

**English 3180: Women's Literary Tradition**  
**Winter 2002**  
**Lecture/3 Credits (3-0-0) UT**  
**Section A3**

\*\*\* Please note that the prerequisite for this course is English 1000 or English 1010 or equivalent

Louise Saldanha

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office hours: Monday 2:00 - 3:30 p.m.  
 Thursday 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.  
 or by appointment

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**HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS CLASS:**

- 1) Plan enough time to get the assignments done.
- 2) Read actively, take notes, jot down questions as you read.
- 3) Some reading assignments are longer than others; plan your time accordingly.
- 4) Take responsibility for the success of your small group discussions. Since I can't be everywhere (and since I don't think my role is to police your discussions), it's up to each of you to use your time wisely in your small group. This is your opportunity to discuss issues we have not covered in the larger group and to ask questions of your classmates that you may not feel comfortable asking of the larger group.
- 5) Come to my office with your questions. It is difficult to strike a balance in this course between those of you who already have a strong background in literature, and those of you who have less experience with literature and are unfamiliar with literary concepts/conventions; therefore, it is important that you let me know if you are having difficulties, or if you feel that you want more in-depth discussion.

**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 theorise 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 course, and so you will be expected to participate actively in this class by contributing regularly to class discussions. You will be expected to attend class regularly and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss, including handouts. Since we meet only once a week, if you miss one class you have missed a week's worth of material!

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### TEXTS

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, each group 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.) organising our discussion in the course. Further details on this class presentation follow.

Armstrong, *The Book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation*

Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree*

Maracle, *Ravensong*

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

weekly reading responses	10%
group class presentation	20%
journal	30%
final exam	30%
class participation	10% (this includes contributions to class discussions, improvement, attendance, participation in small group work, as well as participation in large class discussions)

### OTHER STUFF:

1) Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes and are responsible for obtaining information given in classes you miss. I am not able to keep track of who did not receive handouts, so be responsible for yourself.

2) Attendance Policy: You are allowed one unexcused absence. This absence requires no explanation on your part—it is a “freebie.” An excused absence needs to be cleared with me and usually requires documentation. Any unexcused absences beyond one will lower your grade and your participation grade will be affected.

3) Late assignments will not be accepted unless arrangements for late submissions have been made with me at least two days prior to the date on which the assignment is due.

4) All work must be submitted personally to me. Keep a copy of all your written work.

5) Please see the College Policy on plagiarism under “Academic Conduct” in the Calender. Plagiarism is never allowed. Plagiarism includes representing the ideas or words of another person as your own without proper acknowledgment and extends to the work of other students, the Internet, books, magazines, journals, TV shows, films, etc. This would not only include direct copying without citing the source, but paraphrasing as well.

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#### ASSIGNMENTS

##### 1) *weekly reading responses (10%)*

These will be approximately one typed page in length and will respond to the readings assigned. These are due each Monday and are to be submitted to me at the end of the class. NO LATE RESPONSES WILL BE ACCEPTED.

The main goal is simply to respond to the readings assigned, and why you think you responded the way you did.

Reading responses should follow the format outlined in the handout provided in class.

Class presenters are not required to complete the reading responses for the week they present.

## 2) group class presentation (20%)

Your group will be responsible for reading, researching, and presenting collaboratively one of the following novels linking it to one of the sections ("learning," "(un)learning," "loving," etc.) organising our discussion in the course:

Armstrong, *The Book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation*

Culleton, *In Search of April Raintree*

Maracle, *Ravensong*

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.

Each person will participate in a group, conduct research, and make a class presentation. The presentation must make reference to *at least* three academic articles (only one of which may be an Internet article). Your role will be to "teach" the class your assigned book. Presentations should run between 30 - 40 minutes and should promote discussion, even controversy, and should be interesting (i.e. no boring lecturing). Use handouts (or overhead transparencies, or power point) to indicate the work's key themes and most notable stylistic features, or any other factual material (I can photocopy handouts for the class if you give them to me in advance).

