

WOMENSST 391W Writing for Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Majors

Meeting Time and Place:	Tues 2:30-5pm
Instructor:	Miliann Kang
Office:	Bartlett 73 (basement in wing near Goodell)
Office Hours:	Tues and Thurs 1-2pm & by appointment
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Course Description

What is feminist writing? What makes writing feminist? What are the most important writing skills, practices and sensibilities for WGSS students to learn, understand and master? Are there universal standards for what constitutes good writing? Why or why not? Who gets to decide? How does gender shape writing and how it is interpreted by different audiences? How does gender intersect with race, class, sexuality, nationality, ability and other social identities and structures to influence modes of writing and their reception? Why do some people write fluidly and frequently while others write only under duress or deadlines? How can feminist approaches to writing give voice to more diverse writing and writers?

In addressing the above questions, we will explore feminist writing theory and practice and apply them to research, analysis, public debate, creative work, and a variety of professional fields. You will have the opportunity to analyze texts, formulate proposals, conduct research, investigate archival and bibliographic resources, narrate life histories, write blogs and op-eds, and explore your creative voice. You will also gain skills in assessing and critiquing various forms of writing. An emphasis will be placed on the process of writing and developing sound writing practices, which include a strong awareness of the relevance of audience, purpose and voice with regard to specific types of writing. This course fulfills the Junior Year Writing requirement for WGSS majors.

Course Requirements

- Regular attendance and active, informed participation in the seminar is required. An attendance sheet will be circulated at the beginning of class.
- Reading assignments must be completed BEFORE the class period for which they are assigned.
- Exercises and on-going writing assignments must be completed on time. Depending on the assignment, this can mean before, during or after the seminar period for which they are assigned. So pay attention to the instructions. These assignments are required, not optional.
- In-class writing is a requirement in this seminar. You may be requested to submit some of these pieces of writing at the end of class. Some of these will be read and commented on by peers.

Peer responses should be constructive and respectful. With this understanding of shared writing, students should decide for themselves what topics they feel comfortable writing about and how they wish to explore these topics. It is the responsibility of everyone to foster as safe a space as possible for people to challenge themselves and take risks in their writing.

- We will follow all university policies on issues of Academic Honesty, Grading, Attendance, Examinations, and Absences due to Religious Observance.
- You are responsible for knowing when assignments are due and handing them in on time. Dates of major writing assignments are below.

Summary of Assignments and Due Dates (hard copies due at beginning of class)

• Attendance and Participation (Ongoing):	20%
• Exercises, In-class and On-line Assignments (Ongoing):	15%
• Life Writing (Due October 1):	15%
• Blog or Op-Ed (Due October 29):	15%
• Prospectus for Final Project (Due November 12):	10%
▪ Final Portfolio: Analytical Paper OR Research Proposal OR Creative Work AND Final Course Reflection (Due Dec 5 by 4pm, hard copy in my mailbox):	25%

Attendance and Participation **20%**

Attendance and participation in the seminar is required. You are expected to contribute to the discussion, and to support your colleagues in participating as well. You are also expected to participate in and complete all in-class exercises and homework exercises that are assigned and to collaborate fully in collaborative projects. Because we only meet once a week, each class session is important and any unexcused absences will result in your grade being marked down. Non-attendance will result in an “F” in the course. For an excused absence you must: 1) provide an official note excusing your absence; 2) submit a 2-3 page reflection paper based on the readings or film assigned for that week, due at the beginning of the next class; and 3) complete any exercises assigned for that class period, due at the beginning of the next class. If you know that for extenuating circumstances you will need to miss a class, please let me know in advances as it is always helpful in terms of planning the seminar.

Exercises, In-class and On-line Writing – Ongoing **15%**

This is a writing-intensive course and you can expect some form of brief writing in most class sessions. Instead of having a few “high-stakes” assignments which tend to breed paralysis and binge writing, these “low-stakes” in-class and out-of-class writing assignments are designed to be fun and exploratory and to foster regular, consistent writing practices,. Nonetheless, cumulatively, these

exercises make up a significant part of your final grade. Some of the writing that you do will be submitted for review by your peers, by myself or by the TA for the course. Completing these tasks on time is of high priority. We will work on writing exercises in class and you will have the chance to review and revise them. Details of topics and assignments will be posted online and discussed in class. If you miss a seminar, check Moodle to see if anything had to be turned in during that class. You must submit the writing exercise within 24 hours of a missed class. Failure to do so will disrupt the flow of the seminar as everyone's participation is integral. If you are unable to do so due to extenuating circumstances it is your responsibility to communicate and document the reason and to negotiate an alternative arrangement.

Life Writing (1000 to 1500 Words): Due October 1 **15%**

This assignment will ask you to explore your own life experiences. You can choose one life event or a theme, period, activity or process on which to focus. In writing about the meaning of this experience, you will demonstrate your understanding of authentic voice, narrative construction and reflexive analysis of your social location and how it shapes your views.

Blog or Op-Ed: (750-1000 words) Due October 29 **15%**

You will be given a choice of current news topics to choose from and you will write an opinion piece that demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the issues and recommendations for how to address them. You will be expected to express your opinion, make a clear argument and employ strategies of effective persuasion and knowledge dissemination. This piece will demand that you be both concise and precise in your writing as writing in the public sphere demands clarity and accessibility. You will receive extra credit for actually posting or submitting your piece for publication.

Prospectus for Final Project: Due November 12 **10%**

You will pick one of the three options for the Final Project outlined below and you will provide an abstract, outline, and steps and schedule for completion.

