

SEP 29 2000

**English 3180: Women's Literary Tradition**  
**Winter 2000**  
**Section A2**

Louise Saldanha  
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office hours: Monday 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
Fridays 10:00 - 11:30 a.m.  
or by appointment

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**course description**

This course involves an examination of women's writing in English from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, with emphasis on the ways in which the national, racial, class, and sexual identities of women writers shape and challenge the formation of a women's literary "tradition" in English.

**course objectives**

To theorize the dynamics of race, gender, class, and cultural difference in relation to writing/reading/teaching practices, within the context of fiction, poetry, plays and essays by African American, American, British, Canadian, Native, and postcolonial women writers. In so doing, we will come to a fuller understanding of the following:

- the intertwined roles of history and literature in articulating what it means to be a "woman" in a certain place and time
- what it has meant to write as a "woman"
- the revelations, ambiguities, and contradictions of themes that have emerged over time as central concerns for women writers

**course expectations**

This will be a discussion-oriented courses, and so you will be expected to participate actively in this class by contributing regularly to class discussions. You are expected to attend class regularly (especially in a class like this that meets only once a week; if you miss one class you have missed a week's worth of material!) and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss, including handouts.

Because a large part of the class will revolve around discussion, and because we will be often engaged in talking about issues about which we care deeply, it is crucial that we establish and are committed to respect as our primary ground rule. A respectful learning environment means that we should participate with open minds in order that we all feel comfortable sharing our thoughts and ideas, that we all listen respectfully to each other, and that we encourage others who have not spoken to speak. Discussions must, thus, be engaged with a sense of responsibility to contribute constructively and to move the conversation forward.

texts (to be supplemented by critical articles and suggestions for further reading by your instructor)

Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (in addition to selected shorter readings from this text, we will be reading *Jane Eyre*, *The Awakening*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, and *Sula*)

Kogawa, *Obasan*

Philip, *Harriet's Daughter*

Rule, *Desert of the Heart*

Goto, *A Chorus of Mushrooms*

Erdrich, *Love Medicine*

In addition to these texts, two students will be responsible for reading and presenting collaboratively one of the following novels linking it to one of the sections ("learning," "(un)learning," "loving," etc.) organizing our discussion in the course. Further details on class presentation follow.

Armstrong, *Slash*

Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree*

Maracle, *Sojourner's Truth and Sundogs*

Mojica, Monica, *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*

I prefer you use the editions of the books on sale at the campus bookstore. If, however, you use other editions, please make certain that they are all unabridged (that no changes have been made to the original text).

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**evaluation:**

class presentation	25%
reading journal	30%
Q cards	10%
final project	20%
class participation	15% (**Class participation includes attendance, facilitation and notetaking in small group work, as well as participation in large class discussions.)

Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 5% a day unless arrangements for late submissions have been made with me at least two days prior to the date on which the assignment is due.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. All work must be submitted personally to me. Keep a copy of all your written work.

## assignments:

### 1) class presentations

Two students will be responsible for reading and presenting collaboratively one of the following novels linking it to one of the sections ("learning," "(un)learning," "loving," etc.) organizing our discussion in the course.

Armstrong, *Slash*

Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree*

Maracle, *Sojourner's Truth and Sundogs*

Mojica, Monica. *Princess Pocahontas and the Blue Spots*

Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*

Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is enuf*

You do not have to link your novel to the theme scheduled for discussion on the day you present; you do have to link your novel to any one of the themes we will be discussing this semester.

Minimum expectations for the presentations are

1. a summary of the novel, including what you feel to be key scenes, quotations, elements of style
2. a brief biography of the author
3. your response to the novel: what ideas interested you most? challenged you? what ideas did the novel introduce that you had not thought of before? Can you critique your response?
4. what links/connections can be made between other texts in the course and the novel?

The presentation length should be no more than 25 minutes and should promote discussion, even controversy, and should be interesting (i.e. no boring lecturing). After the presentation, it is the two students' responsibility to facilitate class discussion. Both students presenting must participate in the preparation and presentation. After your presentation is finished, a basic outline must be submitted to me (about a page) and a detailed list of the tasks each of you completed for the project. How you organize yourselves and present your material is entirely up to you. If you need photocopying, transparencies, or any audio-visual equipment, let me know at least 48 hours in advance. Be sure to choose the date on which you wish to present.

### 2) reading journals

**DUE: OCTOBER 3 (WORKSHOP)**

**OCTOBER 16**

**NOVEMBER 13**

**NOVEMBER 27**

Your journal must be submitted in a notebook or duo-tang separate from the one you are using for your notes. Your journal may be typed or hand-written. Please do not use point-form.

