Course Description and Goals

What does it mean to write “as a woman”? To what extent do women writers respond to cultural and historical forces around them, and to what extent does the literature they produce offer a way to change these forces? How does the multiplicity of women’s experiences—and in particular their differences in class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation—affect the form and theme of their writing? In this capstone course we will develop a vocabulary with which to answer these questions by juxtaposing influential works of feminist theory with fiction and poems by (mostly) twentieth-century American women. Topics will include the relation to patriarchy and the male tradition; female identity, sex, and gender; the intersection of gender, race, and class; gender as performance; the gendering of the cinematic gaze; and the female audience.

Student Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to

1. Demonstrate familiarity with foundational feminist and gender theories, as well as their history.
2. Speak knowledgeably about how diverse social positions and experiences are reflected (or not) in and reinforced by texts. (CO10)
3. Write an analytical paper that integrates ideas from feminist and gender theories with literary interpretation, using a variety of sources. (CO3)
4. Differentiate between and understand basic interpretative approaches to various literary genres including poetry, fiction, and film.
5. Articulate close readings of selected passages of literature in support of larger arguments in brief analytical paragraphs and in class discussion.
6. Articulate connections between literature, theory, personal experience, and other subject areas in which you have expertise (CO 13)

Prerequisites

Prerequisites for Courses satisfying CO 13 are junior or senior standing and completion of all General Education courses that build Core Objectives 1-3 and satisfy Core Objectives 4-8.

Silver Plan Course Objectives

This Course satisfies the following Core Objective

CO13 . Integration and Synthesis: Synthesize and transfer learning to new and complex situations.

This course integrates the following Core Objectives:

CO 1: Effective Composition and Communication.
Students will be able to effectively compose written, oral, and multimedia texts for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes.

CO 3: Critical Analysis and Use of Information. Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information.

C010: Diversity and Equity: Develop a set of affective, cognitive and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of contexts. Engage in modes of analysis attentive to considerations of diversity and equity.

**This Course satisfies the following Core Objective**

C013. Integration and Synthesis: Synthesize and transfer learning to new and complex situations.

**Required Texts and Materials** (Please buy *these editions* only; available at the ASUN Bookstore):

- Adiche, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Americanah* (Anchor)
- Chopin, Kate, *The Awakening* (Bantam)
- Hurston Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Harper)
- Kay, Jackie, *Trumpet* (Vintage)
- Larsen, Nella, *Passing* (Penguin)
- Plath, Sylvia, *The Bell Jar* (Harper)
- Robinson, Marilynne, *Housekeeping* (Noonday)

Supplementary course readings are available through WebCampus (wcl.unr.edu; use the “Course Readings” link). You are responsible for accessing and printing or downloading electronic reserve materials. You must bring paper or electronic copies of all readings to class.

Course handouts and essay topics will be available as downloads from WebCampus. You are responsible for downloading and printing these materials.

**Course Requirements:**

*Attendance.* Attendance is mandatory in this class, as is arriving promptly. If you miss more than 2 classes without a written medical or other excuse your final grade will be lowered; if you repeatedly arrive late, your grade will also be penalized. If illness or another emergency forces you to miss class, you must contact me as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after the missed class. You are responsible for finding out from a classmate what went on in any classes you missed and for getting handouts. Please do not ask me to summarize missed classes. You may not hand in informal responses late or make up missed quizzes.
Participation. As much as possible, this class will be run as a discussion; its success requires your active participation and respect for the ideas of your fellow classmates. At times, we will discuss controversial and/or difficult topics; treat your classmates with respect and tolerance as we do so. Always come to class prepared: do all the reading, remembering that some assignments are long and/or difficult, and be ready to raise questions, discuss particular passages in the reading that interest you, and to link the day's reading to course themes. I will give several unannounced reading quizzes as necessary. Please come to class prepared to speak; I may call on you to do so.

Reading. You should practice active reading in this course. Active reading involves reading all assigned texts slowly and carefully, and, in the case of poems, more than once. As you read, mark your responses in the margin, indicating recurring terms, images, and issues; consider the characters in each work, how we come to know them, and how they change; examine the ways that sentences, chapters, and paragraphs are constructed; indicate places that are confusing and try to figure out why; think about the relation of each text to general categories and term of the course (is the work a coming of age story or a sexual awakening story? how does it connect to—support, complicate, contradict—theoretical readings? how does it connect to other works we have read? etc.). At the end of your reading, write down 2-3 questions about what you have read for our class discussion—both basic questions about plot, imagery, etc., and more analytic questions about structure, motive, etc.; often we will list and discuss these questions. Practicing these skills (which we will also focus on in class) will lead depth and insight to your written work, keep our class discussions lively and insightful, and (perhaps most importantly) increase your pleasure in the different texts we read. Please note that readings are at times quite heavy and that reading is generally assigned on days that papers are due; read ahead wherever possible. We may have unannounced reading quizzes.

