English 36: Women’s Literature SP2018 online

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Office hours: Tuesday 10:30AM-noon; Wednesday 4-6PM

Goal of Women’s Literature: To understand the full range of a women’s experiences from women’s points of view through literature written by women.

Secondary goal: to bring this understanding of a broad range of women’s viewpoints out into the world and our interactions with others.

Books and materials:

Many of these works can be found online or checked out from County libraries. I’ll provide some pdfs. I have three books in the bookstore that I think you’ll want to buy:

ISBN: 9780618871711      Edition: 06      Status: 06

Title: FUN HOME:FAMILY TRAGICOMIC

Author: BECHDEL

Publisher: HM

ISBN: 9780385490818      Edition: 86      Status: 86

Title: HANDMAID'S TALE

Author: ATWOOD

Publisher: PENG RAND

ISBN: 9781400033836      Edition: 91      Status: 91

Title: THOUSAND ACRES

Author: SMILEY

Publisher: PENG RAND

The dvd of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* is available to rent on Amazon and elsewhere. I’ll be showing it on campus for a Face-2-Face Friday.

VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO READ CAREFULLY ALL THE WAY THROUGH TO THE END AND ASK ABOUT IF YOU NEED CLARIFICATION—DON’T WAIT TILL LATER. DON’T BE SHY TO ASK IF YOU’RE UNSURE ABOUT ANYTHING!

The syllabus by weeks is at the end—in bold are the Thursday Speakers series events , CSUF plays, and Face-2-Face Fridays to mark on your calendar now!

**Communicating with me:**

1. CHECK YOUR EMAIL AT LEAST ONCE A DAY. I will post lectures and discussion board forums, but I will email you readings, thought questions, clarifications, hopefully nothing trivial—I value your time.
2. I WILL CHECK MY EMAIL AND THE DB COURSE QUESTION FORUM AT 9AM. I will likely check it more frequently, but I don’t live online. Email me questions that are idiosyncratic to YOU. Course questions go on the DB.
3. MOST QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS BELONG ON THE DB. I will keep as the first pinned forum always a Course Question Forum, which I will check at least once a day at 9AM. I will answer the questions there on the forum. Don’t be shy. If you have the question, someone else probably does too. I try to be as crystal clear as possible, but my instructions will inevitably need clarification or correction. Please don’t email me, each of you, to say that Saturday is the 16th, not the 17th. Post that observation in this forum. I will apologize, and say you’re right. You can post suggestions to your classmates here as well: (eg. “Those tracking women and religion should definitely check out the last paragraph on page 96” or “I looked up ‘idiosyncratic’ and it means ‘unique or special to the individual’”)
4. COME TO MY OFFICE HOURS TO TALK. I’ve spread the office hours across the week to try to accommodate everyone. I may call you in you’re behind.
5. COME TO OPTIONAL FRIDAY FACE-TO-FACE FORUMS (F2Fs) IN THE RWC. I enjoy vibrant face-to-face discussions about literature. I have some films that will help us cover a little more material in the time we have together. Some people take continuing education classes for social as well as intellectual stimulation, so I like to supplement online classes with some activities. Some people take online classes because they have crazy schedules, so the F2Fs are optional.

