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ENG 3504-001: Film and Literature: Women Authors, Auteurs, Stars

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Filmmaker Michelle Citron declares that “many women directors are forced to make a choice: either they maintain control over production of their films and settle for smaller audiences [as auteurs], or they relinquish a degree of control to establishment forces in order to reach a wider audience.” Historically, the same might be said of women authors and their works. Crucial to this class is the question of authorship, particularly the extent to which directors (auteurs?) and their literary counterparts have agency and authority over their own cultural representation. This section of English 3504 will explore this question in relation to films by female directors from Alice Guy-Blache to Kathryn Bigelow and woman writers from the beginning of the film era forward. (Group 5)

Texts:

Cather. *My Antonia*.
Cisneros. *The House on Mango Street*.
Hurston. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.
Naylor. *Linden Hills*
Satrapi. *Persepolis*.
Silko. *Ceremony*.
Tepper. *The Gate to Woman’s Country*.

Course Requirements:

1. **Weekly Responses and Participation:** Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials and/or films. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups so are part of your participation grade. Responses should analyze, critique, argue for or against, or evaluate—they should not summarize except to make the writer’s point(s). You must be in class on the due date to receive credit for your response or for any in-class work.

2. **Midterm:** This exam will provide an opportunity to internalize material all students read for class and to carefully read the first films in the class.

3. **Group Novel Teaching and Presentation:** Members of four different groups will each “read” a different text written by a woman and be responsible for teaching it to the rest of the class (with my help). Film clips from films that build from the work(s) should be included in your presentation—as well as information about author/director.

4. **Final Exam:** This exam will not be cumulative. It will provide an opportunity to internalize material read for class as a group and as a class from Midterm forward and carefully to read the last films in the class.
5. **Final Paper:** The final paper should either expand on one of your responses—which you focus and then develop using information from the film and/or literature—or revolve around a film you have chosen on your own. For the second option, choose a film directed by a woman and write a detailed and focused analysis of its form and style. This paper should be approximately 6 pages long.

6. **Film Log:** This Log will offer a place for you to write brief responses to the films we watch for class. These should be informal and approximately 150 words. Respond to them in relation to Film Narrative and Style or our class theme (women authors/auteurs).

**Grades:** Grades will be determined as follows for a total of 100%:

- Weekly Responses and Participation --- 20%
- Midterm --- 20%
- Group Teaching/Presentation --- 20%
- Final Exam --- 20%
- Final Paper --- 10%
- Film Log --- 10%

**Grading of Responses, Presentation, and Paper:**

Response grades will be based on analytical complexity. Each will be worth twenty points. If a response only summarizes a film or novel, the response gets only half credit. Adequate analysis (or argument or critique) will result in 14 points (C level). Good analysis, etc., in 16 points (B level). Great analysis, etc., from 18-20 points, depending on clarity, precision, and sense of voice.

Paper grades will be based on the following areas: Audience awareness, organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar/usage/mechanics. The first three areas will be weighted more heavily than the second three (60% vs. 40%). I will also distribute the English Department’s grade analysis in class.

Presentations will be evaluated according to a rubric I will distribute in class. Groups should also turn in any class handouts or visuals with novel responses.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

**Plagiarism:** The English Department states, "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 them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

**Electronic Writing Portfolio:** This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.
English 3504 Tentative Schedule, Subject to Change
Spring 2011

January

11 Introduction to the Course and to Film Narrative and Style. How to read a film. Film Adaptations. Read handout on women’s film for 1/13 and sections of Film Art chapters on Narrative and Style for 1/18 and write a response applying what you learn to a film of your choice. Film clips from Bridget Jones’s Diary and Café Bar.

13 Matrimony’s Speed Limit and A House Divided (Alice Guy-Blache)

18 **Response Due.** Discuss Film Art style sections. Film Art Discussion—What is film art and style? How was it applied in Bridget Jones’s Diary, Café Bar and Alice Guy-Blache’s films. Read the first half of My Antonia for 1/25 and write a response in relation to the novel’s setting and narrative voice.

20 Too Wise Women (Lois Weber)

25 **Response Due.** Discuss My Antonia, section 1. Introduce Women’s regional literature of the Midwest and plains. Finish My Antonia and write a response for February 1 focused on the plot of the novel and how you read it in relation to the time period in which it was written.

February

1 **Response Due.** Discuss end of My Antonia. Read first half of Their Eyes Were Watching God for February 8 and write a response in relation to the setting and narrative voice.

3 Vagabond (Agnes Varda)

8 **Response Due.** Discuss first half of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Finish Their Eyes were Watching God for February 15 and write a response focused on the plot of the novel and how you read it in relation to the time period in which it was written.

10 The Secret Life of Bees (Gina Prince-Blythewood)

15 **Response Due.** Discuss end of Their Eyes Were Watching God. Read the first half of Linden Hills for February 22 and write a response in relation to the setting and narrative voice of the novel.

17 Watermelon Woman (Cheryl Dunye)

22 **Response Due.** Discuss first half of Linden Hills. Finish Linden Hills for March 1 and write a response focused on the plot of the novel and how you read it in relation to the time period in which it was written and set.

24 Eve’s Bayou (Kasi Lemmons)
## March

1. **Response Due.** Discuss end of *Linden Hills* and its context and themes. Midterm Review.

3. *Dance, Girl, Dance* (Dorothy Arzner)

8. **Midterm.** First half of Film Log due after exam. You may use both your personnel sheet and your film log on the exam. Read *Ceremony* for 3/22 and write a response focused on the novel's setting and literary strategies.


14-18 Spring Break---No Classes!

22. **Response Due.** Discuss *Ceremony* in relation to its cultural, historical, and literary contexts. Read *The House on Mango Street* for 3/29 and write a response focused on the novel's setting and literary strategies.

25. *Frozen River* (Courtney Hunt)

29. **Response Due.** Discuss *The House on Mango Street* in relation to cultural, historical, and literary contexts. Read *The Gate to Woman's Country* for 4/5 and write a response in relation to the novel's genre and how it is revealed.

31. *The Milk of Sorrow* (Claudia Llosa)

## April

5. **Response Due.** Discuss *The Gate to Woman's Country* as social science fiction. The issues discussed in the work should broach a plethora of discussion. Read *Persepolis* for 4/12 and write a response focused on the work as a graphic novel. I'll provide introductory information with a handout to help you.

7. *Cold Souls* (Sophie Barthes)

12. **Response Due.** Discuss *Persepolis* as graphic novel and social commentary. Prepare for group presentations.


19. **Groups I and II Presentations.**

21. *The Hurt Locker* (Kathryn Bigelow)

26. **Groups III and IV Presentations.** Final Paper Due. Final exam review.

28. *The Kids Are Alright* (Lisa Cholodenko)

## May

5 at 12:30 **Final Exam.** Film Log due after exam. You may use your film log and your personnel sheet on the exam.