

## **ENGL 662-M01**

### **Race and Gender in post-1945 American Literature**

**Wednesday 14:30-17:00**

**Anne Dewey**

**Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30-1:30, Wednesdays, 9:30-1:30**

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## **COURSE OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES**

### *Objectives*

This course explores changing relationship between identity and the body by studying literary constructions of race and gender in several genres of post-1945 literature in the U.S. We will develop an understanding of this relationship by comparing and contrasting where authors locate identity (e.g., in the body, history or family circumstances, place, language,...), analyzing the ideological opportunities/constraints that different genres afford for construction of identity, and discussing the usefulness of some theories of race and gender in analyzing the literary works. Particular attention will be given to the interrelation between race and gender in identity construction.

The course covers a period of intense historical change, including Jim Crow segregation and Cold War domesticity; the Civil Rights Movement; Women's Liberation and the emergence of feminisms of women of color; the Gay Rights Movement; the backlash against feminism and conservative turn to "color-blind" policies in the 1980s; the emergence, fragmentation, and diversification of racial and ethnic literatures with multiculturalism and identity politics; and the emergence of Queer Studies. Although the course focuses on literatures classified as white, African American, and Asian American, we will discuss the problems involved in these classifications and the relationship of these literatures to those of other "raced" and ethnicized groups recognized in American culture.

### *Outcomes*

- Familiarity with a representative range of recent ethnic literature
- Ability to analyze orally and in writing the construction of race and gender identity in works of contemporary literature with knowledge of the breadth and diversity of literary writing on these subjects and some critical lenses through which these works have been studied
- Familiarity with some ideological critiques of genre and the ways writers have used and transformed genres to express race and gender
- Familiarity with some recent theories of race and gender and some of the historical and intellectual movements shaping them
- Development of a deeper understanding of one's own conceptions of race and gender in the context of contemporary cultural perceptions of them through reflection on and writing about various literary and theoretical texts
- Ability to formulate an independent project on race and gender in recent literature based on broad knowledge of the field

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Ralph Ellison. *Invisible Man*. 1952.

Don DeLillo. *White Noise*. 1985.

Richard Rodriguez. *Hunger for Memory*. 1981.

Frank O'Hara. *Lunch Poems*. 1964.

Sylvia Plath. *Ariel*. 1965.

Janice Mirikitani. *Awake in the River*. 1978.  
Gwendolyn Brooks. *Blacks*. 1987.  
Audre Lorde. *Our Dead Behind Us*. 1986.  
Amiri Baraka. *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. 1991.  
Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop. *Ceci n'est pas Keith Ceci n'est pas Rosmarie*. 2002.  
John Yau. *Borrowed Love Poems*. 2002.

## COURSE POLICIES

**Attendance:** Five “unexcused” absences signals that the student has chosen to withdraw from (or fail) the course. (Please let me know if you are going to miss class).

**Academic Integrity:** Please inform yourselves of SLU’s Academic Standards (pp. 20-23 in Graduate Education catalogue, especially those regarding Academic Integrity/Ethical Behavior, pp. 20-23. (link to Graduate Education in on the SLU Madrid MA in English webpage). The *MLA Handbook* also has a good section on plagiarism and ways to avoid unconscious plagiarism in your research.

**Students with Disabilities:** Any student who qualifies for special accommodations, due to presence of a disability, and feels it necessary to utilize them in order to meet the requirements of this course—as outlined in the syllabus, should contact Counseling/Disability Services. Within the context of Spanish law, Disability Services is committed to providing equal access to educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. The objectives are to enable persons with disabilities in the University to function adequately, both personally and professionally. For inquiries or further assistance about Disability Services, contact Dr. Eduardo Fernandez-Cruz, whose office is located in Manresa Hall (91-554-5858, extension 230). Students may also stop by the Counseling/Disabilities Services office in the Manresa building. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

## EVALUATION

Your goal as graduate students is to develop the skills of literary criticism, research, writing, and oral presentation needed to become good scholars and teachers. Because much of what you do is “work in progress,” I grade holistically with an eye to rewarding development and improvement. I therefore do not give a percentage breakdown for individual assignments. Your final paper will be worth at least 30% of your final grade and class participation about 20%.

