Instructor: Nalini Natarajan

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Course Title: Feminism and Literature

Course Number: INGL 6429

Credit Hours: 3

Course Description
This course places literary readings in the context of debates around gender in the last few decades. The lectures will stage a dialogue between literary feminism and gender theory, by examining selected themes around which the debates of gendering may be said to converge. These themes are domesticity and family, the female body, social class and hierarchy, colony and nation, property and money. Seminar sessions will alternate theoretical discussion and textual analysis. Attendance is compulsory.

Course Objectives:
In this course students will acquire:
1. An overview of the broad trends in feminist literary criticism and of the move to gender studies
2. Experience in applying theoretical debates to the readings of literary texts.
3. The ability to analyze in cultural, literary and theoretical depth, themes around which debates in feminism have centered: namely, domesticity, the body, madness, property, sexual exploitation/prostitution, nationality.

Course Plan:
There will be 10 core literary texts. You will be expected to read at least one new text per week, but discussions will range freely around texts already covered. That is, the same text may be discussed more than one under different rubrics or topics. Core Textual readings are in bold type and numbered in the order you are expected to read them. Core Theoretical critical readings will be provided either in the anthology prescribed or as xeroxes. A collection of additional critical
material on each literary text will be placed on reserve in the Seminar Room. Kindly read all this material and connect to the analytic approach of the course.

**Oral Reports:**

Each student will present one oral report which will be graded. This oral report should aspire to a conference presentation, about 15 minutes long. A sample conference presentation will be discussed in class to demonstrate the model. It should be on a literary text we are reading. There can be two reports on one text, as long as the topics do not overlap. The report should relate the text to the themes of the course and where possible to the theoretical readings assigned for that day. Students should inform the professor of the topic and if possible discuss it with the professor.

Please familiarize yourself with how to use blackboard.com and nicenet.com. The online facilities will only be used if ALL students have access to them. If used, online components require the following:

Students should

- Check the site for reading lists, professor’s instructions and class schedules weekly. This will be as preparation for class.
- Post required comments on the discussion board for each reading, literary or critical. If they cannot access the website, they can just send an email to the professor
- Attend chats (face to face or online) with cohorts (people in your study group). These can be face-to-face or online.
- A complete bibliography will be posted on the website.

**Course Outline:**

**Week 1:** Distribution of Course Outlines, Registration.
Buy ALL books from the bookstore
Read the introductory sections of Feminisms.

**Week 2 (August 25)**
Introductory Lecture: Feminist Literary Theory and Gender Studies; Feminism and Narrative
No Oral Reports on this day. Bring short (oral) responses to any of the boldface readings below to class.

Readings:
Introduction to each section of Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms* (new edition, 1996)-in bookstore
Linda Alcoff, “The Politics of Postmodern Feminism, Revisited” *Cultural Critique*, 36 (Spring, 1997)-
In seminar room.
On Narratology and Feminism:
Susan Lanser, “Towards a Feminist Narratology” (1986) in *Feminisms*
Catherine Belsey, “Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text” (1985)

Assigning of Texts for Oral Reports:

**Week 3 (September 1)**
Lecture: The Debate around Domesticity and the family; Race and the Domestic
Textual Readings: Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre* (1)

**2 ORAL REPORTS**
Critical Readings:
Oral Report: *Jane Eyre*

**Week 4**
ONLINE WEEK: Students attend class in lab

**Week 5 September 15**
Lecture: The Female Body and Culture, Madness
Textual Readings
Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (contd.) – I oral report
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior* (4) 1 ORAL REPORT
Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (5) 1 ORAL REPORT
Critical Readings:
Both of the above are in *Feminisms*
Also Introduction to:
*Feminist Theory and the Body* (Routledge, 2000)
Oral Reports: *Beloved*

**Week 6 September 22**
Online week: students meet in lab.

**Week 7 September 29**
Sylvia Plath: Oral Report
Topics: the American Dream, the Body

**Week 8- October 5**
The Body, Domesticity

**Week 9: October 13**
Caribbean Feminisms:
Oral Reports: Wide Sargasso Sea
Rosario Ferre

Week 10: October 20 Lecture
Jamaica Kincaid, *Annie John* (9) 1 ORAL REPORT:
*House on the Lagoon/Sleeping Beauty* (10): 1 ORAL REPORT-
Selected Essays from Partha Chatterjee, “The Nation and its Women” and Woman and the Nation” in *The Nation and its Fragments*
Essays by Norma Alarcon “Traduttora…” and Nalini Natarajan “Woman, Nation and Narration” in *Scattered Hegemonies* (Xerox)

Week 11 onwards
CONCLUSIONS, TERM PAPERS, GROUP REPORTS Term Papers due: December 1

Methods of Evaluation
Class Participation/ Discussion facilitating: (30%)
Oral Report : 15%: 10-15 minutes (like a conference paper):20%
One mid term written test in class 15% ( date to be announced)
Final term paper: 35%

Core Bibliography
Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms* (Rutgers, 1991): Campus Bookstore
Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *Madwoman in the Attic* (1978): Richardson Seminar Room
*Feminist Theory and the Body* (Routledge, 2000)

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Introduction to each section of Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms* (new edition, 1996)-in bookstore
Linda Alcoff, “The Politics of Postmodern Feminism, Revisited” *Cultural Critique*, 36 (Spring, 1997)-
Susan Lanser, “Towards a Feminist Narratology” (1986) in *Feminisms*
Catherine Belsey, “Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text” (1985)

Critical Readings:
Selected Essays from Partha Chatterjee, “The Nation and its Women” and Woman and the Nation” in *The Nation and its Fragments*
Essays by Norma Alarcon “Traduttora…” and Nalini Natarajan “Woman, Nation and Narration” in *Scattered Hegemonies* (Xerox)
Bibliography


Belsey, Catherine. “Constructing the Subject: Deconstructing the Text” (1985) in *Feminisms*


Christian, Barbara, “The Race for Theory” *Cultural Critique*, 6 (Spring 1987), 51.-


Lanser, Susan. “Towards a Feminist Narratology” (1986) in *Feminisms*


Robyn Warhol and Diane Price Herndl, *Feminisms* (New Jersey: Rutgers, 1991)