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ENG 3903-001: Women, Literature and Language

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English 3903: Women, Literature & Language
Course Policy & Syllabus
ENG 3903 – TR – 9:30am – 10:45am– 3290 Coleman Hall

Instructor: Dr. Melissa Ames

Office: 3821 Coleman Hall

Office Hours: T 12pm-2pm

R 11:30am-2pm; 3:15pm-3:45pm

Or by Appointment

Email: mames@eiu.edu (please do not use the email provided by D2L)

Catalog Description: May focus on roles of women in literature, on literature by women or on women's relation to language. Prerequisite is ENG 1002. (3-0-3, WI, 3 credits)

Course Description: Throughout time we are shaped by stories: the stories we tell and the stories that are told about us. This course studies narratives – specifically those written by women, about women, or for women – attending to how they reflect and impact the cultural values of their time periods. From feminist literature and young adult best sellers to chick flicks and mommy blogs, female-centered texts play an important role in rejecting or reinforcing gender norms. Such spaces provide women with authority, voice, and a forum to communicate to other women, allowing their experiences to be recorded as part of “herstory” (as opposed to traditional “history”). Storytelling and orality have long been associated with femininity. This course will study how female writers/producers have purposefully capitalized on their positions as “cultural storytellers” and how certain oral storytelling devices have become (sometimes clichéd, sometimes subversive) staples of women's narratives. Attention will be paid to certain narrative devices and genres (e.g. voice overs, flashbacks, epistolary formats) common to female-centered narratives, and how these develop common themes (e.g. identity construction, sexual awakening, female relationships). Beyond studying traditional “storytelling” practices, this course also will analyze historical and contemporary communication practices, engaging with interdisciplinary research concerning gendered practices in terms of letter/diary writing, social networking usage, and IMing/texting.

Course Objectives: After the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Read fiction and nonfiction, expressing a wide range of cultural perspectives and values, and develop abilities to think critically and write analytically about them.
2. Engage in reading and writing experiences about literature in order to demonstrate an increased understanding or an appreciation for social, cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic ideas and their discovery.
3. Develop research skill, including effective use of source materials and the principles of documentation, and apply that skill to the study of literature and media analysis.
4. Understand the relationship that narratives have to one another (despite differences in media or genre) and to the cultural/social/historical time period in which they are created, produced, and consumed.
5. Apply knowledge about gender & communication theory to the analysis of texts.
6. Study stylistic trends in narrative texts and form arguments for their popularity and effect on consumers.
7. Analyze thematic variations across media and genre in order to determine the effects of narrative format.
8. Apply research from outside disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, history) to the study of literature, film, television, and other artifacts from popular culture.

9. Work collaboratively in order to explore ideas, formulate arguments, and present findings in a scholarly fashion.

Required Texts:

Alvarez, Julia. *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*. NY: Penguin, 2005.

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. NY: Anchor, 1998.

Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. NY: Perennial, 1998.

Jones, Gayl. *Corregidora*. NY: Beacon, 1988.

Luce, Clare Booth. *The Women*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995.

Shaw, Tucker. *The Girls*. NY: Amulet Publisher, 2010.

Tan, Amy. *The Kitchen God's Wife*. NY: Ivy Books, 1991.

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*. NY: Pocket Books, 1985.

Wells, Rebecca. *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*. NY: Harper Collins, 1996.

[Note: An additional student-selected novel and supplementary reading material housed on the course management system will also be assigned].

Materials: Writing instruments, paper, a storage system for returned work and supplementary materials (three-ring binders work well), two-pocket folders for submitted work, USB-compatible device for saving documents (i.e. a jump drive), a college dictionary (print or electronic), access to word processing (typewriter or computer), and other appropriate supplies.