While all of the course assignments provide the opportunity for students to work toward achieving all of the course learning outcomes, some tasks focus more specifically on certain aspects: class discussion on gaining critical awareness of your ideas about race and gender through dialogue with classmates and developing oral expression, the shorter papers for synthesizing readings into your own critical approach to race and gender through development of key elements of scholarly writing (close reading, summary and critique, interpretive argument informed by secondary research). The annotated bibliography and final project focus on developing an original argument about an issue in the field informed by knowledge of existing scholarship.

## WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS (to be supplemented by more explicit descriptions later)

Short reflections to be presented for class discussion (2-3 pp. long, one each):

- Close reading
- Summary and critique of criticism—either one book or three articles

Critical papers:

- Paper on race, 4 pp.
- Paper on gender, 4 pp.

Research Proposal

Annotated Bibliography on research area, minimum 20 sources beyond course reading

Final Paper, 12-16 pp.

## SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

*Note: unless otherwise specified, the secondary readings are on the class website.*

### Week 1

**Friday, September 2** Introduction

### Week 2

Wednesday, September 7 Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Chapters 1-14  
Cornell West, from *Race Matters* (1993): “On Black-Jewish Relations,” “Black Sexuality: the Taboo Subject” Paul Gilroy, from *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (2000): “The Crisis of ‘Race’ and Raciology”

### Week 3

Wednesday, September 14 Ellison, *Invisible Man*, Chapters 15-end  
Frantz Fanon, selections from *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967): “The Woman of Color and the white Man,” “The Man of Color and the White Woman”  
Houston Baker, from *Betrayal: How Black Intellectuals Have Abandoned the ideals of the Civil Rights Era* (2008): “Man without Connection: John McWhorter”  
**Last day to DROP a class and not receive a grade of “W” and/or to add a class**

### Week 4

Wednesday, September 21 DeLillo, *White Noise*  
Toni Morrison, from *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992): “black matters”  
Ramón Saldívar, “Ideologies of the Self: Chicano Autobiography,” *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 15.3 (1985): 25-34 (Proxy Server)

**Week 5**

Wednesday, September 28 Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*  
Rodriguez, "Late Victorians" from *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (1992)  
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, from *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), "Epistemology of the Closet"  
**Paper on race due, 4 pp.**

**Thursday, September 29 Last day to choose audit and Pass/No Pass options**

**Week 6**

Wednesday, October 5 Gwendolyn Brooks, from *Blacks: A Street in Bronzeville* (1945), "In the Mecca" (1968), selections from *To Disembark* (1981) and *The Near-Johannesburg Boy* (1986)  
Sean Nixon, "Exhibiting Masculinity" (1997)  
Elaine Tyler May, from *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War* (1988)  
**Research project proposal due**

**Week 7**

Wednesday, October 12 **Holiday—no class**

**Week 8**

Wednesday, October 19 Plath, *Ariel* and/or *The Bell Jar* (poems for discussion: "The Applicant," "Lady Lazarus," "Medusa," "Daddy," Bee Poems "The Bee Meeting," "The Arrival of the Bee Box," "Stings")  
Carby, from *Reconstructing Womanhood* (1987): "Woman's Era," "The Quicksands of Representation"

**Week 9**

Wednesday, October 26 O'Hara, *Lunch Poems*  
Judith Butler, from *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (1993): "Critically Queer"  
**Paper on gender due, 4 pp.**

**Week 10**

**Monday, October 31 Last day to drop a class and receive grade of W**

Wednesday, November 2 Mirikitani, *Awake in the River* (prose and poetry)  
King-Kok Cheung, from *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature* (1997): "Re-viewing Asian American Studies," "Japanese American Literature"

Lisa Lowe, from *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (1996): "Immigration, Citizenship, Racialization: Asian American Critique"

**Annotated Bibliographies due and 5-minute presentation of findings. You must post the final bibliography on class website by November 10.**