Reading Responses. Approximately once a week, you will write a response of approximately to the readings for that day's class of one typed double-spaced page. In the first half of the semester, I will suggest topics—themes, characters, recurring issues, etc; in the second half, you will devise your own topics. You are responsible for finding out what is due ahead of time. Your response should draw attention to aspects of the text that interest or perplex you while referring to terms and concepts we have been focusing on in class. Come to class prepared to describe and elaborate on your response; I will often ask you to do so. No late, handwritten, or e-mailed responses will be accepted. You may write additional responses for extra credit.

On days when you are not turning in a written response, you should choose a passage from that day's reading that you find particularly moving, interesting, confusing, or significant and come to class prepared to speak about it. Mark the passage and prepare to discuss 3 or 4 things you notice about it.

Classroom Etiquette. All electronic devices must be silenced and put away during class, except for laptops, which may be used only for note-taking. If you violate this rule, you will be marked absent. University policy prohibits audio and/or video recordings of class sessions without permission.

Individual Presentation. Once during the semester, you will present briefly to the class on an article of feminist/gender theory or a critical article about an assigned course reading. You
may choose the article on which you present or I can offer suggestions. (See the handout on locating articles for help in finding something appropriate; the useful anthology of theory Feminisms is also on reserve at the KC for you to browse through.) Your presentation should be no longer than 10-15 minutes and should include the following: a summary of the major points in the work on which you are presenting; a description of connections between the work and course readings; an evaluation of the validity/helpfulness of the article’s claims; and at least one discussion question for your classmates. Please let me know what you will be presenting on at least 48 hours before your presentation. Write up your presentation in a 2-3 page document and post a copy on our WC discussion page (under "handouts for presentation 1") at least 24 hours before the class when you will be presenting so your classmates can access it; also turn in a hard copy to me.

**Group Presentation.** During the last two classes of the semester, you will give presentations in small groups on topics related to the representation of women in popular literary or other genres (including music, TV, and film) and/or on the reception of these genres by women; your presentation topic will also be the topic of your final essay. Your presentation should NOT be in the format of a lecture; rather, you should provide brief and revealing textual samples (song lyrics, film clips, textual excerpts, etc.), briefly present some topics or questions to consider, and lead a discussion or conduct an activity. It may be helpful to hand out discussion questions/topics to think about ahead of time. More detailed information about presentations will be available later in the semester.

**E-mail:** Be sure that you have a way to access the email account you provided to the University and check this account regularly; I will often send information by e-mail. Feel free to ask me questions by e-mail, but please consult a classmate about logistical and technical matters whenever possible and remember that I may not be able to reply immediately. *Please do not e-mail me about an essay the day before it is due or ask me to respond to drafts on-line.*

**Conference:** You must have one 10-15 minute conference with me during the semester to discuss a paper topic or draft, reading question, or other matter. You may choose the topic and time of this conference.

**Essays:**

You will write three essays during the semester. The first (3-4 pages, due 9/27), will be a **close reading** of an element of an assigned text (CO1 and CO3). The second (4-5 pages, due 10/30) will be an analysis of **part of an assigned text in relation to larger questions about gender and ethnic diversity** raised in the course (CO10). The third (5-7 pages, due 12/11) will be a synthetic paper that will consider a genre of literature, film, or television (chicklit, vampire novels, chickflicks, TV talk shows, etc.) geared toward or emphasizing women in a manner that **synthesizes methods drawn from various disciplines**, including primary research, i.e., interviews or surveys; secondary research, i.e., reviews, critical articles, etc.; a theoretical model; and documents related to historical and cultural context (CO13). Throughout the semester, we will devote class time to writing workshops, for which you will prepare prewriting assignments designed to help you work on different writing skills and develop ideas for your papers.

