

Women Writers of the American West

ENGL 3382.001—Fall 2006

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.

English Building Room 362

Course webpage—<http://www.faculty.english.ttu.edu/spurgeon>

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Office Hours: MWF 2:00-3:00 or by appointment

Course Overview:

This course aims to introduce students to a variety of 20th century women writers from the region currently referred to as the American West. We will explore Native American poetry and fiction, Anglo nature writing, Chicana poets, essayists and short story writers, postmodern Asian American fiction, and African American sci fi. What common threads run through these works? Where do the visions and voices of authors collide or overlap? How is the sense of this region imagined across cultures, histories, and into a globalized future? What does it mean to be a woman in the Wests these authors create? We will attempt to answer these questions through close readings, class discussions, four short essays, reader review questions, a mid-term and final exam.

Required texts:

Joy Harjo

How We Became Human “The Last Song,” “Four Horse Songs,” “I Am A Dangerous Woman,” “Anchorage,” “The Woman Hanging From the 13th Floor Window,” “She Had Some Horses,” “I Give You Back,” “Deer Dancer,” “And If I Awaken in Los Angeles.” (Check Harjo’s own notes for many of these poems at the back of the book.)

Louise Erdrich

Love Medicine

Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands/La Frontera “Preface to the First Edition,” 1—The Homeland, Aztlán, 2—Movimientos, 3—Entering into the Serpent, 5—How to Tame a Wild Tongue, 7—Towards a New Consciousness, “To Live in the Borderlands” (216)

Helena Maria Viramontes

Under the Feet of Jesus

Sandra Cisneros

Woman Hollering Creek

Mary Hunter Austin

Stories from the Country of Lost Borders

Gretel Ehrlich

The Solace of Open Spaces

Maxine Hong Kingston
Octavia Butler

The Woman Warrior
Bloodchild and other stories

All texts are available from the TTU Bookstore in the basement of the Student Union Building.

Assignments, Grades, Course Policies:

Reader Review Questions

These questions will be posted on the course webpage. You should write a brief 1-2 pages total answering them. I will collect your responses in a portfolio (please give me a pocket folder with your name on it for this) which I will grade and return at the end of the semester.

Essays

You will write four short (4-5) page analysis essays for the class based on your choice of a series of essay prompts. These essays should have a strong, concise thesis, and *no plot summary whatsoever*. Assume your audience is made up of interested scholars familiar with the text you're examining. You may do outside research if you wish, but it is not required. Please include a works cited page in MLA format, even if you only cite one text. These essays may be submitted as attachments to an email (Word compatible format, please), or on paper. You will receive a more detailed assignment sheet for the essays shortly.

Mid-Term and Final Exam

These will be cumulative, consisting mainly of identification, T/F, fill in the blank, and short answer. You will be expected to know the following basic information about each text:

- Title, author, year of publication
- Names of main characters and their relationships to each other
- Major plot points
- Major themes and ideas for poetry and essays

In addition, the short answer sections may ask you to make connections between texts, draw insights from authors' lives, talk about the role of history, tradition, regionalism, gender, race, etc.

Reader Review Questions	10 pts. (total)	
Essay One	10 pts.	<u>SCALE</u>
Essay Two	10 pts.	90-100 = A
Essay Three	10 pts.	80-89 = B
Essay Four	10 pts.	70-79 = C
Mid-term Exam	20 pts.	60-69 = D
Final Exam	30 pts.	59-less = F
TOTAL POSSIBLE	100 points (no extra credit)	

- *Attendance* - Mandatory. You will get three free absences. You will be penalized one point per absence after that.
- *Participation* - Mandatory. This class will consist of both lectures and class discussions. This will require you to have done all readings for the day *before* you come to class. I will call periodically on everyone in the class. If too many people are sitting quietly while only a few carry on class discussions, or if too many people are coming to class without doing the readings, I will switch to standard lecture format with weekly quizzes. I will post discussion questions for each reading on the class website. **Please check this regularly!**
- *Plagiarism* - This means submitting writing as your own that was actually done by someone else. This means whenever you take words directly from another text, they **MUST** be in quotations and cited, no exceptions. Even a small amount of plagiarized material in your essay will result in a zero on the assignment, possibly an F for the class, and/or expulsion from the University.
- *Due dates* - All essays and reader reviews are due on the dates indicated. **If you speak with me in advance**, you may receive a one week extension without penalty on one essay and one reader review. If you do not speak with me in advance, grades will drop by 1 point for each weekday past the due date. **DO NOT** wait until the night before an assignment is due to write, type, or print it. **ALWAYS** save your work on a back-up disc. Excuses like “my computer crashed” or “my printer isn’t working” will be met with sympathy, but you’ll still lose 1 point per day.

