

WOMEN AND LITERATURE

Avila University

EN 275C 01, 3 credit hours

Novels

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Harriet Jacobs

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison

The Bride Price, Buchi Emecheta

Nervous Conditions, Tsitsi Dangarembga

Herland, Charlotte Perkins Gilman

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit, Jeanette Winterson

Course Description

This course examines women as authors, as characters in literature, and as social and political subjects in several historical contexts and countries. Students think critically about the position of women in literature and society by identifying and analyzing gender differences and differences of race, class, sexual orientation, and nation.

The focus will be on close reading, critical thinking, active participation, group leadership, and written analyses. Students will position the literary works in their historical and cultural contexts to demonstrate how literature both announces and solves problems, how literature both reflects and shapes social conditions. Particular emphasis will be on women's voices—on the importance of women interpreting, speaking, and writing.

Objectives

Students will

- Develop their sensitivity to cultural diversity in the U. S. and in the world / assessed through quizzes, discussion, an oral presentation, and exam.
- Consider the central role narratives play in creating and maintaining cultures and realize the need for women to read and re-interpret old texts, recover lost works, and write anew / assessed through quizzes, discussion, oral presentation and exam.
- Develop and practice critical skills in listening, reading, discussing, and analyzing issues of race, class, and gender / assessed through quizzes, group work, and discussion.
- Communicate orally and in writing their analyses of these works / assessed through quizzes, paper, and discussion.
- Employ skeptical, evaluative, and logical approaches in processing information and drawing conclusions / assessed through paper and oral presentation.

- Develop group discussion skills in focused discussions of the literature, history, and non-fiction / assessed through group work, evaluation forms, and discussion.

Methods

Each class member brings her or his own individual background and experience; our goal as a class is to build on these differing opinions and reactions to arrive at a greater understanding of the works we discuss. Our goal is to create a community of readers and thinkers who learn from each other and from the reading.

Class time will be devoted primarily to student discussion in large and small groups supplemented by lectures on critical approaches and history. Students should plan to read each assignment carefully and to attend every class.

Participation in discussions is one of the most important aspects of the class. Coming to class to listen to other students express their ideas and attitudes does not constitute participation in this class. Rather, it is necessary that you actively take part in class discussions by articulating your ideas, impressions, and point of view. A grade will be assigned at the end of the term for class participation, and this grade will be based on the each student's *spoken* contributions in the large circle discussions. These contributions may consist of comments, interpretations, and/or questions.

Quizzes / Exam

There can be no make-up quizzes. Be sure to read the literature carefully, take notes, and review your notes before coming to class.

Take notes! Take notes during **every** class. And, be certain to ask questions if ideas, interpretations, and theories are unclear. You will need to take and study your notes in order to do well on the quizzes and final exam. Anything that is written on the bulletin board is important. Also, information from the oral presentations may appear on the final exam.

Attendance & Participation

Attendance at every class is expected. You have two excused absences; any additional absences will result in the loss of 30 points for each absence. Frequent tardiness will also result in the loss of 30 points. Refrain from distracting the class by leaving during class or by engaging in side conversations. Being discourteous and disruptive will detract from your course participation grade.

Sensitive Material

Many of the topics we will cover are controversial and exciting, and there will likely

be some emotional discussions. As long as we remain courteous and avoid any personal attacks, these times can be rewarding for all of us.

There will be times when we will need to discuss sensitive topics and issues. These topics will always be presented in a professional manner. You need to be aware, however, that avoiding these issues entirely is not only undesirable but also wholly inconsistent with the goals of a higher education experience.

It is also important that we respect each other and the class by turning off all pagers and cellular phones. (If you have a compelling reason to have your pager or cellular phone on, please notify me before class begins.)

Grading

Participation	50	900-1000	A
Quizzes	600	800-899	B
Presentation	100	700-799	C
Essay	100	600-699	D
Comprehensive Final Exam	150		
TOTAL	1000		