**Format:** All written work (including prewriting assignments and informal responses) should be typed, double-spaced, and in Times Roman or Palatino 12-point font or equivalent with one-inch margins. Be sure your printouts are clear and dark. The first
page must include your name, the name of the assignment (for example, “Essay 3”), the course number, and the date. The essay title should be interesting (not simply “Analysis of Plath”) and centered at the top of the first page, with no quotation marks. Subsequent pages should be numbered, and papers must be stapled, not paper clipped or folded over.

Always follow the MLA style of citation and annotation, which we will discuss more fully in class. Your essays should be free of typos and other mechanical and grammatical errors: please proofread carefully! Keep a hard copy of each writing assignment that you hand in and print out drafts frequently as you are composing.

Submission: All papers must be submitted through SafeAssign onWebCampus. Details will be forthcoming.

Deadlines: Barring verifiable illness or other emergencies, you must hand essays in at the beginning of the class session in which they are due. I will not accept late papers.

Grading. Essays will be evaluated based on the originality of the ideas, the extent to which the thesis is clearly defined and supported by evidence from the text, the insight of the analysis, and the clarity and grace of the writing.

Revisions: You may revise the first and/or second essay if you choose. Your revision must be global: it must involve a major restructuring, a reconsideration of your main points, and/or other substantive changes. Revisions must be handed in no more than one week after I have returned the graded original to you, and you must meet with me to discuss the revision before turning it in. Please note that revisions that involve only “corrections” or responses to marginal comments will receive a lower grade than the original. I will replace your original grade with that of your revision.

Exam. The final exam will include essays synthesizing the themes and readings of the course. It will be on Thursday, 12/13 from 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Grading.

This course uses plus/minus grades and the university’s grading system, which is listed below:

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I will give the following weight to your work in calculating your final grade for the course:

20% reading responses and in-class presentation of responses
10% essay 1
15% essay 2
25% essay 3
15% final exam
15% participation, presentations

Academic Conduct. All rights and regulations concerning academic honesty and plagiarism, as they appear in the current University catalog, will be upheld in this course. Please review the definition of plagiarism in a writers handbook; plagiarism may include
partial and inadvertent as well as deliberate misrepresentation of one's own work. Plagiarism of any kind will result in your failing the course and in disciplinary action by the Academic Integrity Board.

**Disabilities.** The University of Nevada, Reno supports providing equal access for students with disabilities. If you have a disability for which you will need to request accommodation, please contact me and the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building 107) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

**Academic Success Services.** Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/) and University Writing Center (784-6030 or http://www.unr.edu/writing_center/). These centers support your classroom learning; please take advantage of their services.

**Schedule of Assignments**

assignments are subject to change

WC: WebCampus page (wcl.unr.edu)

**Introduction to the course: Defining a Women's Canon**

8/28 Introduction to the course; “In the Waiting Room”

8/30 Gilbert and Gubar (WC); Chopin 1-43

9/4 Chopin 43-116

9/6 Chopin 116-end

**Coming of Age Female in America and Female Identity**

Toward a Female Identity/American Feminism

9/11 Friedan (WC); Plath 1-70
optimal: Kolodny (WC)

9/13 Plath 71-163
begin individual presentations

9/17 Plath to end


**due:** prewriting 1

Immigration and Identity/Multiethnic and Postcolonial Feminism

9/25 Anzaldua, Hooks, Mohanty (WC), Adiche, Part One
9/27  Adiche, Part Two  

10/2  Adiche, Part Three
10/4  Adiche Part Four
10/9  Adiche to end

**Female Desire, Female Lack/Problems of the Gaze**

10/11  Mulvey (WC); Hurston (What White Publishers and Colored Me) (WC); Hurston 1-50

10/16  Hurston 51-115
10/18  Hurston 116-167
10/23  Hurston to end; overview of first half of semester  

**due:** prewriting 2

10/30  Poetry II: Sharon Olds (WC)  

**due:** essay 2

11/1  film TBA

**Women as Consumers**

11/6  film, ctd.; Radway (WC)
11/8  Romance story; Wolitzer article (WC [under ”supplementary readings”])

**Race and Gender as Performance; Queernesses**

11/13  Butler (WC); Larsen Pt I
11/15  Larsen to end
11/20  Kay 1-41
11/22  Thanksgiving; no class
11/27  Kay 42-143
11/29  Kay to end  

**due:** prewriting 3
12/4  group presentations
12/6  group presentations
12/11 wrapup of the course due: paper 3

Thurs 12/13, 12:30-2:30 pm final exam