

## **Introduction to Women Writers ENG 2150 / D550, Spring 2014**

Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:30 - 3:45 PM, Namm 1008

Professor Rebecca Devers, Ph.D. (rdevers@citytech.cuny.edu)

Office hours: M/W 4:00 – 5:00 PM, and by appointment

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**Prerequisites:** Students who enroll in this course must have successfully completed English 1101.

### **Course description and objectives:**

As you can see from the attached outline for the course, we'll spend the semester discussing, interpreting, and responding to a variety of texts written by women. Women from various time periods and cultures are represented in our reading list, as are various genres of writing, from the personal essay to the graphic novel. Throughout each of our classes and assignments, you'll be asked to engage thoughtfully with a number of overarching themes with which female artists have been grappling for centuries.

I expect you to participate in class to show that you understand the assigned readings and can analyze them on multiple levels. We will use the elements of fiction (plot, setting, point of view, characterization, theme, and style) to analyze assigned readings. We'll also discuss various genres and engage in comparative analysis. You'll be expected to use these skills in formal writing assignments and exams. Please refer to the Outcomes Assessment handout for a full explanation of these goals, since they are key to our class and to each of our assignments.

### **Required course materials** (books have been ordered through the City Tech bookstore)

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*. Vols 1 and 2. 978-0-393-93013-9.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*. 978-0486475820. \$2.25.

Lynn Nottage, *Intimate Apparel*. 978-0822220091. \$8.00

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*. 978-0-618871711. \$13.95.

Access to an up-to-date writer's manual, like *Rules of Thumb* or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Access to a reliable computer, with internet (email) access and a printer. Save electronic files of all your work.

A folder or notebook devoted to this class.

You'll also receive handouts and photocopied readings in class.

\*If you choose to use an eReader, that's fine. However, please know that you cannot use any electronic devices, at all, on any exam in this class. This means that you will need to prepare for these exams, which include open-book sections, accordingly.

### **Required assignments** (please refer to the department competencies handout)

Three short papers:

Paper 1: 15%

Paper 2: 15%

Paper 3: 20%

Midterm exam: 10%

Final exam: 15%

Participation: 10%

Unannounced reading quizzes: 15% (quizzes cannot be made up; lowest quiz grade will be dropped)

Passing this class is contingent upon successfully completing all assignments and passing the final exam.

**Students with disabilities:** If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please see me as soon as possible so I can accommodate you. If you think you may have a disability that requires accommodation, see the Student Support Services Program in Room A237, or call them at 718-260-5143.

**Other requirements of the course:** In addition to the materials listed above, this course requires a number of other commitments from you, namely:

**Regular attendance:** This course is designed as a seminar-type class, which means that active participation is necessary if you and your peers are to succeed in this class. I expect you to come to class prepared (which means you've read the assigned readings and you've completed any homework assignments). I also expect you to come to class on time and stay for the duration of our meeting. Arriving more than 10 minutes late, or leaving more than 10 minutes early will result in a "late" mark. Distracted and distracting behavior, which includes using cell phones or music devices, will reduce your participation grade, since it demonstrates that you are not, in fact, actually present and engaged *mentally* in our classroom. You are allowed 3 absences from this class without penalty. The fourth absence may result in a WU grade. If you do miss a class, please know that you are responsible for the information we covered while you were gone. If your religion is not directly recognized by the school calendar, and you anticipate missing classes for religious reasons, please see me as soon as possible. Absences will be excused only in the case of unavoidable, unforeseeable emergencies affecting you or an immediate family member; documentation is required.

**Responsible scholarship:** I expect you to complete all assignments on time, and to do so honestly. We will discuss academic integrity and plagiarism early in the semester. Know now, however, that I will not tolerate any academic dishonesty in my course. The school's statement on academic integrity is in the box below; ***in this class, an act of academic dishonesty will result in a grade of zero (0) on the affected assignment and a report filed with the school's Academic Integrity Officer.*** A second act of academic dishonesty in this class will result in additional sanctions. If you have any questions about plagiarism and how to avoid it, please ask me.

