

# Women in World Thought and Literature – English 330 – Fall 2009

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Instructor: Dr. Julie Barak  
Office Hours: 8:00-8:50 MWF  
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## Course Goals:

1. Become familiar with several different feminist theories/theorists
2. Read a broad selection of important late 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> century women writing in English
3. Use the theory to expand the personal/social/political implications of the literature
4. Participate in the work of feminist pedagogy

## Course Methods:

In "Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference," Kathleen Wieler articulates three goals of feminist theory : it "validates differences, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings" (*Harvard Educational Review* 61: 4 (November 1991), 449-474). Lynne M. Webb, Myria W. Allen and Kandi Walker, in "Feminist Pedagogy: Identifying Basic Principles," discuss six strategies they feel are essential to putting feminist theory to work in the classroom. This course is designed to implement these strategies. I quote at length from their discussion. You can find the entire article and a list of resources/references at the following link: [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb3325/is\\_1\\_6/ai\\_n28914616/?tag=content:coll](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb3325/is_1_6/ai_n28914616/?tag=content:coll).

1. **Reformation of the relationship between professor and student.** Feminist pedagogy offers both the professor and students new relational roles. Power becomes shared as students assume more responsibility for teaching and teachers for learning . . . "A classroom based on feminist pedagogy is a community of learners where power is shared and where participatory democratic processes help learners develop independence. It is an active, collaborative classroom where risk-taking is encouraged; where intellectual excitement abounds; and where power is viewed as energy, capacity, and potential, rather than domination" (Christie, 1997, p. 148).
2. **Empowerment.** Empowerment, the primary goal of feminist pedagogy, involves the principles of democracy and shared power. . . "By focusing on empowerment, feminist pedagogy embodies a concept of power as energy, capacity, and potential rather than domination.... Under conceptions of power as capacity, the goal is to increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some" (Shrewsbury, 1993, p. 10).
3. **Building community.** Feminist pedagogy is concerned with building community and cooperation within the classroom as well as between the classroom and its broader environment. . . "Because feminists value community and equality, building a trusting environment in which all members are respected and have an equal opportunity to participate is central" (Schniedewind, 1993, p. 18). "Collaborative learning assumes that learning occurs through relationships and dialogue; and collaborative learning assumes the learner to be active in her or his own meaning-making and to be a knower in her or his own right" (Gawelek, Mulqueen, & Tarule, 1994, p. 182). Through collaboration "in the feminist classroom, students integrate the skills of critical thinking with respect for and ability to work with others" (Shrewsbury, 1993, p. 9).
4. **Privileging the individual voice as a way of knowing.** Feminist pedagogy encourages authority in others and views knowledge as constructed and culture-bound. "Fostering multiple authorities allows different classroom dynamics and voices to emerge. Authority shifts to students when they can interact and ask questions, where their feedback is actively sought and incorporated, and when faculty work to make themselves less intimidating and more approachable" (Middlecamp & Subramaniam, 1999, p. 521). . . If the only voice heard is the instructor's, the students are deprived of a primary and critical way of knowing" (Gawelek, Mulqueen, & Tarule, 1994, p. 181).
5. **Respect for diversity of personal experience.** Feminist theory privileges personal lived experiences as the basis for analysis, theory generation, activism, and research (Foss & Foss, 1994). Thus, a feminist pedagogy involves an emphasis on personal experience and validation (Chapman, 1997). Such a perspective results in several positive outcomes, including increased respect, enhanced empathy, better critical thinking skills, and broader understanding of truths. "Feminist pedagogy makes explicit

# Women in World Thought and Literature – English 330 – Fall 2009

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that how we experience and understand things is rooted in our social position, based on a variety of factors, including gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual preference" (Parry, 1996, p. 46). Feminist scholarship provides for "a multiplicity of truths and a valuing of diversity not possible with many other kinds of evidence" (Foss & Foss, 1994); it produces not only knowledge but also understanding (the capacity for insight, empathy, and attentive caring).

6. **Challenging traditional views.** Feminist pedagogy challenges the notion that knowledge and teaching methods can be value free. "Schools reproduce and reinforce the social construction of gender through the dichotomization of nurturance and autonomy, public and private, and masculine and feminine" (Scerif, 1997). . . Feminist teachers challenge the origins of ideas and theories, the positions of their promoters, and the factors influencing how knowledge comes to exist in its present form (Middlecamp & Subramaniam, 1999). Pointing out problems with theories that imply or state value orientations sharpens students' awareness that values are socially constructed and therefore open to question and change.

