

**Western University**  
**Department of English and Writing Studies, Winter 2016**  
**English 2240G: Feminist Literary Theory**  
**Tuesdays 2:30-3:30, Thursdays, 1:30-3:30, TH 3101**

**Instructor:** Dr. Madeline Bassnett  
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**Office Hours:** TBA

**Course Prerequisites:** At least 60% in 1.0 of English 1020E or 1022E or 1024E or 1035E or 1036E or both English 1027F/G and 1028F/G, or permission of the Department.

**Course Description:** An introduction to critical debates in twentieth-century feminist literary theory. Students will study (1) the diversity of feminist approaches to literature, literary production, the politics of language, questions of genre and subjectivity; and (2) the intersections among feminist literary theories, postcolonialism, Marxism, anti-racist criticism, queer theory, and post-structuralism.

**Course Objectives**

On successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss key debates and developments in feminist literary criticism.
2. Use feminist theories to understand and elucidate literary texts.
3. Examine feminist theories with a critical eye, both individually and in relation to each other.
4. Develop and demonstrate critical thinking and writing skills through close reading and discussion.
5. Write lucid, effective, and argumentative essays.

**Required Text:**

*Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader*. Ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar. (Norton, 2007).

**Course Requirements:**

Critical Reading/Critical Writing Workshops	10%
Critical Reading Essay	15% Due Thursday February 11th
Mid-term Test	20% Held Thursday February 25th
Final Essay	20% Due Tuesday April 5th
3 Hour Final Exam	<u>35%</u>
	100%

**Note:** Students must receive a passing grade for both term work and the final examination in order to pass the course. Students who fail their final examination (regardless of their term mark) automatically fail the course.

**Attendance and Weekly Preparation**

Attendance is mandatory, and your absence will be noted. I expect you to attend class regularly, come prepared with your textbook to discuss the assigned readings, and participate in discussion. To help you focus your reading and prepare for discussion, I'll regularly aim to provide an advance reading question (or two) that we'll address in the following class.

**Critical Reading/Critical Writing Workshops:** Five workshops are scheduled over the course of the term. These will provide opportunities for focused peer-group analysis. In the first half of the course, the workshops will give us space to put theory into practice, as we use our theoretical readings to analyze and discuss short literary texts. Out of these workshops, students will produce their Critical Reading Paper. In the second half, we'll be working towards the final paper. Our discussions will focus on how to write a theory paper in which we analyze and compare the relationships between theoretical texts and ideas.

You should plan to work with the same workshop group each time. After each workshop, you will be asked to submit your in-class notes (i.e. appoint a secretary) and a list of attending members. While your notes won't be formally graded, evidence of attendance AND fruitful discussion will count towards 10% of your grade for the year. All groups should be prepared to contribute to follow-up class discussions.

**Critical Reading Essay:** 1000 words (approx. 4 pages), due Thursday, February 11th. For this paper, you will rely on our workshop/in-class discussions on Jan. 21, Jan. 28, **OR** Feb. 4th. During these classes, we will be examining literary texts in relation to our theoretical readings. You will be asked to select **one** theoretical text and **one** literary text that we have discussed in class, and to use your close reading skills to develop an argument. You are welcome and encouraged to base your paper on your workshop discussions. Further instructions will be provided.

**Mid-Term Test:** Thursday February 25th.

This is a mandatory test, which will consist of identification and short answer questions. This must be written at the scheduled time unless accommodation has been granted.

**Final Essay:** 1500-2000 words (approx. 6-8 pages), due Tuesday April 5th.

This essay will analyze relationships between theoretical ideas and concepts. Further instructions will be provided after Reading Week.

### **Final Exam**

There will be a three-hour written exam during the April examination period. This must be written at the scheduled time unless accommodation has been granted for alternative arrangements. The exam will cover the entire term's work, will consist of identification and essay questions, and will include a sight passage for analysis. This is a closed book exam.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Introduction**

**Jan. 5:** Introduction

**Jan. 7:** Joanna Russ, "What Can a Heroine Do? or Why Women Can't Write," pp. 200-11.

### **Protofeminisms**

**Jan. 12:** Christine de Pizan, from *The Book of the City of Ladies*, pp. 13-19.

**Jan. 14:** George Eliot, from "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," pp. 85-92.

### **The Feminist Writer: Breaking Molds**

**Jan. 19:** Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One's Own*, pp. 128-37.

**Jan. 21:** Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision," pp. 188-200.  
*Critical Reading Workshop (1)*

### **Language, Race, and Canon**

**Jan. 26:** Gloria Anzaldúa, from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, pp. 247-58.

**Jan. 28:** Toni Morrison, from "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," pp. 267-78.  
*Critical Reading Workshop (2)*