**Week 11**

**Monday, November 7**

**Registration for Spring Semester begins**

**Wednesday, November 9**

**Holiday—no class**

**Thursday, November 10**

**Deadline for posting revised bibliography on class website**

**Week 12**

**Wednesday, November 16**

Lorde, *Our Dead Behind Us* and/or *Zami, Sister Outsider* or *The Cancer Journals* (poems for discussion: "Sisters in Arms," "To the Poet Who Happens to Be Black and Who Happens to Be a Woman," "Outlines," "Diaspora," "Home," "Learning to Write," "Holographs," "Generation III" )

Caroline Rody, from *The Interethnic Imagination: Roots and Passages in Contemporary Asian American Fiction* (2009): "Interchapter: Asian/African"

**Week 13**

**Wednesday, November 23**

Amiri Baraka, *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader* poems (1-16, 210-224, 240-272, 302-310, 480-492) and/or 2-3 plays or music criticism and selection from autobiography (poems for discussion: "Hymn for Lanie Poo," "BLACK DADA NIHILISMUS," "Black Art," "IT'S NATION TIME," "AM/TRAK")

**Week 14**

**Wednesday, November 30**

Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop, *Ceci n'est pas Keith Ceci n'est pas Rosmarie* and selections from works written individually by Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop

**Full or partial rough draft of final paper due, 14-18 pp.**

**Week 15**

**Wednesday, December 7**

Yau, *Borrowed Love Poems* or prose (*The Passionate Spectator: Essays on Art and Poetry*)

Cheung, from *Interethnic Companion: "Chinese American Literature"*

**Week 16**

**Wednesday, December 14, 12:00-15:00 a.m.**

**Final paper due**

CRITICAL PRESENTATION SUGGESTIONS (feel free to pursue your own interests)

**Ellison**

Kemayo, Kamau. *Emerging Afrikan Survivals: An Afrocentric Critical Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2003. (in library)

Lee, Kun Jong. "Invisible Man: Emersonianism Revised." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 107.2 (1992): 331-44.

Lamm, Kimberly. "Visuality and Black Masculinity in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Romare Bearden's Photomontages." *Callaloo: A Journal of African-American and African Arts and Letters* 26.3 (2003): 813-35.

Arac, Jonathan. "Toward a Critical Genealogy of the U. S. Discourse of Identity: Invisible Man after Fifty Years." *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 30.2 (2003): 195-216.

Kim, Daniel Y. "Invisible Desires: Homoerotic Racism and Its Homophobic Critique in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man." *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 30.3 (1997): 309-28.

**DeLillo**

Boxall, Peter. *Don DeLillo: The Possibility of Fiction*. London: Routledge, 2002. (on reserve)

Melley, Timothy. *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2000. (in library)

Nelson, Deborah. *Pursing Privacy in Cold War America*. (on reserve)

Engles, Tim. "'Who Are You, Literally?': Fantasies of the White Self in White Noise." *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 45.3 (1999): 755-87.

Nel, Philip. "Homicidal Men and Full-Figured Women: Gender in White Noise." *Approaches to Teaching DeLillo's White Noise*. Eds. Tim Engles and John N. Duvall. New York: Modern Language Association, 2006. 180-191.

Young, Paul. "No One Sees the Camps: Hitler and Humor in White Noise." *Approaches to Teaching DeLillo's White Noise*. Eds. Tim Engles and John N. Duvall. New York: Modern Language Association, 2006. 39-49. (on reserve)

**Rodriguez**

Ethnic memoir, testimonio:

Fine, Laura. "Claiming Personas and Rejecting Other-Imposed Identities: Self-Writing as Self-Righting in the Autobiographies of Richard Rodriguez." *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 19.2 (1996): 119-36.

Staten, Henry. "Ethnic Authenticity, Class, and Autobiography: The Case of *Hunger for Memory*." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 113.1 (1998): 103-16.

Gender criticism:

Lawtoo, Nidesh. "Dissonant Voices in Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger of Memory* and Luce Irigaray's *The Sex Which Is Not One*." *Studies in Literature and Language* 48.3 (2006): 220-49.

Phillipa Kafka, *(Out)classed women : contemporary Chicana writers on inequitable gendered power relations* (in library)

### **Brooks**

On women:

Betsy Erkkila, *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History, and Discord* (chapter on Brooks) (in library)

Johnson, Barbara. "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion." *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 16.1 (1986): 29-47. (an old but important article)

Wolosky, Shira. "The Ethics of Foucauldian Poetics: Women's Selves." *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 35.3 (2004): 491-505.