The reading journal consists of **four** responses to any of the texts from the course (excluding the one you are using for your class presentation). You do not have to write about each of these texts separately; you may find connections or wish to pursue a comparison between two texts, for example. You may also wish to develop your critique within the context of any of the critical pieces we will be reading in class. Bring your first entry to class on the day in which it is due and we will workshop them together in groups in order to get helpful feedback from your classmates and from me. If you take the suggestions into consideration each time you submit your entries, your work will improve. Your grade will be based on the progress you show throughout the journals and the ways in which you demonstrate a concerted effort to achieve the analysis/critique work required of this assignment. This is why I require you to submit all your entries to me, including those I have already read, for each submission. If you are unclear about these requirements, or your progress within the context of these requirements, come and see me *before the deadline* (remember if you can't make my office hours, we can fix up an alternative time). **If you do not see me with your questions, I cannot help you.**

Each of your responses should show me that you have read and thought about the text, and should contain a substantial critique. To do this, you won't be able to do an entry in any fewer than 2-3 double-spaced typed pages. Although I do not mark very hard for grammar/punctuation for journals, I will mark them down if they interfere with my comprehension of what you have written. Work hard on punctuation.

Each entry must involve the following intellectual work:

- i) level one: response
  - what is the predominant effect of the text on you? (confusion, suspense, identification with the characters, interest, boredom, amusement, terror, etc. Expand as much as possible)
- ii) level two: self-critique
  - why do you think the text had that effect? To answer, this you should ask yourself questions such as the following:
    - where does my response come from? Why did I respond this way? What assumptions/expectations did I bring to my reading of this text? How does this text challenge my assumptions/expectations? What challenges me the most about this text? What things in this text do I resist? Why? Where and why was I taught the beliefs that are being challenged by these texts? What knowledge/lack of knowledge am I discovering? (Note: If there are culturally specific references in the text with which you are not familiar, try and research these). Overall, what does your response tell you about your style of reading, your values, your assumptions?
- iii) level three: cultural critique
  - this needs to be less "I-oriented" and must move into a societal critique, focussing on dominant, or mainstream, society's attitudes towards the issues you raise in the self-critique section. What are society's ideas about women, women's literature, codes of behavior, notions about what is "normal," "conventional," etc. that are revealed?

October 3 (JOURNAL ENTRY DUE--  
WORKSHOP)

*Un(learning)*

Chopin, *The Awakening*  
Class Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

October 9

THANKSGIVING (No Classes)

October 16 (JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)

*Loving*

Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

October 23

Browning "How do I love thee? Let me  
count the ways"

Dickinson, selected poems (TBA)

Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper"

Hall, "Miss Ogilvy finds Herself"

Stein, "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene"

Parker, "The Waltz"

Class Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

October 30

Rule, *Desert of the Heart* or Goto Chorus of  
*Mushrooms* or Erdrich, *Love Medicine*

November 6

*Labour(ing): The Working Woman*

Wollstonecraft, from "Vindication on the  
*Rights of Women* ("Introduction")

Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills"

Shreiner, "Sex-Parasitism"

Woolf, "Shakespeare's Sister"

Marshall, "Poets in the Kitchen"

Atwood, "The Little Red Hen Tells All"

Hurston, "Sweat"

Class Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

November 13 (JOURNAL ENTRY DUE &  
TOPICS DUE FOR FINAL  
PROJECT)

Jacobs, "The Loophole of Retreat,"  
"Preparation for Escape"

Stowe, "The Slave Warehouse"

Austin, "The Walking Woman"

Olsen, Tillie "I Stand Here Ironing" (handout)

Welty, "A Worn Path"

Kingston, "No Name Woman"

Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's  
Gardens"

Class Presentation: \_\_\_\_\_

November 20

Morrison, *Sula*

### 3) Q-cards

Each week you will be responsible for developing three well-formulated questions/responses that come up for you based on the assigned readings for that week. You will be required to bring these questions/responses to class each Monday night to share them with each other in the group. You will also be required to submit a copy of your questions to me. Each group, after sharing questions, will then create a new, more selective, list and discuss possible approaches/answers to the questions.

### 4) final project

**DUE: December 4**

**\*\* (proposal due by November 13)**

This assignment is to be a final project that is connected to the course material. You should present your project in any way you think best organizes the information: essay, poetry, fiction, visual art, video, etc. This final project must involve an annotated bibliography of at least 10 articles/books that provide a critical context for your project. You are required to submit a proposal to me for approval by November 13. This proposal should state the goal, process, form, and length of the project. Collaborative projects are welcome. Your final project must be submitted with the following:

- a three page abstract/summary and critique of your work
- a copy of your original proposal/outline

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### **schedule: tentative!!!!:**

Please have all reading for each week done by the beginning of each week, unless you are otherwise instructed in class. Always bring the book(s) on the schedule to class. Texts may be supplemented by critical articles, films, etc. by the instructor.

September 11

Introduction

September 18

#### *Learning*

Jewett, "A White Heron"

Alcott, *Little Women* (excerpt)

Rosetti, "Goblin Market"

Wilson, *Our Nig* (excerpt)

Freeman, "Old Woman Magoun"

Millay, "Childhood is the Kingdom"

Yamamoto, "Seventeen Syllables"

Oates, "Where are you Going, Where Have You Been?"

Kincaid, "Girl"

September 25

Kogawa, *Obasan* or Philip, *Harriet's Daughter*

November 27 (FINAL JOURNAL ENTRY DUE)

*Looking Forward*

Truth, "Ain't I A Woman?"

Das, "An Introduction"

Hacker, from "Cancer Winter"

TBA

*Class Presentation:* \_\_\_\_\_

December 4 (FINAL PROJECT DUE)

brief presentations of final projects