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WMST 224A: WOMEN IN LITERATURE: NARRATIVE, ESSAY
Tue/Thu: 2:00-3:30, Swing 409

SYLLABUS (Tentative schedule)

Assignments and Evaluation:

One term paper: 30%
One mid-term exam: 20%
Attendance, class assignments, and participation: 25%
Final Exam: 25%

Structure:

Each class is dedicated to specific exercises of literary analysis applied to assigned readings and discussions of auxiliary texts that deal with basic concepts of feminist literary analysis. The students are expected to complete these exercises individually or in group work and present them in class. Some classes are assisted by visual material (film and slides) and popular culture images and objects. Part of the student evaluation is a mid-term in-class essay, a final exam and the production of a short essay (minimum 8 pages) of feminist textual analysis applied to essay prose. The term paper should be based on a text not discussed in class and in consultation with me. The participation mark is based on the completion of assigned readings, take home assignments, and active participation in class discussions.

(Note: Please note that class attendance is expected. However, if you feel uncomfortable with some of our class discussions please let me know.)

Outline:

PART I: WOMEN IN NARRATIVE

September

Tuesday 2: Introduction to the course.

Thursday 4: Basic concepts of narrative. Rhetorical figures, plot and narration, narrative time and setting, narrator, narratee, point of view. Fundamental principles of feminist criticism.

Theoretical readings:

Richard Taylor: "Aesthetic Elements of Narrative Fiction" (pp. 48-60 and 62-95).

Wilfred L. Guerrin: "Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism: Definitions" (pp. 196-203.)

Tuesday 9:

Text:

Inés Fernández Moreno: "A Mother to Be Assembled."

Theoretical reading:

Shari Benstock et.al.: "The Construction of Sexuality, Sex, and Gender."

Thursday 11:

Text:

Nayla Chehade Durán: "The Vigil."

Tuesday 16: Continuation of "The Vigil."

Theoretical reading:

Elizabeth Grosz: "Phallic Sameness" (pp. 104-107).

Thursday 18:

Text:

Rosario Castellanos: "Cooking Lesson."

Theoretical reading:

Eira Patnaik: "The Succulent Gender: Eat Her Softly."

Tuesday 23: Continuation of "Cooking Lesson."

Magic Realism in narrative. Fundamental concepts of Magic Realist fiction.

Theoretical reading:

Wendy B. Farris: "Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction" (pp. 163-190).

Thursday 25:

Text:

Isabel Allende: "Two Words."

Tuesday 30:

Text:

Laura Esquivel: *Like Water for Chocolate*.

October

Thursday 2: Comparative analysis of textual and filmic representation.

Film:

Alfonso Arau: *Like Water for Chocolate*.

Tuesday 7: Over Her Dead Body: Death and Femininity.

Text:

Gabriel García Márquez: Selections from *Of Love and Other Demons*.

Theoretical reading:

Elisabeth Bronfen: "From Animate Body to Inanimate Text: The Most Poetic Topic."

Thursday 9: Continuation of *Of Love and Other Demons*.

Tuesday 14:

Mid-term exam: in-class-essay.

Thursday 16:

Film:

Jane Campion: *The Piano*.

Tuesday 21: Continuation of *The Piano*.

Thursday 23: Geographies of Gender: Woman as Land/Territory.

Text:

Gabriel García Márquez: *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*.

Theoretical reading:

Anne McClintock: "The Lay of the Land."

Tuesday 28: Continuation of Geographies of Gender: Woman as Land.

Thursday 30: Children's Literature.

Text:

Anthony L. Manna and Christodoula Mitakidou: *Mr. Semolina-Semolinus*.

Theoretical reading:

Margery Hourihan: Selections from *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*.

PART II: WOMEN IN ESSAY PROSE

November

Tuesday 4: Fundamental concepts of essay prose. Speaker, voice, point of view, ideology.

Theoretical readings:

Shari Benstock et.al.: "Ideology" (pp. 206-208); "Postcolonial Criticism" (pp. 196-197).

Terry Eagleton: "What Is Ideology?"

Thursday 6: Male Ideological Constructions of the Feminine I.

Text:

Claude Lévi-Strauss: *Tristes Tropiques*: “In the Forest.”

Tuesday 11: **Remembrance Day. University Closed.**

Thursday 13: Ideology in visual culture. Cultural/Postcolonial Criticism.

Film:

Jean Kilbourne: *Killing Us Softly*.

bell hooks: *bell hooks: Cultural Criticism and Transformation*.

Deadline of term paper.

Tuesday 18:

Text:

Rigoberta Menchú: “I, Rigoberta Menchú.”

Thursday 20: Male Ideological Constructions of the Feminine II.

Text:

Octavio Paz: “The Sons of La Malinche.”

Contextual reading:

Bernal Díaz del Castillo: “Doña Marina’s Story.”

Tuesday 25: Continuation of “The Sons of La Malinche.”

Thursday 27: Conclusion and wrap-up of the course.

Break down of assignments:

1) Mid-term exam (scheduled for Oct. the 14th) 20%: It will consist of two parts: Part I is based on a short theoretical question and Part II will ask you to write a brief essay analyzing a chosen literary text by applying concepts of feminist literary analysis studied in class so far.