Course Requirements: This course consists of in-class writing activities, discussion of assigned readings, peer review sessions, out-of-class writing assignments of varying lengths, collaborative group work, and possible pop quizzes. Your grade will be based on a point system that factors in all scores you earn on all writing assignments and in-class work/participation. Attendance is mandatory and will be factored into your in-class grade. Active and constructive class participation will make a positive impact on your overall grade. Detailed assignment instructions and scoring rubrics will accompany all major assignments as the course progresses.

In-Class Work/Participation (200pts):

Daily work – includes in-class activities, writing, peer response, informal group work, and oral presentations.

Response Pieces – includes short formal or informal written responses to the required reading, the media critiques, and class discussion/debates.

Participation – **includes attendance**, participation in class activities, and course preparation. Points may be deducted due to tardiness/early departure, lack of participation, failure to bring texts and other needed materials to class, and/or behavior that distracts from class activities.

Formal Writing Assignments/Assessments (800pts):

Literary Analysis Essay (100pts). A close-reading of one literary text from the first half of the semester. (5-7pgs, 1250-1750 words)

Book Club Project/Presentation (200pts) – meet in groups to explore a book/film adaptation pairing through a simulated literature circle setting or “book club.” Members of the group will work collaboratively over the period of one month to read their assigned novel and research its Hollywood translation. The group will present their novel analysis & research findings to the class on their assigned day. (10-15pgs, 2500-2750 words)

Final Synthesis Essay & Presentation (200pts) – A comprehensive analysis applying scholarly research related to Women’s Studies and/or Literary Studies to a contemporary text (or textual set). This essay will be condensed into a PechaKucha presentation and shared at the English Studies Conference. (7-10pgs, 1750-2500 words)

Annotated Bibliography/Discussion Leadership (100pts) – A compilation of research on one assigned literary novel/author to be shared with the class during a period in which the student acts as discussion leader. (3-4 pgs, 750-1000 words)

Midterm Exam (100pts) – An in-class exam including the interpretation and identification of key literary passages & quotes, short response questions concerning the literary works & media narratives, and reflective responses that showcase an understanding of the course focus areas (thematic analysis, stylistic trends, genre study, and application of research). (Word count will vary)

Final Exam (100pts) – An essay exam focusing on the course theme/focus on female storytelling and communication practices as captured by narratives. (3-5pgs, 750-1250 words)

Course Grade: Your grade in this course will be calculated using a straight point system and standard grading scale. Your final grade will be determined by the following breakdown and grading scale:

Formal Writing Assignments/Assessments:	800 pts
<u>In-Class Work/Participation:</u>	<u>200 pts</u>
Total Points Possible:	1000pts

A = 90% -100%	C = 70% - 79%	F = 0% - 59%
B = 80% - 89%	D = 60% - 69%	

Instructor Class Policies:

Submitted Assignments: All documents must be submitted on time and have a professional appearance. Every assignment should be typed on white, 8.5 x 11 paper and formatted according to MLA guidelines and standards when applicable. (If you are unfamiliar with MLA 2009 guidelines please utilize Purdue’s Online Writing Lab at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>). When writing assignments are turned in they will be submitted in a two-pocket folder that holds all pre-writing, outlines, drafts, and peer review comments. For your own protection, keep copies of all completed work.

Assignment Due Dates: **LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AND WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO (0).** Assignments, including drafts, are due at the beginning of class. E-mail attachments will not be accepted as substitutes for hard copies of your work. Computer and printer problems are not an excuse for turning in late work, so draft and print well in advance.

In-Class Work: In-class activities must be completed in the class period they are assigned. No make-ups will be given on any of these activities unless arrangements have been made with the instructor in advance.

Class Attendance: Because this course is discussion heavy and emphasizes writing as process and as collaborative activity, attendance is essential. During the projects, your classmates will rely on your feedback. Class exercises, peer responses, and group work cannot be made up and their lack of completion will negatively affect your in-class work/participation grade. Therefore, absences negatively affect your grade. For an absence to be excused it must be considered a legitimate and verifiable emergency and documentation must be provided. Legitimate and verifiable emergencies include those instances for which you can provide documentation for why you had to miss class. Acceptable documents include accident reports, doctors’ notes, hospital forms, and employer notices. Although these documents will be accepted, any pattern of documented absences will be questioned and addressed. If it is an excused absence, attending a pre-approved workshop or lecture appropriate to the course description, you can make up the time but not the work missed. Perfect attendance merits the addition of 25 extra-credit points to the in-class work/participation category.

