

FEMINIST NARRATIVES AND RACIAL POLITICS
www.albany.edu/faculty/jhobson/narratives/2008.html

This syllabus is subject to change; such changes will be made online.

Fall 2008
WSS 282Z (8666) – Narratives and Counter-Narratives
ENG 240Z (9488) – Growing Up in America

Tuesdays/Thursdays
2:45-4:05 pm
Humanities 124

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Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course will explore a variety of narratives (fiction, non-fiction, drama, film, art, performance, music, websites, etc.) that advance feminist perspectives while also situating such views through an examination of racial politics. This course will address issues of diversity and marginalization, while challenging dominant and/or mainstream narratives that have served to silence others in the past and in the present. Narratives will represent a cross-range of cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities. Finally, in this writing intensive course, we will engage in select writing projects – writing for a public blog, writing for publication, and writing for multimedia.

Women's Studies Department Goals and Learning Outcomes:

This course was developed as part of the Women's Studies undergraduate curriculum. It also currently serves as an introduction to the concentration in "Arts, Writing, and Activism" for the Women's Studies major. Students who enroll in Women's Studies courses will be able to demonstrate that they:

1. understand and can use intersectional feminist analysis.
2. understand what it means to place women at the center of knowledge-making.
3. understand how feminist pedagogy may be different from other forms of teaching.
4. understand the relationship between Women's Studies scholarship and feminist action. *For more information, please visit the website: www.albany.edu/ws*

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:

- This course parallels departmental goals and objectives in that students will:
1. dismantle the intersecting ideologies of racism, classism, sexism, etc.
 2. conceptualize feminist social justice beyond gender equity and towards community and human dignity.
 3. fully participate in the teaching process as active learners, peer educators, and public scholars.
 4. apply scholarship in the classroom to activism beyond these walls.

General Education U.S. Diversity and Pluralism Requirement:

This course is also cross-listed with the English department. The English section of this course fulfills the General Education U.S. Diversity and Pluralism requirement; we will focus primarily on contemporary experiences in the United States, even as we explore historical developments of our contemporary moment and also venture beyond U.S. borders. Courses fulfilling this requirement offer students perspectives on the diversity and pluralism of U.S. society with respect to one or more of the following: age, class, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation. Given that categories of diversity and pluralism intersect, approved courses will, wherever possible, deal with more than one category.

Approved courses provide students with substantial knowledge of diversity and pluralism as expressed through social, political, ideological, aesthetic, or other aspects of human endeavor. Drawing on the experience of specific groups, courses explore the theories, dynamics, mechanisms, and results of diversity and pluralism, including the sources and manifestations of controversies and conflicts.

General Education Written Discourse Requirement:

Both sections fulfill the writing intensive general education requirement 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, as well as provide peer-review of their classmates' writing;
- research a topic, develop an argument, and organize supporting details.

Required Texts: (available at the University bookstore)

Clare, Eli. 1999. Exile and Pride: Queerness, Disability, and Liberation.

Cliff, Michelle. 1993. Free Enterprise.

Hobson, Janell and R. Dianne Bartlow, guest eds. 2008. Meridians Journal.

M.I.A. 2007. Kala. (Audio CD).

Trinh, T. Minh-ha. 1990. Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism.

Wong, Elizabeth. 1996. Kimchee and Chitlins: A Serious Comedy about Getting Along.

Additional readings are available on Blackboard.

ACTIVITIES

1. Class Participation - You are expected to contribute regularly to class discussions (both in the classroom and on our Blackboard and Blog online classroom sites), to listen effectively to lectures and to others, and to bring reading materials to class. Due to the contents of this course concerning gender, sexuality, and racial issues, sensitivity and respect for all are a must. Below is a sliding scale on which you can earn points toward participation (maximum 20 points):

- *20 points* = regular and substantial contributions to class and Blackboard discussions, demonstrating both completion and

- comprehension of reading assignments; accumulation of less than 2 unexcused absences, with no latenesses or classroom disruptions.
- *15 points* = sporadic contributions to class and Blackboard discussions, often demonstrating completion of reading assignments, with improvement needed to show comprehension; accumulation of 2-3 unexcused absences, few latenesses or classroom disruptions.
- *10 points* = lack of contribution to class and Blackboard discussions, failure to demonstrate completion and comprehension of reading assignments; accumulation of 3-5 unexcused absences, with regular latenesses and classroom disruptions.
- *5 points* = accumulation of 5-7 unexcused absences or regularly late and disruptive in the classroom; lack of contribution to class and Blackboard discussions, failure to complete reading assignments.
- *0 points* = If you accumulate more than 7 unexcused absences, you will receive no class participation points and will fail the course.