#### **New York City College of Technology Policy on Academic Integrity**

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

Another aspect of responsible scholarship is doing your best to meet course requirements. If you find you are having trouble keeping up with your assignments, please see me during office hours. Requests for extensions will only be considered if they are received at least 24 hours before the original due date. Formal papers are due in hard copy (stapled) at the start of class on the days indicated on the course calendar, and must adhere to MLA guidelines. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Writing:** This course is designated as writing intensive. We will use writing to help us learn about our literary texts, even as we use literature to teach us about our own writing. Note that, according to the department's list of competencies for this class, you "must submit acceptable papers [...] in order to pass the course."

#### **Other important policies:**

**Letters of recommendation:** In the future, a potential employer or school may ask you for a letter of recommendation from a professor. If you wish to ask me for a letter of recommendation, please be prepared. I'll need the name and address to which the letter should be sent, as well as a deadline. I'll also ask you to visit me during office hours (or make an appointment) so I can write a letter specific to your strengths and goals. Please notify me at least a month before the letter is due; it should go without saying that I write letters only on behalf of students who passed my class in good standing.

**Extra credit:** No.

**Paper grades:** Your papers will be evaluated according to the following rubric. Please read it carefully and let me know if you have any questions.

- A, A- Papers earning an A or an A- are excellent examples of critical literacy in action. They carefully and intelligently respond to the ideas in the readings and are easy and enjoyable to read. Organization is smooth and the argument is well-polished and convincing. These papers demonstrate the student's mastery of the goals for the course as outlined by CUNY. A paper would earn an A- rather than an A if it met these standards but fell short in an area of sentence-level revision (e.g., minor typographical errors, occasional editing missteps).
- B+, B, B- Papers earning grades in the B range (B+, B, or B-) are good; they set themselves apart by being thoughtful and interesting, though they may still have some rough spots. Overall, the paper succeeds, even if some kinks still need to be ironed out. These papers are more successful than papers earning grades in the C range, because these papers take risks with original analyses or interesting responses to the readings. These papers are less successful than papers earning grades in the A range, because they still need attention to significant paragraph- or sentence-level issues like organization, appropriate use of evidence, appropriate levels of analysis, frequent editing and proofreading missteps, or unclear phrasing. Within this range, papers earn a B+ when these paragraph and sentence level issues occur infrequently but still impede the writer's attempts to communicate; papers earn a B- when the issues occur more frequently, substantially impeding communication.
- C+, C Papers earn a C+ or a C when they meet the requirements of the assignment, but they do so unspectacularly. Such papers are considered average. These papers often have one or more weaknesses on the global level that substantially affect(s) the paper's readability. If your thesis is unclear, if your argument vacillates, if you summarize more than you analyze... these issues often negatively affect the success of a paper. These papers are more successful than papers earning a D because they do, in fact, meet all the requirements of the assignment; these papers are less successful than papers earning grades in the B range because they don't take risks with original analyses or interesting responses to readings and because they present substantial global weaknesses that impede the writer's ability to communicate his or her ideas.
- D If a paper earns a D in this class, it is because it clearly failed to meet the requirements of the assignment. It may have dramatically fallen short of the page requirement or have lacked a thesis statement or argument entirely. Papers earning grades in the D range demonstrate an honest attempt to address the assignment, though they need substantial global and paragraph level revisions in order to meet CUNY's requirements for this course. Papers earning a D are less successful than papers earning a C because they don't meet the requirements of the assignment or the course; they are, however, more successful than papers earning an F because they demonstrate a good faith attempt to complete the assignment.
- F Papers earning an F clearly fall short of meeting the requirements of the assignment. They have no focus and demonstrate no engagement with the assigned readings at all. These papers are less successful than papers earning a D, because they fail to demonstrate any attempt to meet the standards of the course or the requirements of the assignment.