On race (and gender):

Park, You-me; Wald, Gayle. "Daughters in the Promised Land: Gender, Race, and the Question of Separate Spheres." *American Literature: A Journal of Literary History, Criticism, and Bibliography* 70.3 (1998): 607-33.

Cummings, Allison. "Subjects: Race and the Critical Reception of Gwendolyn Brooks, Erica Hunt, and Harryette Mullen." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 26.2 (2005): 3-36.

Avilez, GerShun. "the Black Body: Value, Domestic Space, and Segregation Narratives." *African American Review* 42.1 (2008): 135-147.

On genre:

Clarke, Cheryl. "Loss of Lyric Space and the Critique of Traditions in Gwendolyn Brooks's *In the Mecca*." *The Kenyon Review* 17.1 (1995): 136-47.

Frazier, Valerie. "Domestic Epic Warfare in *Maud Martha*." *African American Review* 39.1-2 (2005): 133-41. (see also short article on the domestic in *Maud Martha* by Malin LaVon Walther in *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*)

### **Plath**

Manuscript issues in *Ariel*: use "restored edition" edited by Frieda Hughes (on website) and critical articles of your choosing from Proxy Server

Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*

Alicia Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America* (on reserve)

Edward Brunner, *Cold War Poetry* (on reserve)

Imagery of whiteness in Plath: chapter from Renée Curry, *Women Writing White* (on website)

Criticism on the Bee poems (see Proxy Server, esp. articles by Susan Gubar, Jessica Luck, John Gordon)

Lant, Kathleen Margaret. "Big Strip Tease: Female Bodies and Male Power in the Poetry of Sylvia Plath." *Contemporary Literature* 34.4 (1993): 620-69.

Essays on Plath and the Holocaust by Susan Gubar and Al Strangeways, Matthew Boswell

Plath and the body:

Boyer, Marilyn. "The Disabled Female Body as a Metaphor for Language in Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*." *Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 33.2 (2004): 199-223.

- Peel, Robin. "Body, Word, and Photograph: Sylvia Plath's Cold War Collage and the Thalidomide Scandal." *Journal of American Studies* 40.1 (2006):71-95.
- Knickerbocker, Scott. "Bodied Forth in Words': Sylvia Plath's Ecopoetics." *College Literature* 36.3 (2009): 1-27.
- Smith, Caroline J. "'Feeding of Young Women': Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, *Mademoiselle* Magazine, and the Domestic Ideal." *College Literature* 37.4 (2010): 1-22.

### **O'Hara**

- Michael Davidson, *Guys Like Us: Citing Masculinity in Cold War Poetics*
- Lytle Shaw, *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of Coterie* (introduction and first chapter) (Google Books)
- Andrew Mossin, *Male Subjectivity and Poetic Form in "New American" Poetry* (on reserve)
- Andrew Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies* (chapters on O'Hara, friendship and collaboration and any others of interest) (on reserve)
- Herring, Terrell Scott. "Frank O'Hara's Open Closet." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 117.3 (2002): 414-27.
- Jarraway, David R. "'Vanilla Hemorrhages': The Queer Perversities of Frank O'Hara." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4.1 (1998) 67-108.
- Magee, Michael. "Tribes of New York: Frank O'Hara, Amiri Baraka, and the Poetics of the Five Spot." *Contemporary Literature* 42.4 ( 2001): 694-726.
- Lagapa, Jason. "Parading the Undead: Camp, Horror and Reincarnation in the Poetry of Frank O'Hara and John Yau." *Journal of Modern Literature* 33.2 (2010): 92-113.
- Sweet, David L. "Parodic Nostalgia for Aesthetic Machismo: Frank O'Hara and Jackson Pollock." *Journal of Modern Literature* 23.3-4 (2000): 375-91.