2. Class Blog: I have created a public blog for our course to introduce you to the web 2.0 world of the blogosphere and to experiment with writing for an audience. Each week, students are given an opportunity to sign up and blog about a narrative or theme introduced in said narrative. On Blackboard, you will be given a sign-up sheet, as well as the login and password to participate on our classroom blog. For the most part, each student in this course will post at least one blog entry this semester. The blog post is expected to be a critical writing piece that reflects on the intellectual merit of the topic assigned and that explores elements of the course theme of "feminist narratives and racial politics" within a more contemporary "real world" context. While the blog post is primarily a written text, the blog itself is digital and allows you to incorporate multimedia elements, such as hyperlinks, embedded videos and audio, and images. Any media used in a blog post must be cited, and references to other blogs and websites must be made through a hyperlink. In the event that you are not writing an original blog post, you are expected to post a comment to your classmates' blog entries, since the nature of blogging is conversational. You are required to post comments to such blog entries at least 3 times a month. When you have posted your own blog entry, you are expected to keep track of comments that are posted and to reply to each substantive comment. I will grade these blog posts in terms of both content and the ensuing blog discussion, but I will not be a participant. I will instead draw from these discussions to shape our in-class discussions. If the online discussion from your blog post gets off track, it is your responsibility to refocus it. You are responsible for maintaining the quality of the blog discussion you lead. Every posting to a blog post should add something substantive to that discussion. If no one leaves comments to your blog post, find out why and do something about it! The public space of blogging also means that the discussion is open not only to your classmates but to anyone who comes across our classroom blog.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. transcending silence... Project: The Women's Studies undergraduate e-journal, *transcending silence...*, which is a unique, fully online journal highlighting both research and creative projects by undergraduate students, is seeking submissions for the Spring 2009 issue. For the purposes of this class, you will be expected to create a submission for this issue. There are two requirements for this project:

- Follow the Submission Guidelines of the e-journal: The e-journal welcomes both research essays and creative projects (fiction, video, audio, art, etc.), so you may choose the genre for this project. The e-journal also requires that you follow certain formats for your chosen project and to submit both a hard and digital copy of your project, along with an abstract, personal statement, and a cover letter with your personal information.
- Adapt the Project to Our Course Theme: Whatever your chosen genre for this project, the content must reflect a feminist narrative that addresses intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. The project must also be a response to a particular narrative (or narrative theme) explored in this course. In other words, this project should serve as a counter-narrative to a specific narrative discussed in class. Your project could be an exploration of a historical or current event, a fictional character, a narrative structure, or an adaptation into a different genre, etc.

You will have an opportunity to revise this project. A proposal for this project is due in class on Thursday, **October 2**. The rough draft of the project is due in class on Tuesday, **November 11**. The final draft is to be submitted in the drop box on my office door (Social Science 344) by **Monday, December 15, no later than 12:30 pm**. To encourage peer review, you are expected to post drafts of your project on Blackboard, where indicated, so that your classmates can evaluate your work and provide feedback. Once this semester is ended, you have a choice to submit your project to the e-journal on your own (submissions will be accepted January 30, 2009 and March 20, 2009), but I will be forwarding on to the editorial board projects that earn a B+ or higher (more than 25 points earned).

2. Multimedia Project: This assignment is an opportunity for the entire class to collaborate on a counter-narrative in response to one of our required texts, the novel *Free Enterprise* by Michelle Cliff. First published in 1993, this historical fiction has struggled to remain in print and is often overlooked in curricula that focus on writings by women of color. In devoting a website to this novel, our class will be able to highlight and keep alive, through the multimedia opportunities made available by web 2.0, a multifaceted and complex work of fiction. Each student will work on this project in groups and will be expected to select a certain multimedia presentation to explore certain elements in the novel (i.e. creating a 5-10 minute YouTube video, an image slide show or photo essay, a 5-10 minute audio lecture, spoken word, or original music, or original digital artwork). The multimedia should be accompanied by a 200-250-word (or paragraph-length) overview about the project, and a quote or passage from the novel that connects with the project. Group Proposals are due in class on Tuesday, **October 21**. A storyboard for the project is due in class on Tuesday, **October 28**. We will spend the week of November 18 working on the multimedia project in class, with the final version due on a rewritable CD in class on Tuesday, **November 25**. Detailed instructions for this project are available on Blackboard.