2) Term paper (30%). The paper will require you to analyze a text by a writer of **your choice** not discussed in class and in consultation with me. The text you choose can be either a short story or an essay. In your paper you will be asked to apply specific theoretical concepts of literary analysis discussed in class. No bibliography is necessary. Minimum length of the paper is 8 pages and maximum 9.

Deadline: November the 13th: There will be no extensions for the term paper unless there are exceptional circumstances which you are expected to discuss with me. A penalty of 2% off the mark for each day of not handing it in will be applied to the final mark of the paper.

(NOTE: The following is a suggestive list of writers you can choose from but you can analyze others not included here:

Margaret Atwood; Carol Shields; Annie Proulx; Marguerite Duras; Barbara Gowdy; Cherríe Moraga; Isabel Allende; Luisa Valenzuela; Gloria Anzaldúa; Clarice Lispector; Alice Munro; Nicole Brossard; Jeanette Winterson; Alice Walker; Toni Morrison; Marjorie Agosín.

Anthologies of short stories or essays written by women of any cultural background.)

3) Participation (25%). Attendance to classes is expected. Participation does not mean just coming to class but implies your response to readings, and active participation in class discussions. Part of your participation will be brief written responses to readings done in class and based on assigned questions.

4) Final exam (25%). The format is the same as the mid-term. The final exam will consist of two parts: part one will ask you to give a brief answer to a theoretical question; part two will ask you to write a brief essay analyzing a literary text.

TERM PAPER CONSULTATION TIMES

Please, ensure your appointment with me ahead of time as the schedule is fixed and there will be no guarantees that you will find a spot to discuss your essay with me once all spots are filled. Consultation hours for the term paper are scheduled as follows:

September 23, 25, 30: 10:30-1:30.

October 2, 7, 9,14,16, 21, 23, 28, 30: 10:30-1:30.

November 4, 6: 10:30-1:30.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (CONTENT OF THE COURSE)

A) THEORY:

1) Taylor, Richard. "Aesthetic Elements of Narrative Fiction." *Understanding the Elements of Literature*. London, Macmillan, 1981 (pp. 48-58 and 62-95).

2) Guerrin, Wilfred et al. "Feminism and Feminist Literary Criticism: Definitions." *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005 (pp. 196-203).

3) Benstock, Shari et.al.: "The Construction of Sexuality, Sex, and Gender," "Postcolonial Criticism," and "Ideology." *A Handbook of Literary Feminisms*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 (pp.164-171, 183-186, 196-197, and 206-208).

4) Farris, Wendy B. "Scheherazade's Children: Magical Realism and Postmodern Fiction." *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995 (pp. 163-190).

- 5) Grosz, Elizabeth. "Phallic Sameness." *Sexual Subversions*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989 (pp. 104-107).
- 6) Hourihan, Margery. Selections from *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- 7) Patnaik, Eira. "The Succulent Gender: Eat Her Softly." *Literary Gastronomy*. Ed. D. Beuan. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988 (pp. 59-73).
- 8) Bronfen, Elisabeth. *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- 9) McClintock, Anne. "The Lay of the Land." *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. New York: Routledge, 1995 (pp. 21-31).
- 10) Eagleton, Terry. "What Is Ideology?" *Ideology: An Introduction*. New York: Verso, 2007 (pp. 28-30).

B) LITERATURE:

1. "A Mother to Be Assembled." (Inés Fernández Moreno). *Cruel Fictions, Cruel Realities: Short Stories by Latin American Women*. Ed. Kathy S. Leonard. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1997.
2. "The Vigil." (Nayla Chehade Durán). *Cruel Fictions, Cruel Realities: Short Stories by Latin American Women*. Ed. Kathy S. Leonard. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1997.
3. "Cooking Lesson." (Rosario Castellanos). *The Oxford Book of Latin American Short Stories*. Ed. Roberto González Echeverría. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
4. "Two Words." (Isabel Allende). *The Stories of Eva Luna*. New York: Atheneum, 1991.
5. Selections from *Of Love and Other Demons*. (Gabriel García Márquez). New York: Penguin Books, 1994.
6. *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*. (Gabriel García Márquez). *Innocent Eréndira and Other Stories*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978.
7. *Mr. Semolina-Semolinus*. (Anthony Manna and Christodoula Mitakidou). New York: Aladdin Paperbacks, 2004.
8. "In the Forest." (Claude Lévi-Strauss). *Tristes Tropiques*. New York: Penguin Books, 1992.
9. "I, Rigoberta Menchú." (Rigoberta Menchú). *The Oxford Book of Latin American Essays*. Ed. Ilán Stavans. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
10. "The Sons of La Malinche." (Octavio Paz). *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. New York: Grove press, Inc., 1985.

C) FILM:

- 1) Jean Kilbourne: *Killing Us Softly*.
- 2) Jane Campion: *The Piano*.
- 3) Alfonso Arau: *Like Water for Chocolate*.
- 4) bell hooks: *bell hooks: Cultural Criticism and Transformation*.