Semester Calendar

UNIT ONE: The First American Storytellers--Native American Women Writers

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| M 8/28 | Intro to class, listen to Harjo’s cd. For Wed. read selections from Joy Harjo’s collection of poetry, <i>How We Became Human</i> . |
| W 8/30 | Lecture and class discussion of Harjo. |
| F 9/1 | Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage. For Wed. begin reading Louise Erdrich’s novel <i>Love Medicine</i> . |
| M 9/4 | LABOR DAY—NO CLASSES |
| W 9/6 | Lecture and class discussion of Erdrich. |
| F 9/8 | Lecture and discussion of Erdrich. For Monday, finish <i>Love Medicine</i> . |
| M 9/11 | Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage. |
| W 9/13 | Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay One. Last day to drop a course and receive a refund |
| F 9/15 | <i>Unit One Essay due today.</i> For Monday read selections from Gloria Anzaldua’s <i>Borderlands/La Frontera</i> . |

UNIT TWO: Borderlands and Homelands--Chicana Writers

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| M 9/18 | Lecture and class discussion of Anzaldua. |
| W 9/20 | Lecture and class discussion of Anzaldua. |

- F 9/22 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage. For Monday begin reading Helena Maria Viramontes' novel, *Under the Feet of Jesus*.
- M 9/25 Lecture and class discussion of Viramontes.
 W 9/27 Lecture and class discussion of Viramontes.
 F 9/29 Lecture and class discussion of Viramontes.
- M 10/2 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage. For Wednesday, read selections from Sandra Cisneros' collection of short fiction, *Woman Hollering Creek*.
- W 10/4 Lecture and class discussion of Cisneros
 F 10/6 Lecture and class discussion of Cisneros
- M 10/9 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
 W 10/11 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay Two.
 F 10/13 **Unit Two Essay due today.** For Monday read selections from Mary Hunter Austin's collections of essays and short fiction, *Stories from the Country of Lost Borders*.

UNIT THREE: Gender and Nature in the West--Anglo Women Writers

- M 10/16 Lecture and class discussion of Austin.
 W 10/18 Lecture and class discussion of Austin.
 F 10/20 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- M 10/23 **MID-TERM EXAM TODAY** For next week, read selections from Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces*
 W 10/25 **NO CLASS TODAY** – I'm at a conference
 F 10/27 **NO CLASS TODAY** – I'm at a conference
- M 10/30 Lecture and class discussion of Erlich. Last day to drop a course
 W 11/1 Lecture and class discussion of Erlich.
 F 11/3 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- M 11/6 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay Three.
 W 11/8 **Unit Three Essay due today.**
 F 11/10 **Free day—you've worked hard!** For Monday, begin reading Maxine Hong Kingston's novel, *The Woman Warrior*.

UNIT FOUR: Other Wests—Asian and African American Women Writers

- M 11/13 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
 W 11/15 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
 F 11/17 Lecture and class discussion of Hong Kingston.
- M 11/20 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
 W 11/22 **THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASSES**

- F 11/24 **THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASSES** For Monday read selections from Octavia Butler’s collection of short fiction, *Bloodchild and other stories*
- M 11/27 Lecture and class discussion of Butler.
W 11/29 Lecture and class discussion of Butler.
F 12/1 Bring in typed answers to reader review questions posted on webpage.
- M 12/4 Bring in thesis statement and outline of Essay Four.
W 12/6 ***Unit Four Essay due today.*** Last day of classes.

W 12/13 FINAL EXAM 1:30-4:00 p.m.
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