

Women Writers Across Cultures

English 261 - Spring Semester 2015

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Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of "talking back," that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice.

bell hooks – "Talking Back"

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will investigate the ways in which writing by women around the world exposes and challenges prevailing social orders and cultural traditions, and how it envisions change. Students will read numerous works of literature by women and will explore the use of critical strategies in relation to those works. Writing assignments will stress critical analysis, including the incorporation of various critical approaches. The incorporation of library research will be required for the final paper. *Course fulfills International/Intercultural Requirement.*

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

- Explain the challenges, problems, and complexities women face writing from different social and physical locations.
- Explain the influence of geography, history, and social environments in shaping women's writing.
- Explain how gender intersects with race/ethnicity, class, and sexuality through an analysis of how these socially constructed categories shape the diversity of women's experiences.
- Identify common themes in women's literature across cultures.
- Ask thought-provoking questions and engage in productive dialog that leads to a deeper reflection and understanding of the works.
- interpret literary texts using critical strategies;
- explain how different critical theories affect interpretation and levels of meaning;
- locate, evaluate, and incorporate research from secondary sources into both class discussion and written work;
- formulate own perspectives about both meaning and structure in a work of literature, and support those perspectives with specifics from the text;
- write analytical, evaluative essays about literature that present interpretations supported with evidence from the works;
- produce documents that adhere to MLA writing conventions

Required Texts

- Marjane Satrapi. *The Complete Persepolis*
- Garcia, Cristina. *Dreaming in Cuban*
- Julie Otsuka. *The BUDDHA in the ATTIC*
- Emecheta *Joys of Motherhood*
- Andrea Levy. *Small Island*
- Handouts (see syllabus)

Grade Percentages

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| • Peer reviews | 10% |
| • Informative presentation | 10% |
| • Essay one | 15% |
| • Essay two | 20% |
| • Final essay | 25% |
| • Class participation | 20% |

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENT AND GRADES

Informative Presentation (10%): Throughout the syllabus, I have designated days for presentations. The objective of each presentation is to 1) enlighten the audience about the geographical, historical, and cultural context of the novel and 2) give background information about the author so that the audience can better understand the significance of her work. (This presentation is not to be a literary analysis of the novel.)

Requirements: Typed report (3-4 pages in length)
 PowerPoint visual (should support the presentation, not take over it)
 Clear verbal presentation (use notes and practice beforehand)
 10-15 minutes in length (no longer or points will be taken off)

Requirements: identify setting (time, place, and culture/country); politics/history of country
 novel set in (if applicable); author report

Grading: Your grade will reflect how well you introduce the novel and cover the main social and political aspects within a historical and social framework, how thoroughly you present background information on the author, and the overall quality of your presentation (verbal and visual). (*A good way to proceed is to think of yourself as a "teacher" presenting new information to your students. Ask yourself what they would need to know to understand the work from a global perspective.*) *You will only have 15 minutes so plan accordingly.

Formal Essays (60%): Essays will be literary analyses based on the readings. Handouts will be distributed ahead of time with requirements.

***Reminder: there is an excellent facility on campus to help you with your writing, the Writing Center, which is located next to the library on the main floor. You may also submit your essay to the Writing Center through email. Submit your name, banner ID, and a brief summary of the assignment and attach the essay. Send to TRWritingCenter@trcc.comnet.edu*

Class Participation and Quizzes (20%): This final ten percent of your grade can either help you or harm you, depending on how well prepared you are and how much you contribute to class discussion and activities. Periodically, I will assign in- or out-of-class writing assignments and/or group activities. Your participation in these activities will be figured into this grade percentage. (In-class activities or quizzes may not be made up!)

Peer Review: Before each formal essay there will be a peer review day where you will review each other's essays to provide feedback and support. You must be in class to participate and have the required amount of typed copies to share. If you come to class without your copies, you will not receive any credit. (You may not leave class either to go make copies.)

OTHER POLICIES

Attendance: In order for the class to be successful, it is important that you attend regularly. (Reminder: all activities that we do in class or homework that is due on a certain day cannot be made up.)