3. Assignment Checklist/Self-Evaluation – designed to help you keep track of your performance in this course, due last day of class, on Thursday, **December 4**; see last page of this syllabus. You stand to lose 5 points from your final grade if you fail to turn this in.

GRADES

ACTIVITIES AND ASSIGNMENTS	POINTS	DUE DATES
Class Participation	20	ongoing
Class Blog	20	ongoing
transcending silence... project	30	Proposal (Oct. 2) Second Draft (Nov. 11) Final Draft (Dec. 15)
Multimedia Project	30	Group Proposal (Oct. 21) Storyboard (Oct. 28) In-class workshop (Nov. 18-20) Final Version (Nov. 25)

Grading Scale:

A = 100-93 B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83 C+ = 79-77 C- = 72-70 E = Below 65
 A- = 92-90 B+ = 89-87 B- = 82-80 C = 76-73 D = 69-65

EXPECTATIONS

You are allowed up to 3 unexcused absences. Excused absences and make-up assignments are only granted in cases of emergency and grave illnesses. If you miss more than your allotted three unexcused absences, you stand to lose significant points from your class participation grade (see the above scale). Please be judicious in how you use your allotted absences and how you monitor your presence in the classroom. Please turn off cell phones (or keep on vibrator alert in cases of "emergency" calls) before class begins.

Late assignments will result in a 5-point reduction for each day late. After two days late, you will receive a "0" for that assignment.

Plagiarism is a university offense and will result in failing grades. First time offense will result in a "0" for your assignment. Second offense will result in a failing grade for the course.

TO AVOID PLAGIARISM:

Understand what it means: plagiarism results when someone uses the ideas or writings of another and presents these ideas or writings as her or his own. Examples include:

1. Buying a paper from a research service or term paper mill.
2. Turning in a paper from a "free term paper" website.
3. Turning in a paper someone else has written for you.
4. Copying materials from a source without proper citation.
5. Using proper citation but leaving out quotation marks.
6. Paraphrasing materials from a source without appropriate citation.

When citing sources, it is best to present ideas using your own original words. If you fully understand a source, you will be able to completely describe its themes and ideas in your own words and from your own perspective. However, if you copy a passage that someone else wrote and only change a few words around, it becomes plagiarism.

When quoting directly from sources, it is best to use direct quotes only if the phrasing is apt and powerfully stated; be sure to include proper citation. If the quote is not revelatory or eloquent but simply provides some useful information, then it is best to explain the information completely in your own words while providing proper citation.

TO AVOID COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT:

Since you will be engaged in digital media production and will possibly work with various media sources, you will need to familiarize yourself with copyright policies on "fair use" of others' creative works. Copyright "fair use" laws allow you to reproduce copyrighted work only if your use of such work is "transformative" of the original or if it contains a small portion of it. It is often difficult to determine the nature of such transformations and portions, so when in doubt, it is safest to seek permission from the copyright owner for free use (if your work is for educational rather than commercial purposes, as is the case for your assignments) or to pay a licensing fee. For more information, please visit Stanford University's website on copyright fair use laws: <http://fairuse.stanford.edu/>

To access royalty free music in the public domain, please visit:
<http://www.freeplaymusic.com>.

EXTRA CREDIT:

You have two opportunities to earn extra credit toward your final grade. You can earn bonus two (2) points for each tutorial that you attend at the Interactive Media Center, which offers free tutorials on various digital media programs that you can use to complete either of your class projects, including workshops on imovie, flash, Photoshop, etc. In the event that your own schedule cannot accommodate the dates listed, please contact the IMC directors, Regina Convoy and Roger Lipera, who can schedule you in for a tutorial at alternative times. The IMC is located in the basement of the main library. You can also earn bonus points by participating in the annual Women's Studies Student Conference, held **December 4-5**. You may choose to present your transcending silence... project at this conference. You can earn 2 points if you submit an abstract (200 words) describing your project to wstudent@albany.edu by **October 31**. You can earn an additional 1 point if you are accepted into the conference and 2 more points if you present at the event, for a total of 5 points.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings on Blackboard are indicated with an asterisk (*).