### **Mirikitani**

- Caroline Rody, *The Interethnic Imagination* (on reserve)
- Kim Whitehead, *The Feminist Poetry Movement* (on reserve)
- There is very little criticism on Mirikitani available. Look online for short articles and interviews, and try Googlebooks for the few essays listed in the MLA Bibliography.
- Topics of interest on Japanese and Asian American culture from George Leonard's *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to the Arts* (on reserve)
- Amy Ling, *Yellow Light: The Flowering of Asian American Arts* (on reserve)
- Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* (on reserve)
- Philippa Kafka, *Undoing the Missionary Position: Gender Asymmetry in Asian American Women's Writing* (on reserve)

### **Lorde**

- Aldon Nielson, *Black Chant: Languages of African American Postmodernism* (on reserve)
- Joanne Gabin, ed. *The Furious Flowering of African American Poetry* (on reserve)
- Kim Whitehead, *The Feminist Poetry Movement* (on reserve)
- On the body:
- Avril Horner and Angela Keane, eds. *Body Matters: Feminism, Textuality, Corporeality* (Googlebooks, chapter on Lorde, Sara Ahmed, "Embodying Strangers")
- Morris, Margaret Kissam. "Lorde: Textual Authority and the Embodied Self." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23.1 (2002): 168-88.



Chinn, Sarah H. "Feeling Her Way: Audre Lorde and the Power of Touch." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9.1-2 (2003): 181-204.

Lorde and identity politics:

Kemp, Yakini B. "Writing Power: Identity Complexities and the Exotic Erotic in Audre Lorde's Writing." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 37.2 (2004): 21-36.

Obourn, Megan. "Audre Lorde: Trauma Theory and Liberal Multiculturalism." *MELUS: The Journal of the Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 30.3 (2005):219-45.

On lesbian writing:

DiBernard, Barbara. "Zami: A Portrait of an Artist as a Black Lesbian." *The Kenyon Review* 13.4 (1991): 195-213.

Ginzberg, Ruth. "Lord's (Nonessentialist) Lesbian Eros." *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 7.4 (1992): 73-90.

Lorde's life writing and or writing on (esp. articles by Elizabeth Alexander, Jennifer Browdy de Hernandez, Lori Walk, Thatcher Carter, Robina Josephine Khalid, Monica B. Pearl)

Keating, AnnLouise. "Making 'Our Shattered Faces Whole': The Black Goddess and Audre Lorde's Revision of Patriarchal Myth." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 13.1 (1992): 20-33.

### **Keith and Rosmarie Waldrop**

Andrew Epstein, *Beautiful Enemies* (introductory and concluding chapters on friendship and collaboration) (on reserve)

Lynn Keller, *Thinking Poetry: Reading in Contemporary Women's Exploratory Poetics* (on reserve)

Laura Hinton and Cynthia Hogue, eds. *We Who Love to Be Astonished: Experimental Women's Writing and Performance Poetics* (on reserve)

Linda Kinnahan, *Lyric Interventions: Feminism, Experimental Poetry, and Contemporary Discourse* (on reserve)

Lynn Keller. "'Just one of / the girls:--/ normal in the extreme': Experimentalists-To-Be Starting Out in the 1960s." *Differences: Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 12.2 (2001): 47-69. Web.

Joan Retallack. "A Conversation with Rosmarie Waldrop." *Contemporary Literature* 40.3 (1999): 328-77. *Project Muse*. Web. 27 Mar. 2010. (and other interviews)

### **John Yau**

Topics of interest on Chinese and Asian American culture from George Leonard's *The Asian Pacific American Heritage: A Companion to the Arts* (on reserve)

*Talisman* Special Issue—any of articles, especially by Priscilla Wald (website)

Yu, Timothy. "Form and Identity in Language Poetry and Asian American Poetry." *Contemporary Literature* 41.3 (2000): 422-61.

Wang, Dorothy J. "Undercover Asian: John Yau and the Politics of Ethnic Self-Identification." In (pp. 135-55) Davis, Rocío G. (ed and introd.); Ludwig, Sämi (ed. and introd.), *Asian American Literature in the International Context: Readings on Fiction, Poetry, and Performance*. Hamburg, Germany: 2002. (Google Books)

Introduction and essay on Yau by Xiaojing Zhou in *Form and Transformation in Asian American Literature* (Google Books)