Late arrivals: *Please be in class on time.* If you arrive after I have taken attendance, you will be marked as late. Repeatedly being late will affect your grade negatively. In addition, leaving class early or taking breaks during class session will affect your grade negatively.

Deadlines: Once class starts, all essays will be due. All essays turned in after ***the beginning*** of class will be counted as late and will be given either a pass or a fail. (*I will not accept essays via email!*) (Just so there is no confusion, homework assignments will not be accepted at all without a written formal excuse; *only* essays will be accepted late for a pass or fail grade.)

Participation: This is a reading intensive course so I highly recommend that you read ahead and take notes as you read. (When I read, I always like to summarize each chapter as well as jot down my thoughts about the work as I read.) Come to class prepared. **All work assigned for a particular day is to be read before class**

Electronic devices: School regulations require that all technological devices be turned off in learning environments. If it is imperative for you to be available by cell phone, please speak to me before class. If your phone rings or you text message, there will be consequences.

Digication: All students are required to maintain an online learning portfolio using a TRCC designed template. Through this electronic tool, students can see their own growth in college-wide learning. The student can keep and continue to use the Digication account after graduation. A Three Rivers General Education Assessment Team will select random works to improve the college experience for all. No names will be attached to the assessment work; it will remain private and anonymous for college improvement purposes. In class outlines, students will find recommended assignments which support various college-wide learning abilities. The student will have a tool which can integrate their learning from the classroom, school, and life and allow for another opportunity of learning at TRCC! Students will be able to make multiple portfolios.

Plagiarism: See handout. You will also be required to submit all of your essays in SafeAssign, a plagiarism tool in Blackboard Learn. Directions to follow.

Support Services: Any student with a hidden or visible disability that may require classroom modifications should see me about her/his disability within the first week or two of class. I will ask you to see the learning disability counselor. TRCC Disabilities Service Providers Counseling & Advising Office is Room A-119.

Bad weather and class cancellations: On stormy days, call the school or listen to the news to see if school is cancelled. If I have to cancel class due to inclement weather or other reasons, I will attempt to email you before class using your school email address. There will also be a sign posted on the door.

The best way to be identified of any emergencies on campus or school closings is to sign up for MyCommNet ALERT. Open up your commnet account and look on the left lower side of the screen. You will see this:



Please join our **new notification system that delivers critical information in the event of an emergency, including weather-related class cancelations**. The system delivers emergency messages through **text messaging** over cellular phones. Enrollment in myCommNet Alert is **free, voluntary, quick & easy**.

To **Create** your account on myCommNet Alert, select ["Create Account"](#) on the log in page

To **update** or **change** your myCommNet Alert profile, [log in](#)

myCommNet Alert [FAQs](#)

*Text message costs will follow your calling plan's terms for text messages.

Title IX Education Amendment states that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." This law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are civil rights offenses. If you have suffered any form of sexual misconduct, you may be unsure of what next steps to take, but there are many people on and off-campus who are eager to help.

Confidential Off-Campus Crisis and Counseling Resources

Three Rivers has partnered with non-profit community agencies that can help survivors cope, access mental and physical health care, relocate (if necessary), and take action against offenders, including action through the College's own disciplinary process. Their services are free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day.

<i>For Sexual Assault</i>	<i>For Domestic / Intimate Partner Violence or Sexual Assault</i>
<p>The Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut 78 Howard Street, 2nd Floor New London, CT 06320 Office: (860) 442-0604 Hotline: (888) 999-5545 http://www.saccecc.org/</p>	<p>Safe Futures 16 Jay Street, New London, CT 06320, Office: (860) 447-0366 326 Washington St, Norwich, CT 06360 Office: (860) 889-8331 Hotline: (888) 774-2900 http://www.safefuturesct.org/</p>

On-Campus Resources

You are welcome to approach any trusted faculty or staff member for help, but please understand that College employees cannot promise confidentiality. College employees are expected to report any details they receive about an incident of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator and / or the Dean of Students. Before disclosing an incident of sexual misconduct to a College employee, you are advised to first speak with a [confidential off-campus counselor](#), and / or [to review your rights to privacy](#).

