

Instructor: Elise Swinford
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Office Hours: Tues 1:30-3:30pm & by appt
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WOMENSST 391W Writing for Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Majors

Tues & Thurs 11:30am-12:45pm
Classroom: Bartlett 274

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? 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.

Summary of Assignments and Due Dates

- Participation (Ongoing): 15%
- Exercises, In-class, and Online Assignments (Ongoing): 25%
- Life Writing (Due September 30): 15%
- Blog or Op-Ed (Due October 23): 15%
- Prospectus for Final Project (Due November 12): 10%
- Final Portfolio: (Due Dec 11 by 4pm, hard copy in my mailbox): 20%

Participation**15%**

Participation in the seminar is required. You are expected to come prepared to contribute to the discussion, and to support your colleagues in participating as well, which means reading all assigned texts and completing all assignments before class. 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. Arriving late, leaving early, or using electronic devices in ways that are not relevant to class are disruptive to the collaborative learning environment—please avoid these behaviors.

Exercises, In-class and On-line Writing – Ongoing**25%**

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 or myself. 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.

Life Writing (1000 to 1500 Words): September 30**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 23**15%**

You will be given a choice of current news topics from which to choose 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 11 by 4pm, hard copy in my mailbox 20%

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 the news and analyze feminist writings on the subject. Drawing from both assigned readings and your own research, 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 (e.g., 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.

In addition, you will 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.

Course Policies :

Communication

As with any college course, you are expected to use standard email and web etiquette. This means beginning emails with greetings, including a specific request or question, and ending with an appropriate closing. You can expect to receive my responses to emails within 1-2 days during the week. Please do not email me for extensive feedback on your work or other detailed matters that are best addressed in person. I encourage you to stop by my office hours for any reason, or to

make an appointment if your schedule does not allow it.

Attendance

You are allowed **two free absences** throughout the semester, no questions (or doctor's notes) asked. Use these wisely. More than two absences will negatively affect your grade, and more than six absences will result in failure of the course. Exceptions to this include religious holidays and team events accompanied by a coach's note (you should let me know in advance). Even if absent, you are still expected to submit work by the due date unless arrangements are made in advance. You will not be able to make up in-class writing unless it is one of the exceptions mentioned above. If you run into trouble (personal/family matters, health issues, etc.) that you think may affect your ability to attend class, please contact me *earlier* rather than later. While I am happy to work with you to help you succeed, there is little I can do late in the semester.

Late work

I rarely accept work submitted late. Any late submissions of assignments must be approved by me in advance or may not be accepted for credit. Generally, in-class writing cannot be completed later. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a deadline, please contact me **in advance** to discuss options.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism—representing, either intentionally or unintentionally, another's ideas as your own—of any course work will not be tolerated. Please acquaint yourself with the university's full policy on academic honesty at http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/. If you have questions about correct citation procedures, please see me.

Accommodation Policy

If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services, Learning Disabilities Support Services, or Psychological Disabilities Services, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. And please note that accommodations cannot be made retroactively, so get documentation and please discuss it with me as soon as possible.

Tentative Course Schedule (*Subject to Change*)

| <i>Week & Date</i> | <i>Topic</i> | <i>Assignment</i> |
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| Week 1 Sept. 2 & 4 | Course Introduction: What is Feminist Writing? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne LaMott, “Bird by Bird” • Elbow, Peter, Everyone Can Write. • Ritche, Joy and Kathleen Boardman. “Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption” |
| Week 2 Sept. 9 & 11 | Locating Feminist Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anzaldua, “La Conciencia de la Meztiza: Towards a New Consciousness” • Lorde, Audre. The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House • 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 16 & 18 | Theorizing Feminist Writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hooks, bell. “Theory as Liberatory Practice” • Weston, K. Theory, Theory, Who’s got the Theory • Grosz, E. Sexual Signatures • Lutz, C. The erasure of women's writing in sociocultural anthropology |
| Week 4 Sept. 23 & 25 | Life Writing/ Narratives of Self | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ferri, Beth A., Disability Life Writing and the Politics of Knowing • Lenart-Cheng and Walker, Recent Trends in Using Life Stories for Social and Political Activism • Livholts, Writing Masculinities: Gender, and the Politics of Change: A Publicly Staged Interview with Raewyn Connell • Baldwin, James, A Letter to My Nephew, at: http://progressive.org/archive/1962/december/letter • Tam, Vickie, Mother-Love: Reflections of an Asian American Feminist Daughter, available at: http://thefeministwire.com/2013/04/mother-love- |