UNIT ONE – SIGNS AND WONDERS

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Aug. 26 | course overview and introduction: |
| Aug. 28 | Screen: <i>In Whose Honor?</i> (Jay Rosenstein, 1996). |
| Sept. 2 | *Lorri Nandrea, "Graffiti Taught Me Everything I Know about Space";
*Diane Neumaier, "Judy Baca: Our People are the Internal Exiles." |
| Sept. 4 | Screen: <i>The Sign of the Loa</i> (Patricia Mohammed, 2006). |

UNIT TWO – TIME TRAVELS, WORLD TOURS

- Sept. 9 *Gerda Lerner, "Why History Matters"; *Ella Shohat, "Area Studies, Gender Studies, and the Cartographies of Knowledge."
Screen: *History and Memory: For Akiko and Takashige* (Rea Tajiri, 1991).
- Sept. 11 *Arundhati Roy, "Come September"; *Newsgaming.com, "September 12."
- Sept. 16 *Woman, Native, Other*: chapters 1-2.
- Sept. 18 conclusion: chapters 3-4.

UNIT THREE – EMBODIED HISTORIES

- Sept. 23 *Exile and Pride*: Part I.
- Sept. 25 conclusion: Part II.
- Sept. 30 holiday – no class.
- Oct. 2 Screen: *The Body Beautiful* (Ngozi Onwurah, 1991).
Due – transcending silence... project proposal.
- Oct. 7 *Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance";
*Suvendrini Perera, "Claiming Truganini: Australian National Narratives in the Year of Indigenous Peoples."
- Oct. 9 holiday – no class.
- Oct. 14 *Free Enterprise*: chapters 1-3.
- Oct. 16 conclusion: chapter 4.
- Oct. 21 Web Design Workshop: Introduction to Dreamweaver.
Due – Group Proposal for Multimedia Project.
- Oct. 23 Web Design Workshop continued.

UNIT FOUR – WHAT THE MUSIC SAID

- Oct. 28 Screen: *The Language You Cry In* (Alvaro Toepke and Angel Serrano, 1998).
Due – Multimedia Project storyboard.
- Oct. 30 Audio: M.I.A., *Kala*.
- Nov. 4 *Meridians*: Parts I-II.
- Nov. 6 conclusion: Part III.

UNIT FIVE – PUBLIC NARRATIVES

- Nov. 11 Screen: *Maya Lin: A Strong Clear Vision* (Freida Lee Mock, 1995).
Due – Rough Draft of transcending silence... project.
- Nov. 13 continued.
- Nov. 18 Workshop: Multimedia Project.
- Nov. 20 Workshop continued.
- Nov. 25 Presentation: Free Enterprise Multimedia Narrative.
Due - Multimedia Project.
- Nov. 27 holiday – no class.

CONCLUSION

- Dec. 2 *Kimchee and Chitlins.*
- Dec. 4 Course Review.
Due – Assignment Checklist and Self Evaluation.
- Due Dec. 15 – Final Draft of transcending silence... project.

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 many absences did I accumulate? _____. How many of these were excused? _____.
 - c. Was I ever late to class or left early? _____. If so, how often?
_____.
2. Class Blog (20 points)
 - a. How often did I contribute to the classroom blog? _____ /week
_____ /month.
 - b. What cumulative points do I expect to receive for my blog entry and comments? _____.
3. transcending silence... project (30 points)
 - a. What points did I receive for my proposal? _____.
 - b. Did I submit an earlier draft before completing the project? _____.
 - c. What points do I expect to receive for my project? _____.
4. Multimedia Project (30 points)
 - a. What points did we receive for our proposal? _____.
 - b. What points did we receive for our storyboard? _____.
 - c. What cumulative points did we receive for our project? _____.
 - d. Did we lose any points for lateness on this assignment? _____. If so, how many? _____.
5. Extra Credit
 - a. Will I earn bonus points for participating in the annual Women's Studies student conference? _____ If so, how many? _____.
 - b. Which IMC workshops did I attend and when?

EXPECTED TOTAL POINTS: _____

EXPECTED GRADE: _____

Your Name

Your Signature

Date