

WSS 282Z (15574): NARRATIVES AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES

<http://www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/narratives/2006.html>

Fall 2006

Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:15-2:35 pm

Place: LE-G41- Teaching Resource Center in CETL (Tuesdays) and Digital Workshop #2 (Thursdays), ground floor of Science Library.

Instructor: Janell Hobson

Office: Social Science 344

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:45-4:05 pm and by appointment

Contact Info. jhobson@albany.edu | Phone: 442-5575

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course examines feminist and other subversive responses to “master narratives” that silence or prompt alternative narratives addressing concerns from marginal perspectives. We will explore different narrative genres - essays, films, novels, graphic novels, theater, music, art, memorials, etc. - and determine the effectiveness of producing counter-hegemonic expressions to challenge viewpoints from the mainstream or status quo and to advance social justice for women and other under-represented groups. Students will also create their own counter-narratives as a final project while assessing these issues.

Online Syllabus:

An online version of this syllabus has been created to enhance your information and knowledge for this class, including access to hyperlinks and online essays. The URL (website address) is included at the top of this page, and you are strongly encouraged to visit it on a regular basis (a hyperlink to the online syllabus is also available on our webCT home page). To access webCT, use your net ID (first and last initials followed by the last four digits of your SSN) and your password (first initial, followed by the first four digits of your SSN, and your last initial) to log on.

Characteristics of General Education Courses:

General education offers introductions to the central topics of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. Approved courses also may satisfy major or minor requirements, but their primary purpose is to inform students who do not plan to pursue more advanced coursework in that field.

General education offers explicit rather than tacit understandings of the procedures, practices, methodology and fundamental assumptions of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields. Approved courses seek to explain what it means to be practitioners of disciplines and fields by encouraging both faculty and students to reflect about the nature of disciplinary knowledge. This characteristic is particularly relevant to courses within the category of Disciplinary Perspectives.

General education recognizes multiple perspectives on the subject matter, reflecting our pluralistic culture within and beyond the university.

General education emphasizes active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to be producers as well as consumers of knowledge. At the University at Albany, a public research university, engaged learning may involve student participation in cutting-edge research, but all courses seek to engage students in the active generation and evaluation of knowledge."

General education promotes critical inquiry into the assumptions, goals, and methods of various fields of academic study; it aims to develop the interpretive, analytic, and evaluative competencies characteristic of critical thinking.

General Education Writing Intensive Requirements:

Approved lower-division writing intensive courses use writing as a means of sharpening critical thinking in and understanding of the course subject. Writing opportunities are highlighted in this syllabus with an asterisk (*). The goals for written discourse include:

- Producing a substantial body of finished work, for a total of 20 pages or more (typed and double-spaced) through journals, essays, research and new media projects.
- Creating opportunities for students to receive assistance with works in progress, such as visits to the Writing Center (HU-140), peer-reviewed sessions in class, and instructor-student consultations in and outside of class.
- Creating opportunities for students to revise and resubmit written works.
- Responding to student writing, from instructor evaluation to peer evaluation.

Department of Women's Studies Goals and Learning Outcomes:

Students will demonstrate that they:

- understand Women's Studies as an academic field of study and research;
- understand and can use intersectional feminist analysis to explore the bases of social inequalities;
- understand what it means to place women at the center of knowledge-making and of discourse across disciplinary boundaries;
- understand how feminist pedagogy may be different from other forms of teaching and learning;
- understand the dynamic relationship between Women's Studies scholarship and feminist social action.

For more information, please visit the website: www.albany.edu/ws/undergrad.html#goals

Course Goals and Learning Objectives:

This course serves as an introduction to the concentration in "Arts, Writing, and Activism" for the Women's Studies major. It meets departmental goals and objectives in that students will:

- learn to dismantle the intersecting ideologies of classism, racism, sexism, etc.
- conceptualize feminist social justice beyond gender equity and towards community and human dignity.
- participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars;
- integrate scholarship in the classroom with community and political activism.

This course meets University General Education Writing Intensive learning objectives in that students will be able to:

- produce coherent texts within common college-level written forms;
- demonstrate the ability to revise and improve such texts;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details.

Required Texts (available at the Book House in Stuyvesant Plaza):

Boal, Augusto. *Theatre of the Oppressed*. NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1985.

