</sup> (NO EXTENSIONS, except for students exercising preliminary draft option)**
- **Format: Typed, double-spaced, with consistent citational style**
- **Topic:** You will develop your own topics for this final paper. You may focus on examples of any form of women's expression, and you should consider how multicultural dynamics—the effort to negotiate conflict between groups or to exert control over other groups—influence the form or function of that expression. Though the parameters for this assignment are broad, each paper should exhibit close, careful analysis of one or two “texts” while situating those texts in relation to broader (historical, political, or aesthetic) contexts. “Texts” could include

interviews and other forms of social scientific data as well as literary, musical, filmic or other artistic works.

- **Research:** Final papers should cite **at least 6** books or journal articles in addition to your primary sources. You are also encouraged to cite websites, artistic works (literary/musical/visual), feminist editorials, or other forms of expression, but these will not count toward your minimum number of scholarly sources.
- **Style:** Though innovative analysis is encouraged, research papers should conform to academic conventions for organization, expression, etc. (Any student who finds this requirement restrictive is welcome to append more stylistically experimental documents to the final paper or to lobby for a limited exception as part of the paper prospectus. Any divergence from academic style must, however, be thoughtful, justified and approved in advanced.) Students are strongly encouraged to consult the overview of my stylistic expectations at <https://umdrive.memphis.edu/lduck/www/studentinfo/papers.html>.
- **Prospectus:**
- **Due: October 28<sup>th</sup> (NO EXTENSIONS!)**
  - **Length: Approximately ¾ page**
  - **Format: Typed.** The prospectus may use a conventional paragraph format or make use of bulleted lists, etc.
  - **Content:** The prospectus need not posit a thesis, but should articulate the line of investigation that you plan to pursue. You need to articulate your research question clearly, and explain how you will approach that question. The extent to which I can helpfully advise you in developing your paper will depend on the quality and quantity of information you provide me here.
- **Annotated Bibliography:**
- **Due: November 18<sup>th</sup> (NO EXTENSIONS!)**
  - **Length:** all primary sources to be consulted for paper, plus at least 6 scholarly sources. Complete bibliographic information must be provided for each source. For each scholarly work, provide one concise paragraph of commentary.
  - **Format: Typed, itemized, with consistent citation style** (MLA, APA, or Chicago)
  - **Commentary:** Describe the relevance of each scholarly item to your paper. For example: Will you be disputing this author's claim? Will it be used to support a certain section of your argument (describe which one)? Will it be used to provide historical context (explain the importance of that context)? If it turns out that this item may not be useful in your paper (and you should not submit a bibliography in which no items will be useful), how has reading it helped to shape your plans for the paper?
- **Preliminary draft and feedback:** I will be happy to comment on a completed draft of the paper in case you would like to revise it before submitting it for a grade. To exercise this option, you must submit a complete draft by Friday, December 5<sup>th</sup>. Students exercising this option can submit their final drafts on Friday, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>.

### **PRESENTATIONS:**

- Your presentation will provide a preliminary overview of your research paper. It should clearly and concisely describe:
  - The problem/question you have chosen to investigate
  - Existing scholarship on this question
  - Your critical methodology

- Either your conclusion or one exemplary datum and the questions you must answer in order to arrive at a conclusion (i.e., for projects “still under investigation,” you may choose to display one instance of the material you are interpreting and use that example to demonstrate the difficulties posed by the material)
- Note that, because the objective for these presentations is to present your findings to your classmates, they constitute an excellent opportunity for you to consider the significance or purpose of your project and also about how to organize and articulate your analysis in an audience-friendly manner. The objective of these presentations is not only to share your research but also to augment the paper-writing process.
- You are strongly urged to develop multi-media presentations: in other words, you should supplement your talk with images, video or audio clips, presentation software, etc. At the very least, students should provide well-formatted and helpful handouts with their presentations.
- Students must prepare at least 8 minutes of material for presentation.
- Presentations may not last more than 10 minutes. Students will receive an optional 2-minute warning and a 1-minute warning; presentations will be stopped at 10 minutes.
- Students are expected to provide questions and feedback for their classmates’ presentations: attendance and participation are just as important during the last session of class as they are earlier in the semester.
- Presentations will be graded according to:
  - Vigor of research and analysis
  - Clarity and organization of content
  - Style (use of media, consideration of audience, response to questions, etc.)