Proper Documentation of Emergency: Assignments may only be turned in late if the student provides documentation of an emergency that prevented him/her from attending class. Proper documentation must be an original document (no photocopies), containing the student's name, and cover the date(s) in question, and be signed by a professional (i.e. doctor). An email is not proper documentation.

Presentations: Please be present when you are scheduled to give a presentation. **If you miss class on the day of a scheduled presentation and your absence is undocumented you will receive a zero and will not be able to make up the presentation.**

Academic Integrity: Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU's Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). In accordance with English Department and University policies, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of such as one's original work – has the right and responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty up to an including immediate assignment of the grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office." Therefore, violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards. The best argument against plagiarism is that you cheat yourself out of the education you are here to obtain when you copy someone else's work. If you believe that a specific instance in your writing might constitute plagiarism, please consult your instructor prior to turning in the final draft.

Disability Services: If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by Ninth Street Hall, Room 2006, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

The Student Success Center & Writing Center: Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302. The Writing Center is also a resource that students can utilize to improve their performance in this course. For more information visit their website (<http://castle.eiu.edu/writing/>). To schedule an appointment, call 217-581-5929, or stop by Coleman Hall, Room 3110 during open hours.

English 3903: Women, Literature, and Language¹

Before They were “Gossip Girls”: Studying Female Storytelling & Communication Practices across Time, Genre, and Media

Unit I. Analyzing “Herstory”: The Stylistics of Women’s Stories across Genre & Media

Week #1

T 1/13 – Course Introduction / Gender & Social Construction
Post-Class Reading: Begin *Their Eyes* (Ch 1-6)

R 1/15 – Women & Orality / Historical Trends & Debates about Gendered Communication Practices
Prepared Reading: *Women & Language* (Introduction & Ch 1, available in D2L); Continue *Their Eyes* (Ch 7-12)

Week #2

T 1/20 – Women & Storytelling / Discuss *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Prepared Reading: Finish *Their Eyes* (Ch 13-20)

R 1/22 – Adaptation Theory / Viewing of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Prepared Reading: Adaptation Articles (D2L); Begin Reading *Garcia Girls* (Part I)

Week #3

T 1/27 – Storytelling Practices on the Big Screen / Viewing of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
Prepared Reading: Continue Reading *Garcia Girls* (Part II)

R 1/29 – *Écriture Féminine* / Women & Short Stories
Prepared Reading: “Laugh of the Medusa,” “When Our Lips Speak Together,” “The Yellow Wallpaper,” (all available on D2L)

Week #4

T 2/3 – Nonlinear Storytelling / Herstory as Historical Memory
Prepared Reading: Finish Reading *Garcia Girls* (Part III)

R 2/5 – Female Friendship From Dramatic Stage to Hollywood Big Screen / Viewing of *The Women*
Prepared Reading: Excerpts from *The Women & The Girls* (available on D2L)

Week #5

T 2/10 – Female Bonds & Characterizations in Young Adult Narratives / Viewing of *The Women*
Prepared Reading: Begin *Corregidora* (Part I)

R 2/12 – Songs as/in Storytelling / Television’s Role in Women’s Storytelling
Prepared Reading: Continue *Corregidora* (Part II); Excerpt from *Jazz* (D2L)
Song Lyrics for Discussion Must be in Class

¹ Course schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Assigned reading is abbreviated by title.