**Succeeding in this class:**

1. KEEP UP WITH THE READING. Each week is based on a “lecture,” which will probably be in the form of an essay, that I will post by Monday noon (often much earlier). The point of the lecture is to give you guided discovery questions and lead you in some of the directions *I* have gone in *my* reading of the work. THESE ARE JUST SUGGESTIONS. This is a discovery class. I want to hear *your* authentic ideas and reactions to the reading.
2. AVOID LOOKING UP OTHERS’ INTERPRETATIONS ONLINE. In the past, I have even forbidden research in literature classes. Here’s the thing: I want to learn what *you* discover in this work. If everyone just goes online and parrots what some other student, or blogger, reviewer, or scholar has said about the work, there will be no new ideas in the world! That said, I like to read and think about what others have said *after* I’ve thought about what I say—that’s kind of like a discussion, isn’t it. It’s two-way and active, whereas simply reporting what you find online is one-way (receptive) and passive. So, I won’t *forbid* research, but , *even if you think you don’t understand a piece,* post your own first authentic and original response. Then go online and read what students, or bloggers, reviewers, or scholars have said (don’t stoop to 1-2-3 help me or those Cliff Notes/Sparks Notes sorts of sources). Then respond to your own thread on the DB with the results of your search, citing and/or attaching what you’ve found. Because we’re scholars, we’ll signal the source (eg. According to Elaine Showalter, feminist critic, in a piece entitled “Mrs. Dalloway: Exploring Consciousness and the Modern World,” Woolf’s characters are uniquely conscious of the inequities they experience because of their gender. NB: notice that I am paraphrasing the idea rather than quote-bombing). I think you get it: I really want to know what *you* think. Your analysis is valid without research.
3. NEVER-EVER *THINK* ABOUT PLAGIARIZING. In an online class, you don’t see me. You also don’t know what I’ve already read. I have surmised that it is so tempting, when you’ve gotten behind, to go to Google or someplace and spot a plausible answer to the DB question, scoop it up and drop it under your name. It’s painful to me when I have to call you out and give you a zero. It’s disrespectful to your classmates, who are reading your post. It’s a pain in the paperwork to report it to the dean, but I will—I have to. We can’t tolerate plagiarism in the scholarly world. If you’re desperate, talk to me.
4. YOU CAN ALSO GO TO THE RWC. The Reading-Writing Center is a super-inviting atmosphere, and there are people who have read some of these works or would be able to read over some parts of works with you. This semester, we are particularly lucky to have a couple of the tutors in the class (I will leave it to them to reveal themselves if they choose to do so). The RWC can also help with your midterm and final.
5. TAKE THE DISCUSSION FORUMS SERIOUSLY. Here’s how they operate: By **Monday** noon each week, I’ll post a lecture and DB1.1 or 2.1 or 3.1, etc. depending on the week (DB3.1 means Week 3, Monday). Complete the Monday post as soon as you read the lecture. It’s a pre-reading, “soft” prompt. Don’t take too much time on the Monday DB, but don’t skip it. Ask any questions you have on the Course Question Forum. Start your reading. By **Thursday** noon each week, I’ll post DB1.2 or 2.2 or 3.2, etc (DB3.2 means Week 3, Thursday). The Thursday forum is the scholarly one, based on the reading. While you don’t need to follow strict MLA style in a DB response, you must be organized, make a point (or points) and support it/them. Formulate your response to the Thursday forums the way you would an essay: Consider your thesis, your main point. Make sure you establish that in the first paragraph. Use topic sentences to govern your paragraphs. Point to specific examples, scenes, chapters, pages, lines, paragraphs, depending on the work in question. Remember that your audience has read the same work (with the exception of Week 16, in which you’ll choose your own free choice work), so, except for Week 16, don’t summarize. Read the piece by Michael Berube in PAGES called “Analyze, Don’t Summarize,” in which the professor compares literary analysis to sport meta-commentary. It’s very clever and instructive for the way I’ll grade the Thursday forums. He points that your audience has read the work, but not in the same way. What’s interesting is the way in which you read the piece compared to the way I read it or classmates read it. One thing to consider, for this class especially, is the Deconstructionist trick of binary opposition. In the strain of literary theory called Deconstruction, we look at what something would be like if replaced by its opposite. What if Hamlet had been female instead of male? (this can go so many ways and bleed into other strains of criticism, eg. A Marxist critic might ask: What if Hamlet were a peasant?). We’ll consider, thanks to Virginia Woolf: What if Shakespeare had a sister? Her book *Orlando,* which we will cover in film form in Week 2, actually has a male protagonist magically turn into a woman. Of the three DB grades per week, the Thursday forum is most heavily weighted. Besides the grade thing, you *want to write something meaningful, don’t you?*  This is your chance to try ideas that are percolating in your head. Some of these ideas will end up on your midterm or final as well. IMPORANT: It’s *critical* you post on time or early because by **Saturday** noon each week, you must respond to two classmates. You will respond to the person who posted BEFORE you and to one other post of your choice. If you are the first to post, you simply have two free-choice responses. While the Thursday post (.2) is weighted most heavily, both Monday and Saturday (.1 and .3) figure into the grade. You may either agree and add more support (“yes, and…”) or disagree and support that (“no, because…”). Your tone must be kind and respectful. Imagine a real person you know and respect as your audience. You’ll all be writing with your most clear punctuation, grammar, spelling, etc, but please don’t comment on each others’. I will send individual emails to people who need to clean up their act (students have called them “howlers,” after the owl deliveries in Harry Potter books, but I do not intend anything but the sincerest coaching from the sidelines to help you express your ideas in the clearest, most well-supported way you can). **The Discussion Board is half your grade.** If you fall behind, your grade will obviously suffer. Occasionally, I will post forums called DB1.4, 2.4, 3.4, etc (DB3.4 means an extra credit forum to replace a missed post or low grade. They will have due dates—usually very short windows. They might involve attending a play at Fresno State and commenting on it, or reading an article that I’ve just come across in the *New Yorker.* You’ll be able to see your weekly grade on Canvas. If you want a full accounting of the grade, come see me, but generally it will be broken down DB4.1=10 points, DB4.2=70points, DB4.3=20points. DB4.4 (extra credit, when there *is* extra credit—don’t count on it!) will vary (10-40).

To reiterate: Monday post=10%, Thursday post=70%, Saturday post=20%, and sometimes there will be extra credit=10-40 point bonus depending.

