

LIT3383-01: WOMEN IN LITERATURE  
The Gaze and Representation in Contemporary Fiction  
MTWR 12:15-1:45 WMS 201

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Office Hours: by appointment at the Sweet Shop on Campus

**Critical/Theoretical Texts:**

“Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” by [Laura Mulvey \(pdf\)](#);

**Art on My Mind by bell hooks**

**Our Readings:**

*Art On My Mind* by bell hooks (1995), ISBN-10: 1565842634 (book)

“Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema” by Laura Mulvey (pdf)

“Oppressive Texts, the Resisting Readers, and the Gendered Spectator: The New Aesthetics” by Mary Devereaux (pdf)

Poetry:

*The Portable Dorothy Parker* (1976), ISBN-10: 0140150749

Short Stories:

“Big Blonde” from the *Portable Dorothy Parker*

“Bernice Bobs Her Hair” by F Scott Fitzgerald

[“A&P”](#) by John Updike

*The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter, ISBN-10: 014017821X

Novels:

*Sula* by Toni Morrison (2004), ISBN-10: 1400033438

*The Virgin Suicides* by Jeffrey Eugenides (2002) ISBN-10: 9780312428815

**Course Description:**

This course considers contemporary fiction—in the short and long form—written by and about women in order to better understand our socially constructed ideas surrounding female identity. As a critical foundation, we will read Laura Mulvey’s “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975) and discuss her concept of the Male Gaze. Meanwhile, essays from bell hooks’s *Art on My Mind: Visual Politics* will also lay down a critical foundation for us to understand how certain characters, narrative perspectives, and plot lines represent political ideas about different kinds of people. From there, we will read a variety of short stories and novels that both challenge and inform Mulvey’s and hooks’s ideas. We will discuss whether these literary examples help to *construct, deconstruct, or reconstruct* female identity on the page.

## Course Goals

By the end of this course, you should have an understanding of

- the major themes and formal aspects of the novels and short stories under discussion
- these fictions in relation to their literary and cultural contexts
- the presentation of gender in these novels and the representation of women in contemporary fiction
- how to approach a text through a distinct critical lens

By the end of this course, you should be able to

- analyze fiction from a distinct critical standpoint
- demonstrate an ability to read and understand theoretical texts
- discuss the role of gender and race in a literary text
- persuasively present in writing your original interpretation of at least one short story or novel in a longer research paper

## Assignments

### **Response to Critical Text: 100 points (10%)**

Due in the second week, this assignment provides a concise summary and response to a critical article of the student's choice. Ideally, this text will later be used in the literary analysis paper. The critical text *may not be one of the assigned readings* (though students are encouraged to use an un-discussed article from *Art on My Mind*).

### **Literary Analysis Paper: 300 points (30%)**

Due on the last day of class, each student will chose a critical angle/concept from our theoretical texts apply it as a lens for interpreting one of our literary fiction readings. Students are encouraged to put this concept in relationship with other critical

### **Proposal: 150 points (15%)**

This is an in-depth description the long paper, which provides a thesis, major points/questions to explore, and conclusion. MLA style, 1-2 pages, double-spaced.

### **Annotated Bibliography: 150 points (15%)**

This document will provide MLA citations and descriptions of the secondary sources to be used in the paper.

### **Five Weekly Quizzes: 100 points, 20 points each (10%)**

Each Thursday students will answer roughly ten questions that review content of the readings and major concepts

**Final Exam: 200 points (20%)**

Total: 1000 points

Tips for success:

Read when you can

Participate

Get a study group

## PACING CALENDAR:

### WEEK ONE

June 29: Welcome

June 30: [Laura Mulvey \(pdf\)](#);

[“Shashimi Cashmere” by Carolyn Forde](#) (We will read in class.)

July 1: Mary Devereaux (pdf) “Pornography” by Steve Almond.

July 2: bell hooks: “Facing Difference” (94); “Women Artists” (125); “Being the Subject of Art” (133) **Quiz I**

### WEEK TWO:

July 6: “Bernice Bobs Her Hair” by F Scott Fitzgerald

July 7: [“Battle Royale”](#) by Ralph Ellison and “Representing the Male Body” (hooks 202);

July 8: “A&P” by John Updike

July 9: “The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars” by Junot Diaz (1998). **Quiz II**

### WEEK THREE: *The Virgin Suicides*

July 13: *The Virgin Suicides*

July 14: Chapters 1-2

July 15: Chapters 3-4

July 16: To end. **Critical Response (2-3 pages); Quiz III**

### WEEK FOUR: *The Bloody Chamber*

July 20: “The Bloody Chamber” (7-40); [“Angela Carter and the Gaze” \(blog\)](#);

July 21: “The Courtship of Mr. Lyon” and “The Tiger Bride” (41-68)

July 22: “Puss in Boots,” “The Erl King” and “The Snow Child” (69-92)

July 23: “The Lady of the House of Love,” “The Werewolf,” “The Company of Wolves, and “Wolf-Alice” (93-end). **Critical Response (2-3 pages); Quiz III Quiz IV**

### WEEK FIVE: *Sula*

July 27 1-50 **Annotated Bibliography Due**

July 28 51-100

July 29 100-150

July 30 150-end **Quiz V**

### WEEK SIX:

Aug 3 The Portable Dorothy Parker

Aug 4 The Portable Dorothy Parker

Aug 5 The Portable Dorothy Parker

August 6 **Final Exam; Final Paper Due**

## CRITICAL RESPONSE PAPER

**Due:** In class on Thursday, July 16th

**Length:** 2-3 pages (500-750 words)

**Format:** Double Spaced, Times New Roman, hard copy

### **WHAT:**

A summary and response of a short critical text, that should define and explain new terms and concepts that relates to our class discussion.

### **HOW:**

Choose a text that proposes some sort of theoretical concept that somehow relates to the concepts we've been discussing in class. You are encouraged, but not required to use another chapter (un-discussed) from *Art on My Mind*. You may also use the library databases such as JSTOR or ProjectMUSE to find the critical text. It does not have to be from a feminist critical lens, but that might be a good place to start. You can use critical material from other lenses (example: critical race theory, post-structuralism, etc), or fields, such as American Studies, Visual Art, Film Studies, Psychology, Social Work, etc. You may use a critical article that interprets another text (for instance, an interpretation of the film *Vertigo*), as long as you are able to summarize and relate its critical ideas and apply them to our course discussions.

### **WHY:**

To demonstrate an ability to find an outside critical argument and relate it to the discussions we've been having in class. Also, to practice engaging complicated, heady ideas, and putting them in your own words.

### **TIP:**

Choose a article/concept that you can apply when your write your long paper.