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| <p>Week 5</p> <p>Sept. 30 & Oct. 2</p> <p>Sept. 30: Life Writing Assignment Due at Beginning of Class</p> | <p>Blogging and Online Writing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various Feminist Blogs, TBA |
| <p>Week 6</p> <p>Oct. 7 & 9</p> | <p>Blogging and Online Writing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cervantes-Altamiranos, The Downfalls of Feminism and Why I Am Still A Feminist • Emily Rapp, Solving the Body Problem at the Bikini Bar • Jessica Rodriguez, Estudiantes • McKenzies, No More Allies • Tillah Willah, Nobody from a Nothing Place |
| <p>Week 7</p> <p>Oct. 14: NO CLASS (Mon. schedule)</p> <p>Oct. 16</p> | <p>Writing as Research: Ethnography</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behar, <i>Women Writing Culture</i>, Intro • Emerson, Robert. <i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i>, Chap 6, Coding and Memoing |
| <p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct. 14 & 16</p> | <p>Analytical Writing: Forms of Argumentation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jones Royster and Kirsch, <i>Feminist Rhetorical Practices</i>, Chap 5 – Critical Imagination and Chap 6 Strategic Contemplation • Ames and Burcon, <i>Women and Oral Culture</i>, Intro |
| <p>Week 9</p> <p>Oct. 21 & 23</p> <p>Oct. 23: Blog/Op-Ed Assignment Due at Beginning of Class</p> | <p>Speaking to Multiple Audiences</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Townsend-Bell, Writing the Way to Feminism • Morrison, <i>Playing in the Dark</i> Preface and Chapter 1 • Staw, Chapter 8, “Choosing Your Reader” |
| <p>Week 10</p> | <p>Transforming Writing</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micicche, Writing As Feminist Rhetorical Theory, in <i>Rhetorica in Motion</i> |

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| Oct. 28 & 30 | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micicche, <i>Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching</i> Preface and Intro • Staw, Chapter 13, “Practicing Deep Compassion” |
| Week 11 Nov. 4 & 6 | Creative Non-Fiction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allison, Dorothy. “Trash” • TBD |
| Week 12 Nov. 12 (Weds: Tues class schedule) & Nov. 13 Prospectus due at beginning of class | Creative Non-Fiction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD |
| Week 13 Nov. 18 & 20 | Analytical Writing: Abstracts and Executive Summaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSRC Art of Writing Proposals • Palimpsests Abstract Submission Guide • Wiltshire, Tips on Writing Abstracts for Conferences http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/wiltshir/abstract.htm |
| Week 14 Nov. 25 (NO CLASS Nov. 27) | Analytical Writing: Proposals and Fundraising | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Fund for Women, Fundraising for Change • Silverman, Writing Proposals for Anthropological Research • Staw, Chapter 5, “Thinking Small” • Look over Girl Got Grants website http://www.girlgotgrants.com/About-Us.html |
| Week 15 Dec. 2 & 4 | Future Directions, Wrap-up and Evaluations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digrazio and Rosenberg, Queering the Writing Classroom in <i>Feminist Rhetorical Resilience</i> • De Hernandez, <i>Women Writing Resistance</i>, Intro • Jussawalla <i>Interviews with writers of the post-colonial world</i> • Staw, Chapter 14, “What’s At Stake” |
| Final Portfolio due Thurs Dec 11 by 4p – hard copy in Bartlett 102 | | |