ENG 3903-001: Women's Bodies/Women's Stories and the Birth of a Nation

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Engl 3903: Women, Literature Language
“Women’s Bodies/ Women’s Stories and the Birth of a Nation
Fall Semester 2007

Dr. Dagni Bredesen

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1.30-2.45 pm and 6-6.30 pm, o.b.a.
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Course Description and Objectives:

In this course we will look at representations of women—mothers, virgins, rape victims—that abound in colonial and postcolonial literature, film and art, as we analyze the attractions and problems of using a woman’s body to depict a nation and women’s roles in the story-telling and processes of nation-building as represented in literary and historical narratives.

English 3903 is a writing-intensive course, intended to enable motivated students improve their written expression, as well as reading comprehension, critical thinking, and oral expression. Assignments will include student presentations of literary, historical, and secondary texts, short writing assignments, midterm and final examinations as well as two 5-7 page essays that draw on critical essays.

Texts:
Beck, Roger. The History of South Africa
Coetzee, J.M. Disgrace
Haggard, H. Rider. King’s Solomon’s Mines
Krog, Antjie. Country of My Skull
Mda, Zakes. Madonna of Excelsior
Van Niekerk, Marlene. Triomf
Wicomb, Zoë David’s Story
Course Packet (TBA)

Strongly Recommended: MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition
Each student should also have a handbook of usage and a collegiate desk dictionary.
Course Schedule: This schedule is provisional and subject to change.

Week 1 (8/21) Orientations “The Lay of the Land: From Virgin Territory to Mother Africa
Homework (HMWK): For next class please read Haggard’s King Solomon’s Mines up to and including chapter 10. Also read chapters 2, and 3 in Beck’s History of South Africa.

Week 2 (8/28) The Female Intermediary
Discuss assigned readings.
HMWK: Finish King’s Solomon’s Mines. Read Chapters 4, 5 & 6 in Beck.

Week 3 (9/4) “The Hottentot Venus”: Race and Deviant Sexuality
Discuss assigned readings.
HMWK: Read Beck chapters 7 & 8 and Madonna of Excelsior chapters 1-18.

Discuss assigned readings. Historical Brief: “The Immorality Acts”
HMWK: Madonna of Excelsior, chapters 19-35; Beck chapter 9

Week 5 (9/18) Rainbow Nation
Discuss assigned readings. Paper topics distributed. HMWK: David’s Story pages 1-106. Beck chapter 10
Week 6 (9/25) Who is Dulcie?: Women's Bodies and the Liberation Struggle
Discuss assigned readings.
HMWK: Read David's Story, pages 107-213

Week 7 (10/02) Women's Stories: "Not Proper History at all"
Finish discussion of David's Story. Bring Triomf to class.
FIRST ESSAY DUE
HMWK: Study for Midterm
Introduction to Triomf, read chapters 1-9

Week 8 (10/09) MIDTERM (which will include all readings up to chapter 9 of Triomf)
HMWK: Continue reading Triomf chapters 10-18

Week 9 (10/16) "The Volksmoeder: Self-Sacrificing Mother of the Nation"
Discuss Triomf HMWK: Finish reading Triomf, chapters 19-21

Week 10 (10/23) "At Least We Have Each Other": The Logic of Afrikaner Nationalism.
Discuss Triomf
Introduce Country of My Skull

Week 11 (10/30) "A Long Night's Journey Into Day"
"The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
In class viewing: A Long Night's Journey into Day
HMWK: Read Country of My Skull, chapters 1-12.

Week 12 (11/06) Power and Limits of Personal Narratives
Discuss Film and assigned reading.
HMWK: Country of My Skull, ch 13-21, Envoi, & Epilogue.
Bring Disgrace to class. Prospectus Due

Week 13 (11/13) Truth is a Woman
Wrap up discussion of Country of My Skull.
Introduction to J.M. Coetzee and Disgrace.
HMWK: Read Disgrace chapters 1-6.
Week 14 (11/27) Rape and Reparation
Discuss readings
**Presentations of Final Papers Begin**
HMWK: Finish *Disgrace*, chapters 7-24

Week 15 (12/04) : Rainbow Nation Revisited
Wrap up discussion of *Disgrace*
Presentations of Final Papers continued.
**Final Papers due FRIDAY, DECEMBER 7TH.**

**Final Examination; Tuesday, December 11th 7.30-9.30**
Bring test booklets to your final exam

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**Course Assignments**

**JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT**
Keep a separate notebook or journal in which you write your responses to reading assignments and class discussion. For each work that we read, please identify in your journal those issues of nationhood, gender, power, domination, oppression, resistance and reparation that you see in the text and your own thoughts about them. Identify also attitudes to the issues—the social and political views expressed in the text. In your journal, also take notes on your background reading in history, political science, and current events. From time to time, you will be asked to write responses in class, and you should add them into your journal when they are returned. You will find a journal very useful in reviewing for exams and in planning your papers and oral presentations. I will not collect or grade journals.

**PAPER I ASSIGNMENT**
PAPER I (800-1000 words/ 3 to 4 computer-printed or typed double-spaced pages) is due on 2nd October. Paper I is an essay analyzing one or two of the literary works assigned for the course during the first half of the term. As appropriate, you may refer to other works (literary or non-fictional) by the author you are discussing, historical background works, or works of political or social theory.