### **The Myth of Woman**

**Feb. 2:** Simone de Beauvoir, from *The Second Sex*, pp. 300-23.

**Feb. 4:** *Critical Reading Workshop (3)*

### **The Essential Body**

**Feb. 9:** Luce Irigaray, "This Sex Which Is Not One," pp. 437-43.

**Feb. 11:** Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," pp. 414-29.

**Critical Reading Essay Due**

**Reading Week****Feb. 16/18****Driving Us Crazy****Feb. 23:** Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*, pp. 448-59.**Feb. 25: Midterm Test****(Re)Defining Difference****Mar. 1:** Monique Wittig, "One Is Not Born a Woman," pp. 545-51.

Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," pp. 620-29.

**Mar. 3:** bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," pp. 701-08.*Final Essay Topics distributed***Out of the Closet for International Women's Day****Mar. 8:** Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, from *Epistemology of the Closet*, pp. 683-701.**Mar. 10:** Terry Castle, from *The Apparitional Lesbian*, pp. 757-72.*Critical Writing Workshop (4)***Performing Identities****Mar. 15:** Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," pp. 708-22.**Mar. 17:** Susan Bordo, from *Unbearable Weight*, pp. 745-56.*Critical Writing Workshop (5)***Postcolonial Feminisms****Mar. 22:** Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, from *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, pp. 799-809.**Mar. 24:** Chandra Talpade Mohanty, from *Feminism Without Borders*, pp. 824-34.**Cyberfeminism****Mar. 29:** Donna Haraway, from *A Manifesto for Cyborgs*, pp. 585-601.**Mar. 31:** Class Cancelled (conference)**Exam Review****Apr. 5:** Exam Review**Final Essays Due**

## **The Fine Print**

### **Accommodation**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth (either alone or in combination) 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.

Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The Student Medical Certificate (SMC) can be found at <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/medicalform.pdf>.

The full policy is set out here:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to MentalHealth@Western:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

The Academic Counselling Office for Arts and Humanities is located in IGAB 1N20.

**I will not grant any requests for extensions unless I have approval from Academic Counselling.**

### **Technology Use**

Please keep the classroom technology free. Put away all laptops, iPads, cellphones, and other gadgets. If you have legitimate need for any of these items, please discuss your situation with me at the beginning of term.

### **Email**

I check email on a regular basis Monday to Friday, and will respond to emails within 24-48 hours. If you don't hear back from me within a reasonable period, assume your email has gone astray and email me again. Please do not expect an immediate response from me on weekends.

### **Submission of Assignments**

All assignments are due in class. You may submit late assignments to the essay box outside the Department of English main office (AHB 2G02), where they will be date- and time-stamped. Essays submitted before 8:30 a.m. in the essay box are stamped with the previous day's date. This also applies to essays submitted before 8:30 a.m. Monday, which will be stamped with Friday's date.

**Please do not put any assignments under office doors.**

Please remember that the Department will not accept assignments by fax or email. If necessary, and by prior arrangement only, assignments may be sent to me at the Department by post or courier.

**Be sure to keep a copy of all assignments submitted.**

### **Late Assignments**

If you submit a paper after the due date, but within two weeks of this date, the paper will be counted as late, and the following procedures will apply:

1. The paper will not be read until all previous assignments have been read and marked, and depending on the extent of the lateness, may be returned at a later date.
2. A grade will be given, but no (or minimal) comments or corrections will be provided.
3. The grade will be reduced by a penalty of two marks (2%) for each calendar day (including weekends) that it is late. The arrangement for date-stamping essays (identified above) still applies.
4. Papers will not be accepted if submitted more than two weeks after the due date unless accommodation has been granted.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism includes:

1. quoting verbatim or almost verbatim from any source, including all electronic sources, without acknowledgement;
2. adopting someone else's line of thought, argument, or supporting evidence without acknowledgement;
3. submitting someone else's work, in whatever form without acknowledgement;
4. knowingly representing as one's own work any idea of another.

The Senate statement on plagiarism is as follows:

“Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.” (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar)

Plagiarism checking: “The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.”

**When in doubt, cite your sources and/or check with me.**