Huntingdon College
School of Business and Professional Studies

COURSE NUMBER: English 313
COURSE NAME: Literature By Women
Fall 2015, Session I - Center Point
Tuesday, 9/1, 8, 15, 22, 29 from 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

INSTRUCTOR’S NAME: Dr. Mary Kaiser

CONTACT INFORMATION: mary.kaiser@hawks.huntingdon.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: An examination of works by women writers. Selections vary with each offering of the course.

This course is a survey of women’s literature, and we will engage texts from a wide range of cultures. We will look at various types of women’s literature—criticism, memoir/autobiography, cultural criticism, poetry, fiction, drama—and try to locate this sub-genre within the schema of literary tradition. Throughout the semester we will engage the following questions: What is women’s literature? What are its chief features and concerns? How is it valued or undervalued or devalued? What is its social/economic/historical significance? Why is there a study of women’s literature as separate from American literature? Or British literature? Or World Literature? Is there a men’s literature?

PREREQUISITE: ENGL 104 recommended

TEXTS REQUIRED:
The Longman Anthology of Women’s Literature. Mary K. DeShazer, editor.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:
• To understand and articulate the difficulties of studying women’s literature
• To understand and articulate the major features of women’s literature
• Explain the significance of selected texts
• Develop a vocabulary for analyzing texts
• Describe the history of the women’s literature
• Analyze and Evaluate selected texts
• Apply postmodern interpretative strategies to reading and analyzing texts.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA:
Grades will be determined by the average of all grades received on a midterm, response papers, one critical analysis or memoir, and a final examination.

Response Paper #1
Response Paper #2
Response Paper #3
Critical Analysis or Memoir
Midterm Examination
Final Examination

**Examination Schedule and Assignment Due Dates**

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**Response Papers**
Response papers should be two pages (approx. 400-500 words) and should address some significant aspect of one of the assigned texts/film for that class meeting. Students should avoid papers that simply explore why they liked or did not like a particular work, and, rather, look at or question what the work does from a historical or cultural perspective. Students may also consider how the work’s structure operates, or what motivates a character to act or not act, or how the work violates or upholds the student’s notion of a text. Students may also compare/contrast two works. Students may expand on one of the response papers for the longer required critical analysis.

**Critical Analysis or Memoir**

Your long paper may be a critical analysis or a memoir in the tradition of many of the women writers we will encounter. The memoir should not be merely a chronicling of the events of your life, but should provide insight into the culture or larger historic moments intersecting with your life. For example, Maxine Hong Kingston’s Woman Warrior is not just a memoir; it is an examination of Chinese-American culture and the place/voice particularly of women in that culture. It is also a critique of significant issues related to women’s place/voice within American culture as well, and the stories of her life provide examples of this analysis. The memoir should be a longer essay of 6 to 8 pages and should in some way critique the culture and women’s place in it.

The critical analysis is a longer response essay of 6 to 10 pages. It may be documented with critical sources or it may be your own critical view of a particular work, issue, group of works or film.

**GRADE POINT EQUIVALENTS** - Describe the point range for each letter grade.

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 59-below
ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Absences and Tardiness – All students are required to attend the first session. Those who do not attend the first session will be automatically dropped from the course. Students with more than one absence will receive an “F” for the course. Since this class meets only five times, missing a single class meeting is equivalent to missing three weeks of a regular term. If you cannot attend a class you must let the instructor know via email as soon as possible. In case of absences you are responsible for obtaining all handouts and assignments. Tardiness may result in a deduction in your class participation grade. Excessive tardiness may count as an absence.

Participation – Participation is not the same as attendance. Participation requires students to come to class prepared to participate actively, which makes the classroom experience more meaningful. However, participation is not just speaking out in class. The contributions made by the student should be related to the course content and meaningful to the class discussion.

Late Assignments – Papers more than one class meeting late will not be accepted without a prior extension negotiated with the faculty member.