The resources listed below can you help you to learn about your options, get connected with confidential off-campus counseling services, and request action against an offender, if you choose.

Resources for Students

<p>Counseling and Advising Room A-119, (860) 215-9016</p>	<p>Campus Security Room A-102 / Front Desk (860) 215-9053</p>
<p>Gregory Souza Title IX Coordinator Room A-116, (860) 215-9486 Gsouza@trcc.commnet.edu</p>	<p>Christine Languth Interim Dean of Students Room C-245B, (860) 215-9003 Clanguth@trcc.commnet.edu</p>

Course Outline ~

Week One

22 Introduction

Week Two

27 Handouts: Audre Lorde "Black Mother Woman"; "The Woman Thing"; "How I Became a Poet" 1966 and Jean Rhys "From Smile, Please: *My Mother*"; Edwidge Danticat "Day Woman"
29 Jhumpa Lahiri "Interpreter of Maladies"; Mary Flanagan "Cream Sauce"; Joy Harjo poetry

FEBRUARY

Week Three

3 Sandra Cisneros "Woman Hollaring Creek"; Alifa Rifaat "Distant View of a Minaret"
5 No class – college-wide professional day

Week Four

10 Isabel Allende "Two Words"; Hisaye Yamamoto "Seventeen Syllables"
12 Finish discussion – (there may be more handouts: stories or poems)

Week Five

17 *Dreaming in Cuban* – presentation; read 1-101
19 *Dreaming in Cuban* – finish novel

Week Six

24 Finish discussion – read handout
26 PEER REVIEW – bring four completed and typed copies of essay

MARCH

Week Seven

3 *Fire* (film)
5 **Essay One Due** *Fire*

Week Eight

10 *Small Island* – presentation; read 1-89
12 *Small Island* – 90-191

* *Spring Break – no class March 16-20* *

Week Nine

- 24 Finish novel and read handout (critique of novel)
- 26 Open day

Week Ten

- 31 *BUDDHA in the ATTIC*-presentation; answer questions on handout
- APRIL*
- 2 Finish discussion on *BUDDHA*

Week Eleven

- 7 Peer Review – bring four typed copies
- 9 *Persepolis* – presentation; read 1-71

Week Twelve

- 14 **ESSAY TWO DUE** *Persepolis*; read 71-155
- 16 *Persepolis*; finish book

Week Thirteen

- 21 Peer Review – bring four typed copies
- 23 *The Joys of Motherhood* – presentation; read 1-71

Week Fourteen

- 28 *The Joys of Motherhood* - read 72-140
- 30 Finish novel

MAY

Week Fifteen

- 5 Open day
- 7 PEER REVIEW – bring four completed and typed copies of your essay

Week Sixteen

- 12 Handouts
- 14 **FINAL ESSAY DUE** (in folder with peer reviews). No exceptions.

*If you would like your essay back right away, please enclose a SASE with it. Otherwise, please pick up your work in my office next semester.

Reading Guide: Questions for Thought

1. How does location shape female identity?
2. What are the forces that shape women's lives – the construction of their identity? Role of race, class, gender, culture, sexuality, nationality, and colonialism.
3. How does women's writing validate their life experiences?
4. In what ways is the nature of women's writing conditioned by and reflective of uniquely female experiences?
5. Women throughout the world have used the literary form as a means of expression. What are they expressing?
6. Is there such a thing as "universal appeal?"
7. Are there commonalities connected to gender which make women's experiences recognizable regardless of their cultural location?
8. What are some of the prevalent stereotypes and assumptions about women from different cultures? How do they affect our reading? How do these readings challenge stereotypes about women? How do they build up new bodies of knowledge about women that challenge them (the stereotypes)?
9. How do these stories reflect women's strengths and their attempts to overcome their (culturally imposed) impotence and take control of their lives?