WST 3120

GLOBAL WOMEN’S WRITING: GENDERED EXPERIENCES ACROSS SOCIETIES AND CULTURES

COURSE DESCRIPTION

GLOBAL WOMEN’S WRITING provides a critical introduction to global women’s writing, examining the literary representation of gendered experiences in societies and cultures across the globe. Students will acquire the ability to analyze the dynamics of power and gender against the socio-cultural, political and historical frameworks of diverse cultural contexts.

Against a critical feminist analysis, students will examine the ways in which women writers address cultural, social and political issues at the intersection of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity, and/or nationality. An evaluation of postcolonial, feminist and transnational critical approaches will enable students to assess the dynamics of power and gender against the socio-cultural, political and historical frameworks of diverse cultural contexts, gaining an enhanced understanding of gendered experiences in societies across the globe.

This is a global learning discipline-specific course that counts towards your global learning graduation requirement.

CREDIT: 3

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Develop critical reading, thinking, and writing skills by examining how women writers articulate gendered experiences.
- Demonstrate enhanced understanding of underrepresented literary voices in societies across the globe, determining how the representation of gendered experiences in women's literature challenges dominant patriarchal discourse.
- Analyze the social and literary significance of the gender roles developed and redefined in women's writing.
- Demonstrate understanding of the literary and social contexts in which author produced a text.
- Examine the connection between women’s writing with contemporary concerns of gender, race, and class central to critical feminist analyses.
- Apply critical approaches and theoretical positions of contemporary feminist literary studies to global women's literature.
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be assessed on their ability to demonstrate:

- A detailed knowledge of the content and form of literary texts drawn from different countries and cultures.
- Develop an interpretation of a literary text, collect research from appropriate sources, support the interpretation with evidence, and cite the source material.
- Engagement with thematic exploration of set texts, writers’ exploration of themes, and appreciation of how texts relate to local socio-cultural as much as global historical and political contexts.
- Assessment of how writers employ the elements of fiction in order to explore, expose, or critique social issues such as gender, class, and race.
- Recognition of how literary texts by diverse women writers create meaning and contribute to the negotiation and re-definition of marginalized voices, culture and identity.

GLOBAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of the interrelatedness of local, global, international, and intercultural issues, trends, and systems.
- Students will be able to conduct a multi-perspective analysis of local, global, international, and intercultural problems.
- Students will be able to demonstrate willingness to engage in local, global, international, and intercultural problem solving.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

This course integrates co-curricular components to deepen the understanding and evaluation of the way in which women’s literature reflects on and responds to specific cultural, political, historical or economic frameworks. Activities may include:

- Lectures/ interviews with local artists and writers from diverse cultural backgrounds; exploration of the way in which creative work constitutes a means to re-negotiate identity, culture, and nationalism.
- Literary/Artistic Events sponsored by local Consulates/Embassies/Cultural Centers for critical exploration of historical, political and cultural issues key to understanding literature.
- Guest speakers from different departments at FIU as well as from local literary organizations that deal with the socio-cultural and literary framework discussed.

These lectures and interviews will be organized on a contingency basis and will depend on the availability of the speakers. Presentations will be videotaped for future use.
EVALUATION AND GRADING

All assignments listed below ask students to critically engage with the course material, apply it and extend it as necessary. Exclusive of the Final take-home exam, all assignments were developed to contribute to classroom discussion and debate.

Distribution of Course Grade:

- Attendance and Participation (10%)
- Critical Response Papers (30%)
- Presentation (15%)
- Reading Quizzes (15%)
- Final Take-Home Exam (30%)

1) Attendance and Participation (10 points)
You are required to read the books and articles assigned for each unit. Before each class you will have to prepare an excerpt in order to properly participate in class discussion and analysis.

2) Reading Quizzes (15 points)
Students will be given Short Answer Questions to demonstrate their ability to comprehend and apply knowledge gained through the textbook readings – as well as media analyses, where applicable. There will be 3 quizzes and each are worth 5 points.

3) Three Critical Response Papers (30 points)
For a selection of texts we read during the semester, you will be required to write a short essay based on an instructor prompt.

This assessment requires students to compare and contrast the texts’ representations of one or more of the following key issues: status of women/gendered minorities in society; gender inequalities; human rights and social justice. Based on class discussions and class lectures about the political, economic, and cultural framework, you will formulate a central interpretive idea about the text. Your essay is to examine the ways in which the text addresses and problematizes key gender issues, identifying possible course of actions and potential obstacles for the fictional characters/protagonists.

Responses should be 1-2 pages in total (double-spaced, 12 font Arial, approx. 500 words). Each essay is worth 10 points.

4) Wiki – Written and Oral (15 points)
At the beginning of the semester, you will self-sign into Study Groups on our course website on Blackboard. Each group will have to read and analyze one of the theoretical articles provided in the SUPPLEMENTARY READING LIST, record their critical analysis in the Wiki, and lead a class discussion for 20-30 minutes.

The Wiki requires students to present a synopsis of the article; identify the text’s main question/thesis; discuss how the author develops her/his thesis; and outline the different methodological and theoretical approaches taken in the article. Situating the text within the broad field of “global women’s literature,” you are to draw connections to the novels/short stories discussed in class: In what ways is the theoretical article helpful in our analysis of global women’s literature?

5) Final Take-home Exam (30 points)
The largest component of your grade consist of an essay that analyzes a gender aspect of a novel/ short story discussed in class:
Students will identify and research a particular gender issue, examining the various political, economic, and cultural dimensions that contribute to the text’s meaning making. Your essay is to explain the basic arguments of the text and their relationship to the author’s purpose and use of persuasive strategies.

Reflecting upon the particular insights gained about the literary representation of a given gender issue will allow you to compare and contrast experiences of gender inequalities and/or processes empowering women to your own cultural context: Your essay should develop a unique argument that shows evidence of your critical thinking in terms of benefits of, and limits to, literary representations of gender inequalities and narrative forms of dis/empowerment across different regional/ national/ international contexts in women’s literature.

Your analysis needs to discuss a minimum of two critical articles while employing original arguments of your own.

**COURSE JUSTIFICATION**

This course aims to provide a critical introduction to global women’s writing and feminist literary theory, engaging students in active inquiry of gendered experiences in societies and cultures across the globe. Students develop insightful and creative responses to women’s literature through extensive analytical, interpretive, and research writing, as well as by class discussions.

This course will enhance the curriculum for the Women’s and Gender Studies B.A. degree by offering a women's and gender studies course in the area of literature, which has been determined as one of the goals in the 2013/2014 program review of the Center for Women’s and Gender Studies.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


TENTATIVE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Week 1  Introduction: Reading Women Writers
Week 2  Feminist Literary Theory & Criticism: Definitions of Feminist Writing
Week 3  Text and Context: Zeina
Week 4  Text and Context: Zeina
Week 5  Study Group Presentations
Week 6  Midterm Exam
Week 7  Text and Context: Niketche
Week 8  Text and Context: Niketche
Week 9  Study Group Presentations
Week 10 Writing Local/Global: Feminism in dialog with postcolonial and global studies
Week 11 Text and Context: Island of Shattered Dreams
Week 12 Text and Context: Island of Shattered Dreams
Week 13 Study Group Presentations
Week 14 Text and Context: Algerian Stories
Week 15 Text and Context: Algerian Stories
Week 16 Study Group Presentations & Final Take-home Exam

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