Childs, John Brown, ed. *Hurricane Katrina: Response and Responsibilities*. San Francisco: New Pacific Press, 2005.

Morrison, Toni. *Paradise*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998.

Satrapi, Marjane. *Persepolis*. NY: Random House, 2003.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. London: Vintage, 1985.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. NY: Harvest Books, 1989, 1929.

Zitka-la Sa. *American Indian Stories*. Lincoln: Bison Books, 2003, 1921.

Additional readings are available on WebCT.

Possible Requirements:

Class Participation (20 points):

- Discussions: You are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions, to listen effectively to lectures and to others, and to bring reading materials to class. Due to the contents of this course, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. It is important to establish respect and trust with your fellow classmates, especially when engaging in peer evaluation of each other's written work. If you fail to contribute to discussions in class, then the highest number of points you can receive for class participation will be 10 points.
- *WebCT: You are expected to post on a regular basis to our WebCT discussion board. An important theme of this class is engaging with new media and the writing opportunities presented online. You will need to post online responses to assignments and take turns each week introducing a discussion topic on our discussion forum.
- Attendance: This will officially be taken immediately after the drop/add period. You are allowed **3 unexcused absences**; however, if you go over this number, you stand to **lose 5 points for each additional absence** from your final grade. **Two bonus points toward your final grade for perfect attendance!!** Perfect attendance means that you have never missed a single class (whether this is excused or not – including for illnesses and emergencies), nor have you ever arrived late nor left early for any reason. If you attend every single session, from the beginning of class time to the end, and if you are respectful in class and contribute to discussions, **then and only then** will you receive bonus points for perfect attendance.

**Reader's Log (or Blog)* (30 points):

You will be expected to keep a reader's log or create a blog that catalogues your responses to reading assignments. Your responses may be reflective or creative (e.g. responding to readings through poetry or fictive narrative, such as adding a vignette written from the perspective of a marginal character, writing an epilogue or prelude, etc.) If you create a reader's blog, then please submit the URL. An entry in your log/blog is expected on the following dates, for a total of 10 entries: **9/12, 9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/10, 10/19, 10/26, 10/31, 11/14, and 11/28**. Each entry should be 500-750 words (or 2-3 pages, typed and double-spaced). For your responses, provide a critical assessment of the reading(s): This is not your opinion, such as whether or not you "liked" or "disliked" the text; rather, this is your own critical evaluation of the author's assertions about a specific issue. 6 or more $\sqrt{+}$ = 30 points, 6 or more $\sqrt{=}$ = 20, 6 or more $\sqrt{-}$ = 15. If you miss 5 of these assignments, the highest grade you can earn will be 10 points.

**Collaborative Digital Project* (20 points):

As a class, we will collaborate on an interactive website (see hyperlink) documenting original hypertext poems. You will be expected to compose an original poem (your own choice of style – free verse, blank verse, rhyme, sonnet, series of haiku, lyric, etc.) in response to the *transcending silence...*'s spring 2007 theme of "Gender, Place, and Space." Drawing also on themes explored in this course – public space vs. cyberspace, the word vs. the visual or the aural – we will create an interactive website that will support our individual works and present them in a way that creates a larger, collaborative class narrative. We will participate in a web design workshop to acquire skills in new media and technology, designed to enhance our writing (free tutorials on other digital media are offered at the IMC in the basement of the main library: 1 point/workshop that you attend this semester). Extra credit points: an additional 2 points for performing poem at the "Spread the Word" open mike event at Ritazza Café (held first and third Wednesdays, 8 pm). Your poem is due in class on Thursday, **October 5**. Your digital poem is due on CD or disk by Tuesday, **October 10**.