<b>Class #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Due Today</b>	<b>Classroom Activities</b>
1	1/27	Margaret Atwood, "There Was Once," V2: 1217.		Course introduction; discuss syllabus.
2	1/29	"The Elements of Fiction" (handout). Also, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wall-Paper," V1: 1392	Introductory email to Prof. Devers	Mastering the elements of fiction and applying them to common texts.
3	2/3	Continue discussing Gilman.	Sign up for Open Lab and request membership to our course	Discuss first paper assignment; discuss Open Lab. Practice quiz.
4	2/5	Virginia Woolfe, "A Room of One's Own," V2: 237		Develop our understanding of a common struggle for women writers
5	2/10	Zadie Smith, "Scenes from a Smith Family Christmas" (Open Lab)		Discuss the first paper assignment.
6	2/19	Jamaica Kincaid, "Biography of a Dress" (Open Lab)		Discuss academic integrity and the importance of image(s) to women writers
7	2/20	Continue discussing Smith and Kincaid	Last day to turn in optional draft of paper 1.	Comparative analysis of related texts
8	2/24	Betty Friedan, excerpts from <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> (Open Lab)		Discuss literary nonfiction and the women's rights movement
9	2/26	Continue discussing Friedan		Apply discussion of Friedan to class readings
10	3/3	Lynn Nottage, <i>Intimate Apparel</i>		Introduction to drama
11	3/5	Continue discussing Nottage	Paper 1 due today.	Continue discussion of Nottage
12	3/10	Finish Nottage		Conclude discussion of the play and prepare for the midterm exam.
13	3/12			Midterm Exam
14	3/17	Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> , Letters and Chapter 1		Discuss the second paper assignment. Introduction to the epistolary form.
15	3/19	Shelley through Chapter 10. Also: Anais Nin, "Birth," V2: 588		Comparative analysis of related texts.
16	3/24	Continue discussing Shelley; also, Diane DiPrima, "Song for Baby-O, Unborn," V2: 1084	Last day to turn in optional draft of paper 2.	Approaching difficult themes in literature.
17	3/26	Shelley through Chapter 19		Continue discussing Shelley.
18	3/31	Continue discussing Shelley		Debate.
19	4/2	Finish Shelley		Understanding Shelley as a "Women Writers" text.
20	4/7	Toni Morrison, "Recitatif," V2: 996	Paper 2 due today.	Discuss Morrison.
21	4/9	Continue discussing Morrison. Also: Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," V2: 1296		Discuss the third paper assignment. Comparative analysis.
22	4/23	Kate Chopin, "Desiree's Baby" (Open Lab)		Continue discussion of race as a theme in fiction.
23	4/28	Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, "The Revolt of 'Mother,'" V1: 1346		Transition to discussion of motherhood and the family.
24	4/30	Maya Angelou, "What's Your Name, Girl?" (Open Lab)	Last day to turn in optional draft of paper 3.	Continue discussion of domesticity.
25	5/5	Continue discussing Angelou.		Continue discussion of domesticity.
26	5/7	Alison Bechdel, <i>Fun Home</i> , Chapter 1		Introduction to the graphic novel form.
27	5/12	Bechdel, through chapter 3		Continue discussion of Bechdel.
28	5/14	Bechdel, through chapter 5	Paper 3 due	Situating Bechdel within our course themes and texts.
29	5/19	Finish Bechdel		Review for final exam.
30	5/21			Final exam

**Monday, 2/3/14**  
**Open Lab Instructions**

This semester, we'll use City Tech's Open Lab to continue our classroom discussions and as a resource hub for course materials. **One of your required assignments this semester is participation in the class blog on Open Lab, so it is essential that you activate your membership and check the page regularly.** First, you'll need to sign up for Open Lab and request membership to our class. Here's how you can do that.

1. You must activate your City Tech email account.
2. Sign up for Open Lab at <http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/register/>
3. After you sign up, you'll need to log on to your City Tech email account and click on the registration link you receive from Open Lab.
4. Log on to Open Lab at <http://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/>
5. In the search box at the top right of the page, search for your professor's last name: Devers.
6. In your professor's list of courses, choose yours.
7. Select "Request Membership" to gain access to your class.