***Final Project Portfolio: 1) Analytical Paper OR Research Proposal OR Creative Work
AND 2) Final Course Reflection Due Dec 5 by 4pm, hard copy in my mailbox*** **25%**

You will pick ONE of the following three choices for the final project: (all should be 1500-2500 words)

- 1) Analytical Paper - You will pick an issue in feminist writing (eg. Asserting an authentic voice; assessing audience response; translating from academic to popular writing). Drawing from both assigned readings and your own research of texts, you will describe the issue,

provide examples, analyze various approaches and arguments, and assert your own interpretation of the significance and stakes of this issue for feminist scholarship and activism.

- 2) Research Proposal – You will design a plan for researching an issue in feminist writing (eg. What aspects of writing do WGSS students struggle the most with, and why? What kind of biases arise when audiences read feminist texts?) You will make the case for why this research project is important, how you would carry it out, and what new knowledge it would contribute to understanding issues in feminist writing.
- 3) Creative Work- You will explore issues and themes in feminist writing through fiction, poetry, performance, video or other creative forms. You will then write a short analytical piece connecting your creative work to readings and themes in the course.

Whichever option you pick, you will also write a final course reflection (750-1000 words) discussing which themes in the course most spoke to you and how your exploration of these themes has changed your own writing and/or understanding of the writing process.

General Course Policies

HARD COPIES of papers are due at the beginning of class on the assigned deadlines. They should be printed in 12 pt font, stapled, proofread and have proper citations and bibliography in APA format.

INCOMPLETES will not be given except in documented circumstances of health or family emergency.

LATE PAPER POLICY – late assignments will be marked down (10% for each day they are late). Deadlines for in-class or on-line exercises will be announced and assignments handed in more than 24 hours after the deadlines will not receive credit. Paper assignments will not be accepted after a week past the deadline.

RESPONDING TO EMAIL: I aim to respond to questions sent by email within 48 hours on weekdays. Please do not expect a response on the weekend. Please make use of office hours to ask questions in person. You can also use your colleagues and the TA as resources.

RETURN of SUBMITTED WORK: We will do a significant amount of collaborative and peer review. Some will be commented upon more heavily than others, depending on how we have ‘workshopped’ them in class. We will have a TA for the course who will assist with grading.

STUDENT COLLABORATION: I encourage you to exchange ideas and discuss course readings and assignments with each other. However, all written work must be your own and you must give appropriate credit to any relevant sources, properly cited using APA format.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Plagiarism will result in failing the class and will be referred to the Academic Honesty Board. Ignorance of academic honesty policies is not an excuse for violating them. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated and you are responsible for educating

yourself about the University's official policy on academic honesty. Following is a summary (you can read it in full at: http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/code_conduct/acad_honest.htm)

If an instructor finds that a student has violated the University's Academic Honesty Policy, the instructor has the right to lower the student's grade, or even to fail the student for the course. Students have the right to appeal such a grade penalty by an instructor. The University Academic Honesty Board, which must be notified by instructors of any grade penalty, reviews all student appeals. The Board may sustain or recommend modification of the penalty given by the faculty member, or may recommend sanctions exceeding those originally given, such as suspension or expulsion from the University. The Board may also recommend sanctions for offenders who have committed multiple violations of the Academic Honesty Policy but who have not appealed the faculty members' decisions. The Updated Student Academic Regulations can be read at: <http://www.umass.edu/registrar/media/academicregs.pdf>

ACCOMMODATIONS: Please let me know as early as possible if you require accommodations due to illness or disability and make sure to coordinate with other university offices as necessary.

READINGS will be posted on Moodle. I have also ordered the book *Unstuck: A Supportive and Practical Guide to Working Through Writer's Block* By Jane Anne Staw, (St Martin's) from Amherst Books (please support your local bookstores and buy from them if at all possible). We will use this book for writing prompts and practices to support fluid writing.

COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS (I reserve the right to make changes as appropriate. Any changes will be announced -please refer to Moodle for updates.)

Tentative Course Schedule

<i>Week & Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment</i>
Week 1 – Sept. 3	Course Introduction: What is Feminist Writing?	
Week 2 – Sept. 10	Locating Feminist Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moraga, Cherrie. <i>Waiting in the Wings</i> • Lorde, Audre. <i>The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House</i> • Elbow, Peter, <i>Everyone Can Write.</i> • Homework Assignment: Select, read and bring to class an example of feminist writing that you find in the public sphere (newspapers, blogs, etc.). Be prepared to discuss: 1) where you found the piece; 2) why you chose it and why it speaks to you; and 3) what is feminist about it?

Week 3 – Sept. 17	Theorizing Feminist Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grosz, E. Sexual Signatures • Weston, K. Theory, Theory, Who’s got the Theory • Lutz, C. The erasure of women's writing in sociocultural anthropology
Week 4 - Sept. 24	Life Writing/ Narratives of Self	
Week 5 – Oct. 1	Guest Lecturer Banu Subramaniam: Writing as Inter/Disciplinary Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Writing Assignment Due at Beginning of Class
Week 5 - Oct. 8	Blogging and Online Writing	
Week 6 – Oct. 15	Mon. schedule – No Class	
Week 7 – Oct. 22	Writing as Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerson, Robert. Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes • Emerson, Robert. Coding and Memoing
Week 8 - Oct. 29	Analytical Writing: Abstracts and Executive Summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog/Op-Ed Assignment Due at Beginning of Class
Week 9 - Nov. 5	Analytical Writing: Proposals (Conferences, Grants, Applications, Awards, etc.)	
Week 10 – Nov. 12	Analytical Writing: Forms of Argumentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospectus due at beginning of class
Week 11 - Nov. 19	Speaking to Multiple Audiences	
Week 12 – Nov. 25	Transforming Writing	
Week 13 – Dec. 3	Future Directions, Wrap-up and Evaluations	Final Portfolio due Thurs Dec 5 by 4p – hard copy in my office