**Counter-Narrative Final Project (30 points):*

You will be expected to produce a larger counter-narrative by expanding on the theme of your poem/digital poem through the development of a response to a particular subject or text (including film, art, and music) studied in class. You will then adapt it for possible submission to the Women's Studies student e-journal, *transcending silence*... Your counter-narrative may include a research paper (10-15 pages, typed and double-spaced) or a creative project (machinima, independent media – Podcast audio, creative website, public art, PSA video, music/poetry video, etc. – short story, epic poem, play/screenplay, memoir, photo-essay, sculpture, musical composition, film short, game/videogame, children's or young adult fiction, epistolary work, manifesto, dance/performance,** etc.). Creative projects must include a written introduction (4-6 pages, typed and double-spaced). You will also be expected to follow the journal's submission guidelines (e.g. all non-written creative projects must be digitized – video/audio streaming; submit 3 hard copies of written work, and include an abstract). To prepare for this project, please submit a proposal (1-3 pages, typed and double-spaced) describing your intentions, research questions, and approaches. Include also an annotated bibliography of at least 1 primary source (archived materials, literature, cultural artifact, or interviews – for the latter, see Human Subjects policies and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) website on how to obtain approval for such research) and 2 secondary sources (academic journal article, book, or book chapter) guiding your research topic. If you plan on applying to the IRB for approval to do Human Subjects research, then please do so by **September 15**. This proposal is due in class on Tuesday, **October 17**. You will also be expected to develop an abstract of 200 words that describes the main theme of your project, due Thursday, **October 26**. You can earn extra points if you choose to submit the abstract to the annual Women's Studies student conference (2 points); if accepted into the conference, you can earn an additional 3 points for presenting your work. (Email wstudent@albany.edu by **October 27, 2006**). The conference will be held November 30-December 1, 2006. First drafts of your project are due Tuesday, **November 7**. A second draft will be due Tuesday, **November 21**; this draft will be peer-reviewed by a classmate. We will spend the final week of class going over your projects (the final draft due in class on Tuesday, **December 12**).

**Performance as Counter-Narrative Project:

In lieu of an e-journal submission, students may audition for and work on a performance this semester, to premier at the annual Women's Studies student conference the evening of Thursday, **November 30**, 6:00 pm. The performance (arranged by your instructor) will include reading and performing poetry, interspersed with musical and dance performances. You may audition to perform one of three parts, or you may work backstage (on directing, sound/music, choreography, costuming, etc.). Work toward this performance will begin in October. You will also give a dress rehearsal before our class on Tuesday, **November 21**. Since you won't be required to submit different drafts of a written project, you will instead be expected to rehearse outside of class in preparation for this performance and to also submit a 4-6 page response/reflection (typed and double-spaced) about creating performance as a feminist counter-narrative, due in class on Tuesday, **December 12**.

Expectations, Course Format, and Policies:

- This course will be structured primarily around discussions and occasional lectures.
- Please come to class with reading materials; you are expected to have read them prior to class, so be prepared to discuss them.
- Films and videos will be screened on the dates listed in the schedule; you have the option of viewing these ahead of time but it is not required.
- Due to the contents of this course, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. If you engage in disruptive behavior (i.e., delivering insults, using vulgar expressions, doing work or having conversations not related to this class, not turning off cell phones, beepers and pagers, or

- walking out in a way that disrupts class) then 3 such incidences = 1 unexcused absence.
(Please see Attendance Policy)
- Whenever you have concerns over a grade assigned, please contact me at least 24 hours after receipt of your grade. Please only send emails to schedule an appointment, not to discuss concerns with the course.
 - Late assignments will result in 5 points deducted from your grade for each day late; no extensions will be granted with the exception of documented emergencies. In addition, plagiarism (see tutorial hyperlink) is a violation of university policy; any errors in citations and use of work that is not your own will result in a failing grade for assignments.
 - All assignments turned in must also be posted on webCT to foster a community of shared learning.

Letter-Grade Equivalents for Points:

A = 100-93	A- = 92-90	B+ = 89-86	B = 85-83	B- = 82-80
C+ = 79-76	C = 75-73	C- = 72-70	D = 69-65	E = Below 65

Course Schedule

UNIT ONE: MEDIA/TED SPACES

- Sept. 5 Course overview and introduction.
Audio/Video Showcase: Musical Counter-Narratives.
- Sept. 7 Slide Show: Visual Counter-Narratives.

UNIT TWO: GENDER, RACE, & THE ECONOMIES OF SPACE

- Sept. 12 *A Room of One's Own*.
Essay: (1) Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference.
- Sept. 14 Essay: (2) Dis Place: The Space Between.
Poem: Poem About My Rights.
- Sept. 19 Essays: (3) "Graffiti Taught Me Everything I Know about Space"; (4) Judy Baca:
Our People are the Internal Exiles.
Website: www.sparemural.org.
- Sept. 21 Film segment: *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision* (Frieda Lee Mock, 1994).