## Required Texts:

Gilbert and Gubar -- *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Tradition in English*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.  
Donovan – *Feminist Theory: The Intellectual Traditions* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.  
Chopin – *The Awakening*. (Any publisher or edition you prefer.)

## Criteria for Grading:

### I. Participation in small group discussions and large group sharing:

- a. (Students will be provided with a blue book on the first day of class. When the first book is full, you'll be responsible for buying additional books. Keep the books together; you'll be asked to submit them for a grade three times during the semester.) As you read your assignment for the day, BEFORE YOU COME TO CLASS, write out a question in your blue book. At the beginning of each class, pass your books around and take a few minutes to record answers to each other's questions. When your question comes back to you, read and reflect on the answers and make some summatory comments. Students will be called on randomly to share each day. Good questions usually include "how" or "why" interrogatives. Some good question stems are:
  1. Explain why (or explain how) \_\_\_\_\_?
  2. Why is \_\_\_\_\_ important?
  3. How are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ similar?
  4. What is the best \_\_\_\_\_, and why?
  5. What do you think causes \_\_\_\_\_, and why?
  6. What is the solution to the problem of \_\_\_\_\_?
  7. How does \_\_\_\_\_ tie in with \_\_\_\_\_? (The blank here indicates a story or character or idea we discussed before.) (*Collaborative Learning Techniques: A Handbook for College Faculty*, 249)
- b. Experience/Identity/Theory connectors: Every day, you'll draw cards to determine who will be the recorder, speaker, time keeper and researcher in your group. You'll be provided with a folder in which to record your thoughts, examples, supporting evidence, etc. The folder will also indicate which roles/identities are to be the focus of your reflections for the day and which theories you should pay particular attention to as you work with the text(s). Record the date, the assignment and who is playing each role for the day before you begin your discussion. Record important notes and ideas, reference page numbers from Gilbert and Gubar and Donovan. At the end of each class period, the reporter will share your findings for the day. You will turn these folders in at the end of each discussion for a group grade. Discuss the works on the table for the day with the following questions in mind:
  1. What personal connection did you make with the piece(s)? Or, what personal response did the piece elicit? How did you feel while you were reading or upon reflection afterwards?
  2. How does the piece redefine/challenge or comment on women's stereotypical roles or identities?

# Women in World Thought and Literature – English 330 – Fall 2009

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3. How does the theory expand/explode/deconstruct the literature?
  4. How does the piece connect to other pieces on the syllabus for the day or to other pieces we've read previously?
- II. **Two Essays** – reflecting on how theory shapes/reshapes identity issues in one or two of the literary texts. One will be due at approximately mid term and the other at the end of the semester. The notes in your blue books should serve as prompts for topics. The folders that record class discussions/connections will always be outside my office door. These, too, should serve as good resources for connecting the theory to the texts. More information forthcoming concerning parameters for evaluation.
- III. **Points:**
- a. Bluebooks = 240 points (80 for each third)
  - b. Folders = 500 points (Grades determined each day based on folder and participation in group/reporting. Average of daily grades = total at the end of the semester.)
  - c. Essays = 260 points (130 each)
  - d. After 3 absences, you lose 5 points from the 1000 point total for each absence.
  - e. 20 extra points will be awarded to students with no absences at the end of the semester.

## **Policies and Procedures:**

I. **Academic Honesty:** Refer to the Student Handbook for college policies on Academic Honesty. You are cautioned a) against using, word for word, without acknowledgment, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. from the printed or manuscript material of others; b) against using with only slight changes the materials of others; and c) against using the general plan, the main headings, or a rewritten form of someone else's material. These cautions apply to the work of other students as well as to the published work of professional writers. (Department of English, Purdue University) Violations will be handled according to the guidelines suggested in the Student Handbook.

II. **Students w/ Disabilities:** In coordination with Educational Access Services, reasonable accommodations will be provided for qualified students with disabilities. Please meet with the instructor the first week of class to make arrangements. Educational Access Services can be contacted at 248-1856, or in person in Houston Hall, Room 100.

III. **Tutorial Learning Center = TLC:** The TLC is a FREE academic service for all MSC students. Tutors are available on a walk-in basis for many courses. Needing to ask a quick question? Seeking homework clarification? Looking for feedback on a paper? Reviewing for a test? Come to Houston Hall 110 on Mondays through Thursdays from 8AM-7PM and Fridays from 8AM-5PM to meet with one of our peer tutors. Please call 970-248-1392 with any questions.