In this and all papers, be sure to credit ideas and phrasing that you use in your analysis. Be sure to quote accurately, indicate all quotes and paraphrases, and document accurately (use the MLA system). Inform yourself about documentation conventions for electronic-media information and materials. All such materials must be documented, and citation forms are illustrated in recent handbooks; go to the Writing Center for assistance. Electronic-media materials must be evaluated for quality and reliability even more scrupulously than print materials. Please remember that you must absorb and process all materials: downloading is not research.

**PAPER II ASSIGNMENT**
PAPER II, due Friday 7th of December is a researched analytical study (2000--3000 words) discussing some specific aspect of the representation and treatment of gender and/or nationhood in two or three works of literature we have covered. Topics must be approved but you may write about a topic that also relates to your area of disciplinary interest.
A prospectus (one or two fully-developed paragraphs [5 to 7 sentences each], typed and double-spaced) is due on 6th November. The prospectus should clearly identify the issue to be discussed, the approach to be taken, and the point of view to be argued; it should also indicate the literary works and works of background research that will be referred to in the paper.

RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATION: During the last two weeks of the semester, each student will present the material of his/her final research paper, according to an assigned schedule. The presentation should be carefully timed to last 10 minutes.

GRADE CALCULATION
- Participation and Daily Preparation (including quizzes and oral presentations): 20%
- Mid-Term Exam: 15%
- Cumulative Final Exam: 20%
- Paper I: 15%
- Paper II (including Prospectus): 25%
- Research Paper Oral Presentations: 5%

COURSE POLICIES
CLASS ATTENDANCE, punctuality, preparation, and participation are expected and required. You are presumed to be professionals-in-training responsible for attending class regularly and participating in discussion. In order to deal with unforeseen emergencies, starting from week two, you are allowed to miss up to the equivalent of one week of class without documented excuse. Any additional absences will, however, be penalized at a rate of one letter grade per two class meetings; any student who is absent for more than four classes (equivalent of four weeks) will earn a grade of F for the course.

ASSIGNMENTS are to have been completed by class time on the date for which they appear on the syllabus. The book(s) in which the day's assignments are contained should be brought to class. Unannounced quizzes on assigned material may be given at any time. There will be no opportunity to make up missed quizzes or in-class writing assignments. Students are responsible for material covered in class and announcements or assignments made in class as well as for assignments on the syllabus.

MAJOR TESTS AND EXAMS should be written on test booklets, available at the Union Book Store. Please write tests in ink and on the appropriate booklets. Announced tests and exams must be taken at the scheduled time. Except in cases of DOCUMENTED emergency or official university absence arranged ahead of time, there will be no opportunity to make up mid-term or final exams!

ALL PAPERS AND OTHER WRITTEN WORK must be handed in on the date due. Work turned in late without advance clearance will not be accepted. Any work turned in late with clearance will be penalized, usually at the rate of 5 points per day (not per class meeting) of lateness. Additionally, late submission may delay the grading and return of the paper, perhaps until semester's end. BE SURE TO KEEP A COPY OF EVERY PAPER YOU HAND IN. In the case of a missing paper, the student is responsible for supplying a copy.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS: Papers must be "typed" or computer-generated (double-spaced) on heavy or medium-weight white 9 x 11 paper. Computer print-outs must be "letter quality," 12-point size, clear, and dark--no pale print will be accepted. Use 1” margins. Each paper should have a separate title sheet which includes the title of the paper, course title,
instructor's name, student's name, and submission date. Repeat the title at the top of the first page of text. Papers must be stapled or clipped, and pages numbered.

DOCUMENTATION: Use the MLA system to cite all primary and secondary sources used in preparation of your papers. Also, be sure to introduce sources in your text. Each student should have access to the latest edition of The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, and to a handbook of usage and mechanics.

RESPONSIBLE USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA: Please keep in mind that electronic media materials must be documented as conscientiously and accurately as any other material. Be aware also that it is necessary to ascertain the authority, reliability, accuracy of all materials and that it may be particularly difficult to do so in the case of electronic media. Be sure to evaluate and clearly identify any source of information, analysis, or opinion; process material from electronic sources as critically and creatively as you do print sources. Check with the Writing Center for up-to-date documentation conventions. DOWNLOADING IS NOT RESEARCH.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: All written work (papers, exams, tests, quizzes) must be prepared independently; all sources and background material (print, electronic, or other) must be digested and acknowledged. Make to understand the meaning of plagiarism and the policy of the English Department:

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" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of the grade of F for the writing in which plagiarism occurs and a grade of F for the course, as well as to report the incident to the university's Judicial Affairs Office. Respect for the work of others should encompass all formats, including print, electronic, and oral sources.

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodation, please note that arrangements must be made through the Office of Disability Services; you should, therefore, contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

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"Africa is Woman." This cry of the early colonial poets galloping through the land echoes warmly in the chants of the poets of the New South Africa as they sing their praise songs to Mama Afrika. Woman as Mama remains a metonym for Africa; protean woman, who once also served the colonial project, has been refashioned to serve the national liberation movement. For the imagined community of the nation (see Anderson 1983) with its reliance on 'tradition', woman as mother, whose reproductive and nurturing powers are foregrounded, is a revered symbol of survival. It is her body that is written as a map: its rivers and plains and peaks, source of life and sustenance, landmarks and boundaries of the early colonial struggle, are also discursively drawn in the struggle over reproductive control.