



“To write as if your life depended on it; to write across the chalkboard, putting up there in public the words you have dredged; sieved up in dreams, from behind screen memories, out of silence— words you have dreaded and needed in order to know you exist.”

— Adrienne Rich

WGSS 293J/CompLit 293J: Gender and Global Literatures

3 Course Credits

Fall 2020

Instructor: Sandra Russell (she/her/hers)

T/Th 4:00 PM-5:15 PM (via Zoom)

Zoom Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30PM and by appointment

Course Description

Using the prism of gender and sexuality studies, this course explores the discursive concept of desire, subjectivity, and belonging through comparative representations of gendered, racialized, and sexualized bodies in contemporary works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and criticism. We will look at both the “local,” in the United States, and the “global,” in transnational contexts, including literatures from East/Central Europe and the Global South. We will, moreover, consider how bodies and their literary representations shape and are shaped by our imaginings about nation, citizenship, and belonging.

Class Philosophy

Learning is a process, both individual and collective. We come to this course with different backgrounds and experiences, yet we are all moving through it together. Though we acquire information, arrive at insights, and develop skills at our own pace, learning is inescapably interdependent. For this reason, we will proceed with respect and patience for each other, especially when we disagree.

Course Objectives:

- To gain exposure to some of the most striking and thought-provoking works of literatures in a global context
- To engage with critical secondary sources in women’s, gender, and sexuality studies and think about their relationships to the text(s)

- To gain confidence, experience, and poise as a public speaker
- To gain experience working through collaborative projects
- To refine your writing skills through a variety of writing exercises
- To insist on the necessary relationship between literature, theory, and the lived experiences of bodies

Class Policies:

- Please arrive on time, prepared, and stay for the entire class period. If you need to leave early, let me know ahead of time either by email or before class.
- Please remain engaged during class.
- Please pay attention to due dates for assignments and upload them to Moodle in a timely manner. **If, for some reason, you are unable to meet a deadline, please get in touch with me.** I am a person, I understand that things happen, but I can't help you unless you communicate with me.
- **Keep up the readings and come prepared to discuss them.**

Required Texts:

Zabuzhko, Oksana. *Fieldwork in Ukrainian Sex*, Amazon Crossing, 2011. ISBN: 978-1611090086

Lorde, Audre. *Zami*, Crossing Press, 1982. ISBN: 978-0895941220

Dangarembga, Tsitsi. *Nervous Conditions*, Ayeibia Clarke Publishing, 2004. ISBN: 978-0954702335

Optional (I will provide the selections, but if you want a hard copy/the whole thing I encourage you to purchase!)

Machado, Carmen Maria. *Her Body and Other Parties* (selections), Graywolf Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1555977887

Ugrešić, Dubravka. *American Fictionary* (selections), Open Letter, 2018. ISBN: 978-1940953847

Academic Honesty

Although students are free to study and work together with other students in this course, it is expected that all written work that is turned in will be completed solely by the student whose name is on the work. Furthermore, students must always cite sources that they are using in their written work in order to give credit to the sources for any ideas or observations that they are referencing. This is in keeping with the principles of academic honesty that are followed at this University, and any violations of these standards will be handled according to the University policies. For more information concerning the University's academic honesty policy, please see: <https://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

Accommodations:

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If a student has a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services (DS), Learning Disability Support Services (LDSS), or

Psychological Disabilities Services (PDS), they may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. Any student with a documented disability that requires an accommodation must notify the instructor, if possible within the first two weeks of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Please visit the University's website for more details about student's rights for accommodations at: <https://www.umass.edu/disability/students/accommodations-students>

Title IX and mandated reporting

WGSS classes are a place where issues of sexual violence and other sexual misconduct are discussed as a matter of course. It's not a taboo subject, and feminists have long worked to develop theory and activism around sexualized violence, including rape, dating violence, child sexual abuse, and the like. If you want to discuss your own personal experiences of sexual violence in a class, we don't consider that a "report" covered by Title IX (although if you want faculty help and support in reporting sexual violence, we are here to help you do that). Other available resources on campus for addressing sexual violence include both confidential and non-confidential resources—non-confidential resources will keep your concerns private but will report your concerns to the Title IX coordinator, or, the Dean of Students Office who will provide you with different options to assist you. Confidential resources will keep your concerns confidential and will provide you support, assistance in addressing safety concerns as well as other services such as providing you with an advocate. The resources can be found at www.umass.edu/titleix

Grading Breakdown:

- Attendance and Participation: 20%
- Autobiography/Biomythography (2-3 pages): 10 %
- 2 Short Responses (2-3 pages): 20% (10% each)
- Presentation: 15%
- Discussion leading: 10%
- Final Project (7-8 pages): 20%
- Attend an Event related to the class (via Zoom/online): 5%

Grading Scale:

A	(100%-93%)	C	(76%-73%)
A-	(92%-90%)	C-	(72%-70%)
B+	(89%-87%)	D+	(69%-67%)
B	(86%-83%)	D	(66%-63%)
B-	(82%-80%)	D-	(62%-60%)
C+	(79%-77%)	F	(59% and below)

Class Attendance & Participation (20%):

As it is part of your grade, I will take attendance for each of our meetings. Our class discussions are prepared with your learning in mind, so please inform me in advance if you expect to be late or absent. In the event of an absence, do obtain notes from a classmate to review what you missed, and if you have further questions, come to my office hours.

