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Office Hours: Tuesday 10am -12pm or by appointment

WGSS 310 – Junior Year Writing
T/Th 4:00-5:15 | South College Room W205

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 is it 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? How can feminist approaches to writing give voice to more diverse writing and writers?

We will address the above questions in relation to research, analysis, public debate, creative work, and a variety of professional fields. In doing so, we will explore feminist writing in theory and practice. 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.

Books:

Required:

- Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* [Available as e-book through the library]

Optional (I will provide PDFs of the sections we are going to read together):

- Wayne C. Booth et al., *The Craft of Research* 4th Edition

All other material will be made available to you online.

Summary of Requirements and Due Dates

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| • Participation (ongoing) | 15% |
| • Small assignments online and in-class (ongoing) | 15% |
| • Theorizing from Experience Essay (10/3 by noon) | 10% |
| • Blog or Op-Ed (10/17 by noon) | 10% |
| • Annotated Bibliography (noon 11/5, end of day 11/20) | 10% |
| • Analysis Paper (end of day 11/20) | 10% |
| • Final Project Proposal (in class 12/11) | 10% |
| • Final Project (end of day 12/19) | 20% |

Requirements [All assignments should be posted to Moodle]:

- ***Participation (15%)***

This is a small, discussion based course, so your participation is vital to making it function. There are many ways to be engaged and many styles of participation. But, at minimum, I expect that you: come to class, be on time, bring in requested materials, do the reading and be ready to discuss it, and participate in in-class discussions and activities to the best of your ability. I recognize that some students have trouble speaking up in class due to shyness, language barriers, processing speeds, and so on. Because public speaking is a useful skill, I encourage you to push yourself to participate verbally. However, if the above describes you and you are worried that it will negatively affect my evaluation of you, come to my office hours and we will work out how you might use writing to supplement your participation grade. Additionally, we will be coming up with a set of ‘rules of engagement’ together, which will set out our collective expectations regarding what it looks like to participate *well*.

- ***Small assignments online and in-class (15%)***

This is a writing-intensive course and you can expect that we will do some form of writing most class sessions. As a supplement to the more formal “high-stakes” assignments, these “low-stakes” in-class and out-of-class writing assignments are designed to be exploratory, to foster consistent writing habits, to encourage regular reflection, and to develop your writerly ‘voice.’ Many of them will be designed to give you a head-start on some of the larger assignments. If you miss a class, check Moodle to see if anything had to be turned in on that day. Although these assignments won’t be formally graded, your overall grade will suffer if you don’t complete these tasks in a timely manner.

- ***Theorizing from Experience Essay (10%)***

For this 2-4 page piece, you will be asked to reflect on the meaning of your own life experience in relation to one of the themes covered in class. I will provide you with a more detailed assignment sheet closer to the due date. Keep in mind: you will receive credit for this assignment based on timely completion, not “quality,” and we will workshop these pieces in class on 10/4.

- ***Blog Post or Op-Ed (10%)***

For this 1-3 page piece, you will be asked to choose a current news topic and write an opinion piece that demonstrates in-depth knowledge of the issues and recommendations for how to address them. I will provide you with a more detailed assignment sheet closer to the due date. Keep in mind: you

will receive credit for this assignment based on timely completion, not “quality,” and we will workshop these pieces in class on 10/16.

- ***Annotated Bibliography (10%)***

During our “Research” section, you will be asked to compile a list of at least eight sources that you might use to address your proposed research question. Once you have identified your sources, you must create a properly formatted bibliography and, beneath each entry, provide a short account of why this source is important to read for your research. I will provide you with a more detailed assignment sheet closer to the due date. Keep in mind: you will receive credit for this assignment based on timely completion, not “quality.” A first draft will be due on 11/5 and a revised draft will be due appended to your Analysis Paper on 11/20.

- ***Analysis Paper (10%)***

For this 3-5 page piece, you will be asked to identify a primary source related to your research question and perform a close, careful analysis of it, making use of what you have learned in your research. I will provide you with a more detailed assignment sheet closer to the due date. Keep in mind: you will receive credit for this assignment based on timely completion, not “quality,” and we will workshop these pieces in class throughout our “Revision” section.

- ***Final Project + Proposal (30%)***

Toward the end of the semester, you will each hand in a final paper proposal that 1) outlines the paper you plan to write, 2) identifies the sources with which you plan to engage, and 3) gives a narrative account of *why* this paper. We will workshop these proposals in much the same way as we workshop your previous papers. The paper itself should be a 8-10 page essay that builds on one of the previous assignments. For example, you might write a paper that expands your analysis paper into a full research paper. You might substantially rewrite/expand a paper from a previous course. I am also open to—and encourage!—creative final projects, but these must be discussed with me well in advance of the end of term. There are many ways to approach this project, so we will talk about both the paper and the proposal in class as the semester winds down.

Policies:

- ***Absences***

Again, this is a small, discussion based class, so it going smoothly depends on your showing up to each class meeting. However, because I understand that sometimes things come up, you are allowed *two* absences, no questions asked. Any additional absences will have to be cleared with me, in advance, or they will negatively affect your participation grade.

