

TITLE OF COURSE AND COURSE NUMBER: Images of Women in Modern Literature,
English 217 Credits: 3 Undergraduate level

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE:

A study of the images of women in modern literature drawn mostly by women. The course examines the various roles women have played in literature and the ways in which race, class, and ethnicity shape the works. Selected writers may include Virginia Woolf, Tillie Olsen, Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, Margaret Atwood.

COURSE PREREQUISITES: ENG 110

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. The primary goal of the course is to introduce students to images of women in literature written primarily by women in the twentieth century, with an emphasis on contemporary authors. The specific objectives under this broad goal are as follows:
2. To enable students to determine what a "female tradition" in literature written by white women and by women of color means.
3. To enable student to demonstrate and understanding of the relation of feminist theory and scholarship to literature written by women.
4. To enable student to determine what the various texts suggest about women's lives and identities in the twentieth century.
5. To help students understand the ways in which different texts overtly and/or covertly challenge prevailing gender ideologies .
6. To enable students to compare texts around certain recurring images of women: girls and adolescents, mothers, wives, working women, older women, free women, woman-identified women, and rebels, for example.
7. To enable student to understand the ways race, class, and sexual orientation, as well as gender, shape subject matter, style, content, and theme in literature written by women.
8. To familiarize students with the social/cultural/political history of the period to enable them to better understand the texts.
9. To provide students with the opportunity to evaluate the various texts aesthetically.
10. To prepare students for upper-level English courses by giving them experience in reading and writing about literature.
11. To enhance students' ability to make connections between literature and literary themes and their own lives.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate, in writing, an understanding of the recurring images of women in the literature studied.
2. Demonstrate, in writing, an ability to incorporate lecture material and secondary sources into their interpretations of twentieth century texts by women.
3. Participate actively and in an informed way in class discussions, group work, and oral presentations by revealing their close readings of the texts and relevant secondary readings.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of feminist theory and scholarship as it relates to the texts studied.
5. Improve as critical readers and writers by completing regular written assignments on the literature.
6. Demonstrate, in writing, an understanding of race and class differences as they impact on women's texts.
7. Demonstrate an ability to compare issues raised in the course with those in their own lives.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE COURSE CONTENT:

The course focuses on twentieth century literature written by women. While the individual instructor might choose to stress different writers and topics, to include some male writers, or to include various genres, the course should include literature by women of color as well as by white women. The following would be a typical outline:

Week I: Introduction to the Course: Traditional Images of Women in Literature

Week II: Women Becoming Writers: Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*; Paule Marshall, "To the Poets in the Kitchen;" Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens." Week III: Girls and Adolescents: Audre Lorde, from *Zami*; Toni Morrison, *Sula*; Week IV: Girls and Adolescents, continued: Short stories by Valerie Miner, Sandra Cisneros, and Jamaica Kincaid. Week V: The Romance Plot: Poems by Anne Sexton, Sylvia Plath, June Jordan; short stories by Joyce Carol Oates and Doris Lessing. Week VI: The Mother: Poems by Margaret Atwood and Sharon Olds; Toni Morrison, *Beloved*; Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*. Week VII: Women and Work: Poems by Judy Grahn, Lucille Clifton, Marilyn Hacker; short stories by Susan Glaspell and Alice Munro. Week VIII: Women and Class Differences: Short stories by Bharati Mukherjee, Toni Cade Bambara, and Alice Walker. Week IX: Older Women: Tillie Olsen, *Tell Me a Riddle*; short stories by Doris Lessing and Grace Paley. Week X: Women Loving Women: Poems by Adrienne Rich, short stories by Paula Gunn Allen and Joanna Russ. Week XI: The Female Dystopia: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*. Week XII: Women Resisting: Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*. Week XIII: Women Resisting, continued.: Short stories from *Spider Woman's Granddaughters*. Week XIV: Toward a Female Aesthetic: Readings from various feminist critics, including Barbara Smith, Bonnie Zimmerman, and Judith Fetterley. Week XV: Conclusion: What Will the Images of Women be in the 21st Century?

GUIDELINES/SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING METHODS AND STUDENT LEARNING

ACTIVITIES:

Lecture and discussion, in-class group work, student presentations and projects (individual and/or group), daily reaction papers and/or notecards, and visual aids (videos on individual writers; documentaries such as the Bill Moyers series on women poets, videos on contemporary issues of relevance to women).

GUIDELINES/SUGGESTIONS FOR METHODS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT (STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES):

Papers (5-7 pages), essay examinations (in-class and/or take-home), inclass group work, group presentations, individual oral presentations, reaction papers (1-2 pages), response notecards, and creative writing options.

SUGGESTED READINGS, TEXTS, OBJECTS OF STUDY:

Allen, Paula Gunn, ed. Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women, 1989. Atwood, Margaret. The Handmaid's Tale, 1985.
Cisneros, Sandra. Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories, 1991
Kingsolver, Barbara. Animal Dreams, 1990.
Kingston, Maxine Hong. The Woman Warrior, 1976.
Morrison, Toni. Sula, 1973, or Beloved, 1987.
Olsen, Tillie. Tell Me a Riddle, 1976; Silences, 1978.
Solomon, Barbara H., ed. Other Voices, Other Vistas: Short Stories from Africa, China, India, Japan, and Latin America, 1992.
Tan, Amy. The Joy Luck Club, 1989.
Winterson, Jeanette. Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, 1985.
Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own, 1929.

Instructor may also include nonfiction works like Paule Marshall, "From the Poets in the Kitchen," Reena and Other Stories, 1983, pp. 1-12, poetry by writers like Audre Lorde, Sylvia Plath, and Adrienne Rich, and work by nonwestern women writers. Instructor may also include relevant work by male authors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF SUPPORTIVE TEXTS AND OTHER MATERIALS:

Allen Carolyn. Following Diuna: Women Lovers and the Erotics of Loss. Indiana University Press, 1996.
Anzaldúa, Gloria, ed. Making Face/Making Soul/Haciendo Caras, Aunt Lute Books, 1990.
Benstock, Shari, ed. Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship. Indiana University Press, 1987
DuPlessis, Rachel Blau. Writing beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers. Indiana University Press, 1985.
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr., ed. Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology. New American Library, 1990.
Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century, Vol. I (1988) and Vol. II (1989). Yale University Press.
Lauret, Maria. Liberating Literature: Feminist Fiction in America. Routledge, 1994.
Perry, Donna, ed. Backtalk: Women Writers Speak Out. Rutgers University Press, 1993.
Russ, Joanna. To Write Like a Woman: Essays in Feminism and Science Fiction. Indiana University Press, 1995.

Walker, Alice. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Wall, Cheryl A., ed. Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women. Rutgers University Press, 1989.

PREPARER'S NAME AND DATE: Professor Susan Radner; before 1977

ORIGINAL DEPARTMENTAL APPROVAL DATE: Before 1977

REVISER'S NAME AND DATE: Dr. Donna Perry, March 29, 2000

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