Each student will evaluate their experiences as a group member. Presentation grades will be based on self, peer, and instructor evaluation.

Minimum expectations for the presentation:

- a) a summary of the novel, including what you feel to be key scenes, quotations, elements of style
- b) a brief biography of the author
- c) what other critics have said about the novel
- d) your response to the novel: what ideas interested you the most? challenged you? what ideas did the novel introduce you to that you had not thought of before? do you agree with the critics' assessment? why or why not?
- e) A critique of your response (your beliefs/assumptions, etc. See self-critique section of journal assignment)
- f) what links/connections can be made between your assigned novel and other texts we have read in the course thus far?

How you organise and present your material is entirely up to you.

After the presentation, it will be the group's responsibility to facilitate class discussion.

**Each group member must participate in the preparation of the presentation as well as the presentation itself. If you need photocopying, transparencies, or any other audio-visual equipment, let me know by the Thursday preceding your presentation.**

I strongly recommend that you discuss your assigned novel and your ideas with me at least 10 days before your presentation to ensure that you are on the right track.

3) *journal (30%):*

DUE: FEBRUARY 4:

MARCH 4:

ON OR BEFORE APRIL 1:

TWO JOURNAL ENTRIES DUE

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

The reading journal consists of six 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. If you take my suggestion 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 for 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 cannot make my office hours, we can arrange an alternative time). **If you do not see me with your questions, I cannot help you.**

Each of your entries 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. Please carefully proofread your entries and ensure that they are without grammatical or mechanical errors.

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? (There is no need to answer all of these questions. They are meant as ways to get you thinking. Respond to the ones that work for you.)

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 behaviour, notions about what is "normal," "conventional," etc. that are revealed?

3) *final exam (30%)*

**DUE: April 15, 2002**

This will be a take home exam and will be distributed in advance of the due date.

5) *class participation (10%)*

This includes contributions to class discussions, improvement, attendance, participation in small group work, as well as participation in large class discussions

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**SCHEDULE (TENTATIVE!!!!)**

Always bring the reading(s) on the schedule to class. Texts may be supplemented by critical articles, films, etc. by the instructor. You must endeavour to keep up with the reading. Lectures will not be helpful to you if you have not read the assigned books.

January 7: Introduction

**Learning**

January 14 Jewett, "A White Heron"  
Alcott, *Little Women* (excerpt)  
Rossetti, "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"

January 21 Kogawa, *Obasan*  
or  
Philip, *Harriet's Daughter*

**(Un)Learning**

January 28 Chopin, *The Awakening*

**Loving**

February 4 Brontë, *Jane Eyre*

February 11 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"

February 18 FAMILY DAY (No Classes)

February 25 READING WEEK (No Classes)

March 4 Rule, *Desert of the Heart*  
or  
Goto, *Chorus of Mushrooms*  
or  
Erdrich, *Love Medicine*

**Labour(ing)**

March 11 Wollstonecraft, from *Vindication on the Rights of Women* ("Introduction")  
Davis, "Life in the Iron Mills"  
Shreiner, "Sex-Parasitism"  
Woolf, "Shakespeare's Sister"  
Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens"

March 18 Jacobs, "The Loophole of Retreat," "Preparations for Escape"  
Stowe, "The Slave Warehouse"  
Marshall, "Poets in the Kitchen"  
Hurstun, "Sweat"  
Atwood, "The Little Red Hen Tells All"

March 25 Austin, "The Walking Woman"  
Olsen, "I Stand Here Ironing" (handout)  
Welty, "A Worn Path"  
Kingston, "No Name Woman"

April 1 Morrison, *Sula*

**Looking Forward**

April 8 Truth, "Ain't I A Woman?"  
Das, "An Introduction"  
Hacker, from "Cancer Winter"  
TBA

April 15 FINAL EXAMINATION