Accommodation of Special Needs - Huntingdon College makes every reasonable accommodation for disabilities that have been processed and approved through our Disability Services Committee in accord with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. In order to request disability-related services at Huntingdon College, students must self-identify to the Disabilities Intake Coordinator, Camilla Irvin, and provide appropriate and up-to-date documentation to verify their disability or special needs. After the accommodations have been approved by the Disability Services Committee, the 504 Coordinator, Dr. Lisa Olenik Dorman, will notify your professor(s) of the committee’s decision. If you have any questions regarding reasonable accommodation or need to request disability-related services, please contact Disability Services at (334) 833-4577 or e-mail at disabilityservices@huntingdon.edu.

Academic Honesty – Plagiarism is literary theft. Failure to cite the author of any language or of any ideas which are not your own creation is plagiarism. This includes any text you might paraphrase, as well. Anyone is capable of searching the Internet or any printed media; your research paper is intended to broaden your knowledge, stimulate your creativity, and make you think, analyze, and learn. It is not consistent with the College Honor Code, nor with scholarly expectations to submit work which is not the product of your own thinking and research. Severe penalties will result upon the submission of any work found to be plagiarized, including potential failure of the entire course. It is easy and simple to properly cite all sources used in your paper. Take no risks – cite your sources.

First Night Assignment – Response Paper #1—Write a response to bell hooks “Talking Back” or Maxine Hong Kingston’s “No Name Woman.” What have been your own experiences with back talk? How is it powerful? How is it an audacious act? How does hooks learn to “talk back”? Why do we want to keep children, girl children in particular, from doing this? OR What can your family not talk about? Who can you not talk about? How do family secrets take on a life of their own? How does Kingston take the mother’s lesson that was supposed to be a warning and use it for her own purposes? What are Kingston’s own purposes?
CLASS SCHEDULE:

Week 1: Talking Back
Outcomes-By the end of this module, students are expected to:
- Explain the critical issues raised in the readings
- Define women’s literature as a subgenre
- Describe the features and preoccupations of women’s literature
- Analyze and Evaluate women’s literature and discuss the difficulty of its evaluation
- Apply cultural and historical knowledge to literary interpretation

Student Preparation

“Talking Back,” bell hooks, 72-76; “That Year” Sharon Olds, 559; “No Name Woman,” Maxine Hong Kingston, 307-315; “I the Woman,” Sandra Cisneros, 576
“The Toilet,” Gcina Mhlophe, 336; Patriarchal Poetry, Gertrude Stein, 284;
“Standing Female Nude,” 334 and “Mrs. Aesop,” 335, Carol Ann Duffy;
Novelists,” George Eliot, 248; A Room of One’s Own (One) 14-27

Response Paper #1 due at beginning of class

Learning Topics:

What is women’s literature?
How is it talking back and to whom or what?
What is a female aesthetic?
What are the impediments to women’s writing?
Is women’s literature essentially different from men’s literature?

Classroom Activities:

1.1 Introductions and Overview: Introductions of the class members to each other and to the instructor. Overview of syllabus. Introduction to the course including challenges and rewards of studying women’s literature.
1.2 Discussion of bell hooks’ reading and Maxine Hong Kingston reading
1.3 Discussion of student response papers to those readings
1.4 Small Group Work: Break into small groups to analyze aspects of the other reading
1.5 Report of Small Groups: Each group summarizes findings of its work and discusses with the class
1.6 Review of criteria for memoir or critical analysis paper due week #4
1.7 Summary of learning outcomes and important points by the class; preview of next module by the instructor.
Week 2: Women and the Body

Outcomes-By the end of this module, students are expected to:

- Explain the critical issues raised in the readings
- Develop a vocabulary for discussing women’s writing
- Analyze and Evaluate how women’s objectification becomes an impediment to writing
- Analyze and Evaluate the way women’s bodies are viewed or used by the larger society
- Apply cultural and historical knowledge to literary interpretation

Student Preparation


Watch in class—Barbie Nation or Dreamworlds

Writing-Response Paper #2 due at beginning of class

Learning Topics:
From whence does a woman write in a phallocentric culture?
How do women writers carve out an identity in a world where language is masculine?
What does it mean for language to be masculine?
What is the difference between the erotic and the pornographic?
How is the use and depiction of women’s body a mechanism of control?
How do the women writers seize the power of their own bodies?