UNIT THREE: BETWEEN HISTORY & MEMORY

- Sept. 26 *Hurricane Katrina: Response and Responsibilities*.
- Sept. 28 Writing Workshop: Poetry.
- Oct. 3 *Persepolis*.
- Oct. 5 Web Design Workshop.
Due: Poem.

Oct. 10 Film: *The Language You Cry In* (Alvaro Toepke and Angel Serrano, 1998).
Due: Digital Poem.

Oct. 12 Essay: (5) Grandma's Story.
Audio on WebCT: Zap Mama, *Adventures in Afropea*.

UNIT FOUR: NARRATIVES OF THE OPPRESSED

Oct. 17 Film: *Latcho Drom* (Tony Gatlif, 1993).
Due: Proposal for E-Journal Manuscript.

Oct. 19 continued.

Oct. 24 holiday – no class.

Oct. 26 *American Indian Stories*.
Due: Abstract for E-Journal Manuscript.

UNIT FIVE: MYTHS RETOLD, TRUTHS FORETOLD

Oct. 31 *Paradise*. (“Ruby” – “Consolata”).

Nov. 2 continued (“Lone” – “Save-Marie”, epilogue).

Nov. 7 Film: *Jesus of Montreal* (Denys Arcand, 1989).
Due: First Draft of E-Journal Manuscript.

Nov. 9 continued.
Audio on WebCT: Peter Gabriel, *Passion*.

Nov. 14 *Theatre of the Oppressed*. (chapters 1-3).

Nov. 16 continued (chapters 4-5).

Nov. 21 Dress Rehearsal for *Words of the Prophet* (Poetry Performance set for Nov. 30).
Due: Second Draft of E-Journal Manuscript.

Nov. 23 holiday – no class.

Nov. 28 *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. (“Genesis” – “Joshua”).

Nov. 30 continued (“Judges” – “Ruth”).

CONCLUSION

Dec. 5 Writing Workshop: E-Journal Draft.

Dec. 7 Writing Workshop continued.
Due: Assignment Checklist/Self-Evaluation.

Dec. 12 **Due: Final Draft (and abstract) of E-Journal Submission.**

ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST AND SELF-EVALUATION

Please complete the following, to be signed and turned in the last day of class.

1. Class Participation (20 points)
 - a. How often did I participate in class discussions? _____ /week ____/month.
 - b. How often did I post responses and assignments to the webCT discussion board? _____ /week ____/month.
 - c. How many absences did I accumulate? _____. How many of these were excused? _____.
 - d. Do I qualify for the Perfect Attendance bonus 2 points? _____.
2. Reader's Log or Blog (30 points)
 - a. Do I have a total number of 10 entries for my log/blog? _____. If not, how many entries do I have? _____.
 - b. How many \surd + did I receive? _____. How many \surd ? _____. \surd -? _____.
 - c. Did I lose any points for lateness on these assignments? _____. If so, how many? _____.
3. Collaborative Digital Project (20 points)
 - a. What number of points did I receive for my Poem? _____. What number of points did I receive for my Digital Poem? _____.
 - b. Did I lose any points for lateness on these assignments? _____. If so, how many? _____.
4. Counter-Narrative Project (30 points)
 - a. Did I turn in a Proposal? _____. Did I turn in an annotated bibliography? _____. Did I turn in two earlier drafts of this project? _____. If I opted to work on the Performance Project, how often did I rehearse outside of class? _____.
 - b. Did I follow the submission guidelines for *transcending silence...* when I turned in my final draft? _____.
 - c. What number of points do I expect to receive for this assignment? _____.
 - d. Do I expect to lose any points for lateness on this assignment? _____. If so, how many? _____.
5. Extra Credit Points
 - a. Did I earn extra credit points for attending a workshop at the Interactive Media Center this semester, at 1 point per workshop? _____. If so, which IMC workshops did I attend and when? _____.
 - b. Did I earn 2 extra credit points for performing my class poem at a Spread the Word event at Ritazza Café? If so, when did I perform? _____.
 - c. Did I earn 2 extra credit points for submitting my abstract to the annual Women's Studies student conference? _____.
 - d. Did I earn 3 extra credit points for presenting my paper at the same conference? _____.

EXPECTED TOTAL POINTS: _____

EXPECTED GRADE: _____

Your Signature

Date