Unit II. Storytelling as Historical Revision & Social Commentary

Week #6

T 2/17 – Trauma, History & The Novel / Discussion of *Corregidora*
Prepared Reading: Finish *Corregidora* (Parts III-V)
Book Club Preference Forms Due

R 2/19 – Poetry as Storytelling / Capturing (Mis) Communication
Prepared Reading: *The Branches, the Axe, the Missing* (excerpts on D2L); Begin *Handmaid's Tale* (Part I-IV)

Week #7

T 2/24 – Peer Editing / Television as a Cultural Storyteller
Prepared Reading: Continue *Handmaid's Tale* (Part V-IX)
Rough Draft Due in Class

R 2/26 – Literature & Political Critique / Discussion of *The Handmaid's Tale*
Prepared Reading: Finish *Handmaid's Tale* (Part X-XIII & Afterword)
Assignment Due: Literary Analysis Essay

Week #8

T 3/3 – Women & Memoir / Understanding Intersectionality
Prepared Reading: From *PHD to Ph.D.* (excerpts available on D2L)
*Note: **Required Attendance** at WHAM Keynote Address, Dr. Elaine Richardson's "From PHD to Ph.D.: How Education Saved My Life – A One Woman Show," 5:30pm, 7th Street Underground.*
Midterm Exam

R 3/5 – **No Class** (Release Day for Required Keynote Attendance Earlier in Week)
Prepared Reading: Begin *Divine Secrets* (First Third)
Assignment Due: Proposal for Final Research Paper/Presentation – due electronically to mames@eiu.edu by 9:30am

Unit III. Portrayals of Women & Female Relationships in Pop Culture & Real World Interactions

Week #9

T 3/10 – Portrayals of Mother-Daughter Bonds / Viewing of *Divine Secrets*
Prepared Reading: Continue *Divine Secrets* (Second Third)

R 3/12 – Viewing of *Divine Secrets* / Discussion of Novel & Film
Prepared Reading: Finish *Divine Secrets* (Final Third)

Spring Break – No Class

Week #10

T 3/24 – Book Club Meeting #1
Prepared Reading: Book Club Book (Part I); Begin *Kitchen God's* (Ch 1-7)

R 3/26 – Writing Conference / Workshop Day
Prepared Reading: Continue *Kitchen God's* (Ch 8-17)
Assignment Due: Sources, Outline & Draft of Intro or Body Section for Final Paper

Week #11

T 3/31 – Intergenerational Storytelling / Discussion of *Kitchen God's Wife*
Prepared Reading: Finish *Kitchen God's* (Ch 17-26)

R 4/2 – Book Club Meeting #2 –Out-of-Class Meeting Day – **No Class**
Prepared Reading: Book Club Book (Part II); Begin *Color Purple* (p. 1-50)

Week #12

T 4/7 – Females as Keepers of Memories & Relationships / Letter & Diary Writing
Prepared Reading: Continue *Color Purple* (p. 51-123); *Women & Language* (Ch 3 &6, available on D2L)

Rough Draft of Final Essay Due in Class

R 4/9 – Course Release Day for Mandatory Presentation/Attendance at English Studies Conference –
Prepared Reading: *Women & Language* (Ch 11-14, available on D2L)
No Class

Assignment Due: Final Research Paper due electronically by 9:30am to mames@eiu.edu

F 4/10 – **Required PechaKucha Presentation at the English Studies Conference**

Week #13

T 4/14 – Book Club Meeting #3
Prepared Reading: Book Club Book (Part III); Continue *Color Purple* (p. 124-198)

R 4/16 – The Epistolary Format / Discussion of *Color Purple*
Prepared Reading: Finish *Color Purple* (p. 199-295)

Week #14

T 4/21 – Women & Technology / Women's Communication & Activism Online
Prepared Reading: *Attachments: A Novel & The Internet Girls: TTYL* (excerpts of both available on D2L)

R 4/23 – Book Club Meeting #4 – Planning Period
Assignment Due: Notes/Response to Blog Reviews

Week #15

T 4/28 – Book Club Presentations (Groups 1 & 2)

R 4/30 – Book Club Presentation (Group 3) / Closure Activities / Evaluations

Finals Week/End of Semester