ENG 315: Women Writers and Cultures: 20th Century (Literary) Forms of Protest, Spring 2011
MW 2:00-3:20pm, Pacific 16, CRN 32529

Instructor: Dr. Britta Spann
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Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30-5:00

Required
Brooks, Gwendolyn, Blacks
Butler, Octavia, Kindred
Carson, Anne, Autobiography of Red
Stein, Gertrude, Three Lives and Tender Buttons

Course Packet (You may print copies of the course packet readings from Blackboard. I am currently working to find other ways to make printed copies of these readings readily available.)

Course Description
The twentieth century, arriving on the heels of major scientific breakthroughs and rapid industrialization, brought with it the opportunity for great social progress, as the success of the women’s suffrage movement and various civil rights movements in the 1900s demonstrates. A similarly progressive spirit can be seen in the literature of the twentieth century. The spirit of protest pervades modern and contemporary literature. Authors and poets from underrepresented groups recorded their experiences of racism, sexism, and heterocentrism to condemn these forces and to call for change, and for the first time in literary history, they have been able to find a receptive audience. But how did these writers create a space for themselves in literary history? Literary forms and traditions were set and enforced by privileged white men, and these conventions were used to exclude women and writers of color. For example, the epic, a long and majestic poetic form that records the history of a particular culture, was off limits for women; not only were women considered too feeble to write such long and complex poems but they were also confined to the domestic sphere, cloistered away from the world of history, politics, and public life. What are writers to do with the conventions that have impaired them for millennia? This course will explore the ways that women have dealt with literary conventions forged and perpetuated by a hostile dominant culture. We will examine a variety of forms and traditions to see how women have transformed them from instruments of exclusion to tools for protest.

Grading and Assignments:

Close Reading Assignment 10%
A three page essay that makes an argument about an assigned poem or excerpt and supports its claims with close reading: in-depth analysis of the text. In essence, you will make a claim then explain how the text supports your claim, paying attention not only to what the text says but also how it says it. Our discussions throughout the quarter will model close reading skills.

Presentation 10%
Presentations will cover either a literary form or a literary period and should be approximately 10-15 minutes long. Together with your group, you will define the term/period, identify its major conventions, provide a brief discussion of a canonical/exemplary text, then guide the class into a discussion of how our readings engage with the conventions of the form/period. To facilitate your presentation, you need to provide the class with a handout that offers: a definition and overview of the form/literary period and its conventions, an example of an emblematic text (a short poem or a summary and excerpt from a longer work) with brief notes about how it
embodies the conventions, some ideas about how our texts relate to those conventions, and a few discussion questions. I will make the first presentation of the quarter so that you can see what I am looking for. I highly recommend that you meet with me during office hours or make an appointment to discuss your presentation; I have several books that could be useful resources, and I am happy to make suggestions, give advice, and/or point you in the direction of people who have expertise in your presentation topic.

Midterm 15%
This exam will assess your knowledge and comprehension of the literary forms, conventions, and periods we have discussed, gauge your understanding of lecture material and the carefulness of your reading, and test your ability to analyze texts. Expect short answer, definition, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions that require close reading.

Final Exam 30%
Cumulative exam following the same format as the midterm.

Research Paper 35%
An essay of between six and eight pages that will make an original interpretive argument about a text or texts that will (a) rely on close reading to support its claims, (b) consider the role of convention in the creation of meaning in the text(s), and (c) engage with current critical literature about the text. The research paper will be broken down as follows:
- Abstract 5%
- Six Item Annotated Bibliography 5%
- Final Draft 25%

Policies

Attendance
I do not take attendance, count absences, or give pop quizzes. I believe that you should be in class because you want to be, not because I am holding your grade hostage. As such, I can only assume that a person who rarely attends class is not invested in learning. I am less likely to grant extensions for such students. So, while I don’t take attendance and don’t necessarily need to know when and why you are missing class, I do recommend that you speak with me if there is a circumstance beyond your control that causes you to miss a lot of class. If I know that you’re invested in the class but simply having a rough time, I can try to help you.

Class Cancellation
Should I need to cancel class for any reason, I will send an email via Blackboard to the class at least two hours ahead of time. I will also arrange to have a note posted on our classroom door, just in case. Even if I cancel class, assignments are still due on the due dates listed in the syllabus.

Email
Answering emails is one of the biggest drains on my time. It is important to me to be able to respond to your questions and concerns and to have enough time to prep for class, grade, and so forth. To keep that logistically feasible, I do not respond to emails that can be answered by reading your syllabus. I also do not answer emails that are unprofessional and impolite. Follow the rules of professionalism: use a salutation (“Hello Dr. Spann”), use correct grammar and spelling, be courteous, do not demand things (i.e. avoid “write back as soon as you get this,” “tell me my grade,” and the like), and so forth. Ignoring these emails means that people who have legitimate reasons for emailing me (scheduling appointments, informing me of extenuating circumstances, asking for clarification on instructions) get responses in a timely manner. Please note: a “timely manner” means within 48 hours (72 hours on weekends). I am not
at my computer 24/7, so it is unreasonable to expect me to respond to your email within a few hours. If you are proactive, you should not find yourself in a situation where you need an answer “right away.”

