

ENGL 689-M01 Poetry and Theory of Gender after the 1960s

Prof. Anne Dewey

3 credits

Spring 2010

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 17:00-19:20

Office Hours: Until May 5, MWF, 10:15-12:15, 12:30-14:30, Tuesday and

Thursday or by appointment until May 9.

Starting May 10, MW, 10:15-12:15, Tuesday and Thursday, 14:00-17:00 p.m.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will explore connections between poetry and theory of gender since the period of second wave feminism and gay liberation in the 1960s. Whereas many poets who came of age during the 1960s and who were influenced by and active in these movements advocated representation in terms of American traditions of citizenship and democracy, optimism in the power of such poetry, advocacy, and theory to achieve equality begins to wane in the 1970s, with the United States' turn to political conservatism and the backlash against feminism. Our investigation of poetry and theory of gender construction will help us to understand this disillusionment with liberal identity politics through challenges to liberal theories of identity.

We will analyze poets' and theorists' insights into and performance of gender construction to attempt to understand these challenges and possible constructive responses to them. Readings include poetry by Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Denise Levertov, Robert Duncan, Adrienne Rich, Amiri Baraka, Yusef Komunyakaa, Rita Dove, Rosmarie Waldrop and Keith Waldrop. Theoretical approaches include historical, structuralist, deconstructionist, psychoanalytic, post-liberal political theory, and ethnic and cultural studies.

By the end of the course, you should have become familiar with different critical approaches to poetry and experimented with how they can illuminate interpretation of a poetic text, as well as the ways in which poetry can demonstrate or challenge theoretical assertions. You should also be more conscious of your own critical approach to reading and writing about poetry and have developed the ability to write in a way that articulates consciousness of this approach within the wide spectrum of critical positions.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*. 1982.

Denise Levertov, *Candles in Babylon*. 1982.

Robert Duncan, *Ground Work*. 1984, 1987. (or copies)

Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World*. 1991.

Amiri Baraka. *The LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka Reader*. 1991.

Yusef Komunyakaa, *Neon Vernacular*. 1993.

Rita Dove. *Mother Love*. 1995.

Rita Dove. *On the Bus with Rosa Parks*. 1999.

Rosmarie Waldrop. *Reluctant Gravities*. 1999.

Keith Waldrop. *Hegel's Family*. 1989.

Course Reader—scanned theoretical readings

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. Please phone the office at 91 554-5858 (Ext. 230), or send an e-mail to vandrew1@slu.edu. Students may also stop by the Counseling/Disabilities Services office in the Manresa building. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS

WEEK 1

- Tuesday, April 13 Introduction
- Thursday, April 15 Denise Levertov, *Candles in Babylon* (1982), first half
Michael Davidson, *Guys Like Us*
Kim Whitehead, from *The Feminist Poetry Movement*

WEEK 2

- Tuesday, April 20 Denise Levertov, *Candles in Babylon* (1982), second half
Susan Faludi, *Stiffed*
Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*
- Thursday, April 22 Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* (1982), first half
Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

WEEK 3

- Tuesday, April 27 **Close reading due, 2-3 pp.**
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*, (1982) second half
Jacques Derrida, "The Battle of Proper Names"
- Thursday, April 29 Robert Duncan, *Ground Work* (1984-87), Part I
Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I

WEEK 4

- Monday, May 3 Last day to drop class and receive grade of W"**
- Tuesday, May 4 **Proposal for theoretical project due, 1-2 pp.**
Robert Duncan, *Ground Work* (1984-87), Part II
Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror*
Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*
- Thursday, May 6 Adrienne Rich, *Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991), first half
Wendy Brown, "The Desire to be Punished"

WEEK 5

- Tuesday, May 11 **Paper applying theory to a poetic text, 3-4 pp.**
Adrienne Rich, *Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991), second half
- Thursday, May 13 Amiri Baraka, *Reader*, 3-75, 161-171, 210-224
Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*

WEEK 6

- Tuesday, May 18 **Summary and critique of article for theory project due, 3-4 pp.**
Amiri Baraka, *Reader*, 240-242, 251-255, 262-272, 400-449, 566-567
- Thursday, May 20 Yusef Komunyakaa, *Neon Vernacular* (1993), first half
Hazel Carby, *Race Men*

WEEK 7

- Tuesday, May 25 **Annotated bibliographies due for presentation**
Yusef Komunyakaa, *Neon Vernacular* (1993), second half
Houston Baker, *Betrayal*
- Thursday, May 27 Rita Dove, *Mother Love* (1995)
bell hooks, TBA

WEEK 8

- Tuesday, June 2 Rita Dove, *On the Bus with Rosa Parks* (1999)
Anne Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*
- Thursday, June 4 **Research day—we do not meet as a class**
(Reschedule: Rosmarie Waldrop, *Reluctant Gravities* (1999))

WEEK 9

- Tuesday, June 8 Keith Waldrop, *Silhouette of the Bridge* (1989)
- Thursday, June 10 **Final paper due, 15-18 pp.**
Present selected close reading in class