

What does it mean to describe American women's writing as a "tradition"? Given the extraordinary diversity of American women writers – black and white, Asian and Latina, immigrant and Native, old and young, gay and straight – what features, or themes, do women writers share? In what ways can writing be said to be gendered? What is "reading as a woman" and how can we best describe it? How does American women's writing relate to other American traditions such as African American literature, realism, naturalism, or modernism? What have been the assumptions – and protocols – of feminist literary criticism and theory? What questions has feminist literary criticism and theory tended not to ask? Does a feminist critic read women's writing differently from other writing? Should she? To begin to address such questions, this course will take a multi-genre approach to American women's writing, focusing on those works of poetry, drama, fiction, autobiography, journalism/essay, and memoir/graphic memoir which have become most central to the canon of feminist criticism and theory. Beginning with some of the earliest works by women in the Americas, we will conclude our course with Anna Deveare Smith's groundbreaking play in multiple voices, *Twilight: Los Angeles* and Alison Bechdel's powerful graphic memoir, *Fun Home*. Among the issues we will cover are: genre and gender; reading, literary identification; canons; the politics of recuperation; feminist heroines; reading silence; family; gender and sexuality; the social construction of the subject; intersectionality; compulsory heterosexuality, and more. Many of our readings will be placed on blackboard. Books have been ordered through the bookstore and students are asked to purchase ordered editions, to facilitate close reading together in seminar. Requirements include class participation; a class presentation/collaborative discussion leading; one short paper (5-6 pages); one longer paper (8-10 pages). This seminar does not presume particular prerequisites in literature and all students, regardless of discipline or major, are welcomed.

Books (available at bookstore):

Jacobs, Harriet (Linda Brent), *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ed., Jean Fagan Yellin

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*

Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*

Nella Larsen, *Passing*, ed. Carla Kaplan

Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Adrienne Rich, *Diving Into the Wreck & Your Native Land, Your Life*

Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Anna Deveare Smith, *Twilight: Los Angeles*

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Week 1: Native American women's poetry; selections, Mary Rowlandson (1636-1678), *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*; selections, Anne Bradstreet

Week 2: Phillis Wheatley, poems; selections from Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, edited Jean Fagan Yellin
sign-up sheets, in class, for presentations/discussion leading

Week 3: Emily Dickinson, selected poems; Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I a Woman?" Alice James, selections from *The Diary*; Margaret Fuller, selections from *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*; Louisa May Alcott, selections

Week 4: Rebecca Harding Davis, selections from *Life in the Iron Mills*; Frances E.W. Harper, selections from *Iola Leroy*; Harriet Wilson, selections from *Our Nig*; selections from Nellie Bly, *Ten Days in a Madhouse*; selections from Ida Tarbell; Selections from Ida B. Wells; Edith Wharton, "The Other Two;" Willa Cather, "Coming Aphrodite!"

Week 5: Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper;" Susan Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers;" Isak Dinesen, "The Blank Page"

Week 6: Anzia Yezerkska, "The Fat of the Land;" from Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*; Djuna Barnes, from *Nightwood*; Rebecca West, "Indissoluble Matrimony;" selected poetry: Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop, Gwendolyn Brooks, Denise Levertov, and Edna St. Vincent Millay; Mourning Dove (Hum-Ishu-Ma), "The Origin of Diseases" and "Coyote Takes His Daughter as a Wife;" Sui Sin Far, from *Mrs. Spring Fragrance*

Paper One Due

Week 7: selections, Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*; from Ntozake Shange, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Should be Enough*; Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens," and selections, *The Color Purple*; Tillie Olsen, "Tell Me a Riddle;" Nella Larsen, *Passing*

Week 8: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Week 9: Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and selections from Zora Neale Hurston's letters, ed. Carla Kaplan

Week 10: Selected poetry: Anne Sexton, Audre Lorde; H.D., & Sylvia Plath; Julia Alvarez, from *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*; Sandra Cisneros, from *The House on Mango Street*; Maxine Hong Kingston, "White Tigers;" Gish Jen, "White Umbrella;" Louise Erdrich, "Walking in the Breakdown Lane"

One Page Proposal for Final Paper Due

Week 11: Adrienne Rich, *Diving Into the Wreck* and *Your Native Land, Your Life Revised Proposal*,
Paper One Due

Week 12: Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
First or last page of Paper Two & 2-page annotated bibliography due

Week 13: Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Week 14: Anna Deveare Smith; *Twilight: Los Angeles* and Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home Final Final*

Papers due.

Grading:

Paper #1: 30%

Paper #2: 50%

Participation: 10%

Presentation/Discussing Leading: 10%

Policies:

- All readings are to be completed in advance of the day for which they are assigned. It will not be possible to cover every reading in every class discussion; students are encouraged to raise questions about other readings over email or in office hours. Occasional readings will be placed on blackboard. Longer works may be read as excerpts, as needed.
- Attendance is required: missing more than two classes will affect your grade. Participation in class discussion is expected and part of your grade.
- Papers must be original work, with any outside materials clearly cited and anyone else's words only used in quotation marks. Plagiarism is grounds for immediate failure. It is possible to revise one paper for a revised grade; more on that in class.
- Quizzes, if necessitated, will be peer-graded; any peer grade disputes can be brought to office hours.
- Cell phones must be turned off in class; computers may be used only if Wi-Fi is off. No texting; no e-mailing; no web use during class – no exceptions.
- A peer review process will provide student feedback on paper #1; students will be encouraged to follow-through, on their own, with peer review for paper #2, outside of class. Topics and papers will also be workshopped.
- Keep a copy of your papers; we are not responsible for theft or loss of student papers placed in faculty mailboxes. All papers are due in paper copy, 12 pt. type, 1" margins, with proper formatting and citations for quotation, paraphrase, summary, and research. Improper or missing citation can result in a failing grade for the course.

Do not come to class if you are ill/contagious. Stay home. Rest. Let's keep all illnesses to ourselves!