Autobiography/Biomythography (10%)

As we are reading Audre Lorde's *Zami*, which she refers to as a "biomythography," I want us to play with this genre a bit as a way of thinking about our own embodied relationships to the world. While you are welcome to write a simple autobiographical essay, I welcome you to explore this genre and try out the notion of a "biomythography," bringing in fictional or mythological elements. I will provide more information and criteria for this in advance of the deadline.

Short Responses (20% total):

You will be expected to write two short reading responses (2-3 pages, double spaced, 12pt Times New Roman font) relating to some of the texts we will be covering over the course of the semester. This response is intended to generate ideas about the materials and concepts discussed in class. The goal is to encourage reading, critical thinking, and to work through some of the complicated ideas the authors present. You may also use these short responses to brainstorm for the final paper/project. All reading responses should be submitted online through Moodle.

Presentation (15%):

You will sign up to give one presentation (10-15 minutes) on one of the authors or books we are reading this semester. It can be about anything related to the author or the text we are reading, but the goal is to bring greater complexity and nuance to our thinking and reading. I encourage you to be creative with this presentation and include visuals, video/audio clips, and/or interact with the audience.

Discussion Leading (10%):

Each student will sign up for one class meeting in which they will be responsible for leading part of the discussion. This can be done in a number of ways including identifying a particular passage they would like to discuss, bringing in some specific questions about the text, and/or connecting it with something else within or outside of class. **This is a way that you can help raise topics and determine the kinds of discussions we have.** Plan for generating around 20 or so minutes of discussion. NOTE: This should not be treated as a presentation. Think of this as a way to create dialogue about what we are reading and discussing.

Final Paper/Project (25%):

You will write a final, thesis-driven paper based on the readings we have done over the course of the semester. Further details on expectations and grading criteria for your papers will be announced/distributed in-class in advance of the paper deadlines. All papers should be submitted online through Moodle. If you are interested in doing a creative project of some sort, I am open to it, but please check with me.

Outside Event (5%):

Each student will attend an outside event related to the themes of the class via zoom or the like. There are so many WGSS and Literary events in the valley (and beyond!) that would be great to attend. Please check with me first, and I will send some suggestions as well.

Course Schedule (This may change as I see necessary)

I. What Do We Do When We Represent “the Body”?

Week 1:

Tuesday 8/25: Welcome to class! Introductions and syllabus.

Thursday 8/27: Lindy West’s “How to Be a Girl” from *The Witches Are Coming*, Audre Lorde “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,” Toni Morrison, “Black Matters” from *Playing in the Dark*

II. Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being: Race, Queerness, and Embodiment in Literature

Week 2:

Tuesday 9/1: *Zami* pp. 3-52

Thursday 9/3: *Zami*, pp. 52-97

Week 3:

Tuesday 9/8: *Zami*, pp. 97-147

Thursday 9/10: *Zami*, pp. 147-183

Week 4:

Tuesday 9/15: *Zami*, pp 183-255

Thursday 9/17: Machado, “The Husband Stitch”

Autobiography/Biomythography Due (Friday 9/17 before midnight)

Week 5:

Tuesday 9/22: Machado, “Mothers”

Thursday 9/24: Machado, “Real Women Have Bodies,”

III. Decolonizing the Body/Self

Week 6:

Tuesday 9/29: Aimé Césaire *Discourse on Colonialism* (excerpt), Frantz Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth* (excerpt), Chandra Talpade Mohanty *Under Western Eyes*, Clenora Hudson-Weems “Africana Womanism and the Critical Need for Africana Theory and Thought”

Thursday 10/1: Dangarembga, pp. 1-57

Week 7:

Tuesday 10/6: Dangarembga, pp. 58-104

Thursday 10/8: Dangarembga, pp. 105-150

Week 8:

Tuesday 10/13: Dangarembga, pp 151-208

IV. Body and Nation/alisms

Thursday 10/15: Zabuzhko, "The Death of Don Juan," Zychowicz "Two Bad Words: Femen and Feminism in Ukraine"

Short Response #1 Due (Friday 10/16 before midnight)

Week 9:

Tuesday 10/20: Zabuzhko, pp. 1-52

Thursday 10/22: Zabuzhko, pp 52-85

Week 10:

Tuesday 10/27: Zabuzhko, pp. 85-134

Thursday 10/29: Zabuzhko, pp. 134-161

Week 11:

Tuesday 11/3: Ugrešić, "Fictionary," "Refugee,"

Thursday 11/5: Ugrešić, "Body," "Harassment," "EEWs"

Short Response #2 Due (Friday 11/6 before midnight)

V. Trans/Non-Binary Poetics

Week 12:

Tuesday 11/10: Cameron Awkward-Rich's "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to Be Free" from *The Paris Review*

["What Does Gender Have to Do With It?"](#) TC Tolbert and Trace Peterson, Interview with Poetry Magazine

Awkward-Rich ["The Child Formerly Known As,"](#) ["Cento Between the Ending and the End"](#)

Trace Peterson, ["Canyon Heroines,"](#) ["The Valleys Are So Lush and Steep"](#)

Thursday 11/12: Zoe Tuck! (Guest Speaker)

Final Project Proposals Due

VI. Wrapping Up

Week 13:

Tuesday 11/17: Final project workshop (TBD)

Thursday 11/19: Wrap-up, Final Project mini-presentations

Final Project Due: November 27th