### **EXAM:**

- The exam is designed to ascertain that students have done the reading and can write interesting and coherent commentary concerning the course subject matter. Student responses should reflect awareness of class discussions but should not be restricted to mere “regurgitation” of points made in class.
- Part I of the exam will consist solely of short-answer identification questions: students will be provided a passage of text and will be required to name its source and very briefly describe its significance in relation to at least one of our course’s themes. (Please note that these passages will not be obscure selections; I will be seeking passages of sufficient import that anyone who has read the text and attended to class discussion should be able to recognize them easily.) This section of the exam will take place at the end of class on December 2<sup>th</sup>. There will be a time limit, and students will be allowed to consult their notes.
- Part II of the exam will consist solely of essay questions, similar in form to the questions on M.A. and Ph.D. comprehensive exams. The questions will be sufficiently broad that they will relate to many materials in the course; a successful answer will typically incorporate meaningful references to several syllabus items. Students should allot approximately one hour to each question; ideally, essays for these exams should be roughly outlined before students begin writing, in order to craft a persuasive and coherent answer. This section of the exam does differ from comprehensive exams in its take-home

format: it will be completed outside of class on the honor system. Students are expected to type their answers and are allowed to consult notes and texts.

### **SCHEDULE:**

Texts/assignments listed to the right of the date are to be discussed/submitted on that date.

## **UNIT I: MULTICULTURAL FEMINISM: PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES**

### **8/26 Introduction (wk. 1)**

“Morning in America,” letter to *The Nation* (2008)

Ella Shohat, “Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge” (2002)

### **9/2 Space, Culture, Psyche (wk. 2)**

Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, pt. I (1987)

Images, Frida Kahlo

### **9/9 Institutions, Class, Race (wk. 3)**

Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, pt. II

Gwendolyn Brooks: “The Lovers of the Poor” and “A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon” (1960)

**SHORT PAPER #1 DUE**

## **UNIT II: NARRATING/QUESTIONING SELVES AND COLLECTIVES**

### **9/16 Mask, Performance, and Being (wk. 4)**

Sally Potter, *Orlando* (1992)

Judith Butler, “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality” (2001)

Guest speaker: April Jackson

### **9/23 Myth, History, and the Present (wk. 5)**

Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts* (1975)

**SHORT PAPER #2 DUE**

### **9/30 Archives and Fakes (wk. 6)**

Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

Cheryl Dunye, *The Watermelon Woman* (1996)

Images, Cindy Sherman and Nikki S. Lee

### **10/7 Commonality and Conflict (wk. 7)**

Nawal El Saadawi, from *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980)

Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* (2004)

**SHORT PAPER #3 DUE**

**10/14 Fall Break: No Class**

### UNIT III: CASE STUDIES IN CONFLICT AND COALITION

#### 10/21 Narrating Rape I: Singular Violence/Social Control (wk. 8)

Ida B. Wells, from *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynching in the United States* (1895), chaps. 1, 6, and 8  
 Jesse Daniel Ames and Bertha Payne Newell, "Repairers of the Breach" (1940)  
 Eudora Welty, "Sir Rabbit" and "Moon Lake" (1949)

#### 10/28 Narrating Rape II: Personal Trauma/Social Relations (wk. 9)

Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (1975)  
 Images, Kara Walker  
 Andrea Smith, "Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples" (2003)

#### PROSPECTUS FOR FINAL PAPER DUE

#### 11/4 Labor/Relations: Domestic, Local, Multinational (wk. 10)

Ellen Douglas, *Can't Quit You, Baby* (1988)  
 Sindiwe Magona, pt. I of *Living, Loving, and Lying Awake at Night* (1991)

### UNIT IV: APPROACHING GLOBAL FEMINISM

#### 11/11 Rights, Norms and Cultures (wk. 11)

Ousmane Sembene, *Mooladé* (2004) (screening, TBA)  
 Christine J. Walley, "Searching for 'Voices': Feminism, Anthropology, and the Global Debate Over Female Genital Operations"

#### 11/18 Patriarchy and the Post/Colony (wk. 12)

Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (1988)  
 Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'" (1992)

#### ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

#### 11/25 Transnational Visions and Divisions (wk. 13)

Frances M. Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female" (1969)  
 Mallika Dutt, "Some Reflections on U.S. Women of Color and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and NGO Forum in Beijing, China" (1996)  
 Valentine M. Moghadam, "Globalization and Its Discontents: Capitalist Development, Political Movements, and Gender" (2005)

### QUESTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS: STUDENT WORK

#### 12/2 PRESENTATIONS

#### FINAL EXAM PART I

#### 12/8 RESEARCH PAPERS DUE

**12/11 FINAL EXAM PART II DUE BY NOON**