Classroom Activities:
2.0 Review of previous module, questions, concerns
2.1 Class discussion on selected literature and the topic of women’s bodies
2.2 Small Group Work: Break into small groups to analyze aspects of an assigned reading’s relationship to the general topic
2.3 Report of Small Groups: Each group summarizes their analysis and discusses with the class
2.4 Showing of Barbie Nation or Dreamworlds
2.5 Review of research skills and techniques and memoir
2.9 Summary of learning outcomes and important points by the class; preview of next module by the instructor.

Week 3: Mid-term
Outcomes-By the end of this module, students are expected to:

- Analyze and Evaluate the assigned readings
- Apply cultural knowledge to the readings

Student Preparation

Study for Mid-term Exam

Response Paper #3 due at the beginning of class

Learning Topics:
How does motherhood change or affect writing?
How is motherhood different for women of color? Poor women? Artists?
What are the rules and traditions of motherhood? How do the writers talk back to the rules and traditions? How do they uphold them?
How and why has the act of giving birth been sanitized?
What are the politics of motherhood?

Classroom Activities:
3.0 Discussion of texts and learning topics
3.1 Review for Midterm
3.2 Midterm Examination

Week 4-Women, Resistance and Transformation
Outcomes-By the end of this module, students are expected to:

- Analyze and Evaluate the assigned readings
- Apply cultural knowledge to the readings
- Explain the critical issues raised in the readings/film
- Develop a vocabulary for addressing women’s historical/ political place

Learning Topics:
How have women agitated for their rights through writing?
How have women been transformed by art?
How have women used art to transform themselves and notions about them?
How have women agitated for the rights of others?
What rights, particularly local rights, are of concern to women?
How is the political writing of women different from the political writing of men?

Student Preparation
Adrienne Rich, 1094-; from Vindication of the Rights of Women, Mary Wollstonecraft, 1133; “Aint I a Woman,” 1146, “Keeping the Thing Going While Things are Stirring,” 1146, Sojourner Truth; Harriet Martineau, 1147-; “Amnesty,” Nadine Gordimer; Carolyn Forche, 1282-

Showing of Film: Girl Fight

Critical analysis or Memoir due at the beginning of class

Classroom Activities:
4.0 Review of previous module, questions, concerns
4.1 Class discussion of assigned readings
4.2 Class discussion of learning topics
4.3 Viewing of Girl Fight
4.4 Small Group Work: Break into small groups to analyze the politics of Girl Fight
4.4 Report of small groups on Girl Fight
4.5 Preview of next module by the instructor

**Week 5-Women in the Tradition—Still Talking Back**
Outcomes—By the end of this module, students are expected to:
- Explain the critical issues raised in the readings
- Describe the features of the literature read
- Analyze and evaluate connections/relationships between contemporary women writers and those who came before
- Analyze and evaluate connections/relationships between contemporary women writers and their male counterparts
- Apply cultural and historical knowledge to literary interpretation

**Student Preparation**

**Study for the final examination**

Learning Topics:
What is the literary tradition of women writers?
How do women tie into that tradition?
How do women writers carve out a tradition different from their male counterparts?
How are other ways of speaking and other topics—gossip, language generally not found in academic writing, the domestic sphere—a source of creativity and difference for women writers?

Classroom Activities:
5.0 Review of previous module, questions, concerns
5.1 Class discussion on cultural background and literary terms in reading plays.
5.2 Small Group Work: Break into small groups to analyze aspects of Vinegar Tom
5.3 Report of Small Groups: Each group summarizes findings of its work and discusses with the class
5.4 Class discussion on the other readings
5.5 Final Examination