- ***Late Work***

Because of the structure of this class, I generally will not accept late assignments. If you suspect that you are going to have trouble meeting a particular deadline, please speak with me at least 48 hours in advance. If you are having trouble with the work for the course, I recommend taking advantage of the many resources available to you well before any deadlines. Come to my office hours, visit the Writing Center (<https://www.umass.edu/writingcenter/>), or make an

appointment with Kate Litterer (www.wgsswritingtutor.com / wgsswritingtutor@gmail.com), who is the department-specific writing tutor for WGSS.

- ***Accessibility***

I assume that we all have different learning needs, many of which don't fall under the official rubric of disability. Our first in-class writing assignment is intended to provide you with a space to articulate your learning needs, and I will do my best to accommodate them. I also assume that brains and bodies change overtime, so if you find that you are having trouble, please come talk to me and I will be happy to help you find ways to succeed, which may or may not mean making use of the resources available at Disability Services (<https://www.umass.edu/disability/>). However, if you have, or think you have, a disability which will require accommodation in this or other courses, I recommend setting up an appointment with Disability Services sooner rather than later.

Please Note: Some of the texts considered in this course contain sexually explicit material and discussions of (sexual) violence. Because these are both unavoidable and central to the intellectual content of the course, I urge you to speak with me at the beginning of the term if you feel this will be a problem.

- ***Communication***

With a few exceptions, all course material—including reading, assignment prompts, and updates—will be posted to Moodle. Therefore, please check Moodle regularly, and consult it first if you have a question. That said, I do welcome appropriate email inquiries, and will do my best to get back to you within 24-48 hours. If you have complex questions that require complex answers—i.e. “Is this an appropriate paper topic?” “How do I boost my participation grade?”—I urge you to come to my office hours or schedule an appointment to talk face-to-face.

Course Schedule

Introductions

9/4 Go over syllabus; in-class writing assignment

9/6 Reading: 1) Audre Lorde, “Poetry is not a Luxury”
2) Alexander Chee, “On Becoming an American Writer”
Assignments Due: Short Personal Writing History (post to Moodle)
Bring a piece of your writing to class

What is Feminist Writing?

9/11 Reading: Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, 1-42

Assignment Due: Locate an example of feminist writing (bring hard copy & post to Moodle)

- 9/13 Reading: Ahmed, *Living A Feminist Life*, 235-268
Assignment Due: What's in your toolkit? (post to Moodle)
- 9/18 Reading: 1) Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"
2) Barbara Johnson, "Muteness Envy"
- 9/20 Reading: 1) Sara Ahmed, "An Affinity of Hammers"
2) Combahee River Collective Statement
Assignment Due: Short Response Paper (post to Moodle)

Theorizing from Experience

- 9/25 Reading: 1) *Living A Feminist Life*, 43-64
2) Susan Stryker, Susan Stryker, "My Words To Victor Frankenstein Above The Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage"
- 9/27 Reading: 1) Joan Scott, "The Evidence of Experience"
2) Christina Crosby, *A Body, Undone*, Chapters 1-3 [whole book available as e-book through library]
- 10/2 Reading: 1) Crosby, *A Body, Undone*, Chapters 6, 7, 10, 17, 18

Theorizing from Experience Essays due to Moodle by noon 10/3

- 10/4 Workshop Day – come to class having read your classmates' essays

Audience/Voice

- 10/11 Reading: "Thinking in Print" and "Connecting with Your Reader" from *The Craft of Research*
Assignment due: Blog / Op-Ed example (post to Moodle)
- 10/16 Reading: Lisa Duggan, "The Full Catastrophe"
Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity"
*Reading likely to change

Blog post due to Moodle by noon 10/17

- 10/18 Workshop Day – come to class having read your classmates' posts

Research

- 10/23 *Developing Research Questions*
Reading: "From Topics to Questions" and "From Questions to a Problem," *Craft of Research*
Assignment: Develop two potential research topics / questions (post to Moodle)
- 10/25 Reading: "From Problems to Sources" *Craft of Research*
Library Visit – Meet in lobby of WEB Dubois Library

10/30 *Following the trail*
Reading: “Engaging Sources” *Craft of Research*
Assignment: Bring at least one book from our library visit to class

11/1 *Subjects Objects*
Reading: 1) Judith Stacey, “Can There be a Feminist Ethnography?”
2) Ann duCille, “The Short Happy Life of Black Feminist Theory”

Annotated Bibliography draft due to Moodle by end of day 11/5

Citation

11/6 *Summary / Quoting*
Reading: “Incorporating Sources” *Craft*

11/8 *Engaging your Sources*
Reading: “Making Good Arguments,” “Assembling Reasons and Evidence” *Craft*

11/13 *The technicalities*
Assignment: Proper Documentation (post to Moodle and bring to class)

11/15 *Feminist Citation?*
Reading: *Living a Feminist Life*, 115-162 (re-read pages 15-17 also)

Analysis Paper + Revised Bib Due by end of day 11/20
I recommend turning it in before you leave for break!

Revision (Workshop Weeks)

11/27 *Sentence-level*
Reading: “Revising Style” *Craft*

11/29 *Paragraph-level*
Reading: “Organizing Your Argument” and “Introductions and Conclusions” *Craft*

12/4 *Essay-level*
Reading: Your peers’ revised papers

12/6 *Meta-level / What’s the politics of that?*
Reading: TBA

Wrap Up

12/11 Final paper proposals due / discussed in class

Final project due to Moodle by 11:59 on 12/19