1. DO WELL ON THE MIDTERM AND THE FINAL. **The midterm and final are each a quarter of your grade.** In Week 8, instead of the DB, you will write a midterm of 5 paragraphs, one paragraph exploring each of five evenly-weighted questions. The questions will be general and based on the reading up to Week 8. They will be something like: How does social class impact the women’s outlook and attitude? Or: How much do traditional roles still impact progressive women? Or: How much does a woman’s experience depend on her race and culture? What is the impact of motherhood on a woman’s life experience? I will probably present you 7 questions, and you’ll choose 5. Then, in Week 17, instead of the DB, you’ll write a developed paper exploring a theme of YOUR OWN that you’ll develop over the course of the semester. Keep track, as you’re reading, thinking, and discovering, of themes that emerge. These should be particular to *your* reading of the works. Don’t waste any time or energy trying to figure out what Mrs. Lapp’s reading of the works is or what I’m looking for. I’m looking for your own authentic discovery and analysis. I had a similar final in American Literature, back when we covered Puritans to the present. I gave suggestions like: How did people’s relationship to God or death or marriage change over time? Or: How did the portrayal of women change over time? (they were required to choose one work from each half-century). Most people chose my suggestions and wrote passing finals or better, but I was impressed by original themes, such as how people’s relationship to business had changed over time, portrayals of farmers and farming, or our changing ideas about work and leisure time. I’ll pin a forum to contain your Thesis-in-Progress ideas. Drop something in there any time you want. When a student writes something that sounds like a potential theme to me, I’ll drop it in there. This will be available to everyone all the time.
2. READ AHEAD IF YOU WANT TO. Break up the long reading, so you’re not cramming it at the end. You’ll see there are two full-length works before midterm: Margaret Atwood’s *Handmaid’s Tale* and Jane Smiley’s retelling of King Lear entitled *A Thousand Acres.* We’ll cover *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* briefly, as it’s written by a woman, Rebecca Skloot, (and some things happen to her--good and bad—because she’s a woman), it’s the 1 Book-1 College all-school read, and members of the Lacks family will be coming to campus. I’m kind of assuming you’ve read that. We’ll see the movie with Oprah Winfrey. After midterm and Spring Break, there are two more: *The Mothers* by Brit Bennett and your free choice book, which can actually be poetry or any literary genre.

Syllabus by Weeks:

1. Intro lecture including readings/”The Birthmark” by Nathaniel Hawthorne (for comparison), inventory, history, themes in men’s literature
2. Lecture on Wharton, Brontes, Austen, Elliot/”Roman Fever” by Wharton **F2F Friday**: *Orlando* film in RWC
3. Lecture on Dickinson, Woolf/”Shakespeare’s Sister,” *Orlando* (film) by Woolf, “My Life Had Stood a Loaded Gun” by Dickinson
4. Lecture on Chopin/”The Awakening” (90 pgs) by Chopin or “Desiree’s Baby” **F2F Friday**: Discussion of Chopin, etc
5. Lecture on Bishop, Sexton,Plath/poetry, *Handmaid’s Tale* by Atwood Literary Arts “Party in the Library” Saturday 6PM—benefits speaker series
6. Lecture on Atwood/ *Handmaid’s Tale* by Atwood **F2F Friday**: *A Thousand Acres* (movie)
7. Lecture on Alice Walker/”Everyday Use” *The Color Purple* film (optional) **Thursday Speaker Series:** Mark Salzman (read *Lying Awake,* optional)
8. Lecture on Jane Smiley/*A Thousand Acres* by Smiley (book & film) **MIDTERM** is due through TurnItIn before Thursday at noon.
9. Lecture on Sharon Olds et al/poems, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* **F2F Friday:** *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (movie)
10. Lecture on Quiara Alegria Hudes/*Water by the Spoonful,*  **Thursday Speaker Series**: Lacks Family visit
11. Lecture on Lorrie Moore, Pam Houston/”How to Be an Other Woman” Moore **CSUF Play**: *Lydia—*I’m going on Wednesday 7:30 PM at CSUF (optional) Spring Break
12. Lecture on Brit Bennett, /*The Mothers* andChimamanda Ngozi Adichie
13. Lecture on Alison Bechdel and *Fun Home* (play)/ *Fun Home* graphic novel **F2F Friday:** discussion about final themes and free reading
14. Lecture on Pat Mora/poetry, poet Sasha Pimental to visit required **Thursday Speaker Series**: Sasha Pimental 7PM Forum Hall
15. Lecture on Gloria Machado/ free choice reading **F2F Friday:** free choice readingdiscussion?
16. Lecture on future reading suggestions/ free choice reading
17. Lecture on final **CSUF Play**: *Streetcar Named Desire* I’m going Wed 7:30 PM at CSUF
18. **FINAL** is due through TurnItIn on Canvas before Monday at noon