Extensions
Life happens. We get sick, unfortunate and tragic things happen, and sometimes we simply get overwhelmed with the amount of work facing us. I am always happy to grant brief extensions for students who are clearly invested in the class (see “attendance” above) but unable to do their best work due to life circumstances. If you need an extension, you need to contact me at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.

Formatting
All written work should BE STAPLED, have one-inch margins all around, be double-spaced, and be written in an acceptable academic font (Times New Roman, Courier, Arial). You must use a 12 point font for all writing, including your title. Center your title but do not use bold face, italics, or put quotation marks around it. Use MLA formatting for citations. If you foresee that you will have difficulties meeting these requirements, for any reason, please see me before the assignment is due. I reserve the right to refuse work that is improperly formatted. If your work is refused for formatting reasons, your grade will be penalized one letter grade and will be due by 5pm the next day.

Late Work
No late work will be accepted. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you are still expected to turn your work in on time. If a hard copy of an assignment is due, put it under my office door or (if you cannot make it to campus) email it to me by the deadline. Exceptions can be made for extenuating circumstances, but you must see or contact me immediately if something happens which prevents you from completing an assignment on time.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty
All work submitted in this course must be your own and be written exclusively for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly documented. You can consult the MLA Handbook or any general handbook for academic writing for a definition of plagiarism and information on documentation and refer to the Student Conduct Code on the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards website:

In cases where academic dishonesty has been clearly established, the award of an F for the final course grade is the standard practice of the English Department. Please see me if you have any questions about your use of sources.

Texts
Many of our texts are poems and short stories from various sources. These texts will be on Blackboard. YOU MUST PRINT OUT AND BRING TO CLASS THE TEXTS POSTED ON BLACKBOARD. I am taking a leap of faith and not giving open-book pop quizzes in an attempt to “get” people who come to class unprepared. IF, HOWEVER, I FIND THAT PEOPLE ARE NOT PRINTING OUT TEXTS TO BRING TO CLASS, I WILL IMPOSE A PENALTY AND RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DO SO. Most likely, I will begin giving open-book pop quizzes and have the grades be part of your midterm and/or final exam. I have kept the textbook costs of this class under $50 to make up for the cost of printing. Please prove to me that I’ve done the right thing by not having you purchase each and every text we read.
Universal Access
If you have a disability (physical, learning, psychological, or otherwise), medical condition, life circumstance, or anything else, really, that you think may affect your performance in this class, please see me during the first week of the term so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities.

Schedule of Assignments (Note: schedule is subject to change due to problems with textbook availability at the time of the writing of this syllabus)

Week 1
Monday: Introduction to course
Wednesday: “The Gender of Sound” (BB)

Week 2
Monday: Stein “Melanctha” Term: Modernism
Wednesday: “Melanctha” cont’d

Week 3
Monday: “Feminist Manifesto,” “Futurist Manifesto,” “Love Song to Johannes” Term: Futurism
Wednesday: “Imagist Manifesto,” H.D. poems, Term: Imagism

Week 4
Wednesday: Sonnets, Term: Sonnet

Close Reading Assignment due under my office door Friday by 5:00pm

Week 5
Monday: Midterm Exam
Wednesday: selections from “A Street in Bronzeville” and “The Bean Eaters,” Term: Ballad

Week 6
Monday: selections from Annie Allen, Term: Epic: literary conventions and the role of heroism and nationalism
Wednesday: “Riders to the Blood-red Wrath,” selections from “In the Mecca,” Term: Black Arts Movement

Research Paper Proposal due under my office door Friday by 5pm

Week 7
Wednesday: Butler, “Prologue,” “The River,” “The Fire” Term: Science Fiction

Annotated Bibliography due under my office door Friday by 5pm

Week 8
Monday: Butler, “The Fall,” “The Fight” Term: Slave Narrative
Wednesday: Butler, “The Storm,” “The Rope,” “Epilogue”

Week 9
Monday: “The Cariboo Café,” “Janus,” “People Like That Are the Only People Here: Canonical Babblings in Peed Onk” (BB) Term: Postmodernism
Wednesday: Autobiography of Red, beginning-64, Term: Hybridity (as applied to literature)

Research Paper due under my office door Friday by 5pm

Week 10
Monday: Memorial Day holiday
Wednesday: Autobiography of Red, 64-end; Emily Dickinson poems (BB)

Final Exam: Monday, June 6th, 3:15pm