

Representations of Women: Law, Literature, and Gender
Spring 2011
Professor Kalsem

Course No. 24-PRSP-713
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Course Materials

Dow, <i>Far and Beyon'</i>	Doyle, <i>The Woman Who Walked Into Doors</i>
Eliot, <i>Adam Bede</i>	Feinberg, <i>Stone Butch Blues</i>
Morrison, <i>Beloved</i>	Wollstonecraft, <i>Maria</i>

Other course materials will be available on TWEN.

Course Description

Explaining that there are “some things that just cannot be said by using the legal voice,” Lucinda Finley writes, “Rage, pain, elation, the aching, thirsting, hungering for freedom on one’s own terms, love and its joys and terrors, fear, utter frustration at being contained and constrained by legal language--all are diffused by legal language.” In this course, we will focus on legal and literary language and narratives. Specifically, we will examine various literary texts that “perform feminist jurisprudence” by providing a forum for the expression of women’s stories and experiences that the law may fail to take into account or consider irrelevant and by exploring the limitations of legal language, analysis, and method. We will read several novels, short stories, essays, and poems written by authors of different eras, races, ethnicities, genders, classes, and sexual orientations. We also will read related statutes, court opinions, and critical articles that will help us to dialogue on the multiple and possible meanings of feminist jurisprudence.

Required Assignments and Grading

Weekly participation (incl. class presentation and discussion questions)	25%
Research "text and context" paper (25 pages)	75%
Two short reflection papers (ungraded)	

SYLLABUS.

Weeks 1-2: “Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors”: Women’s Place in Law and Society: A Historical Perspective

- 1/24 Introduction to the course and each other
Chopin, “The Story of an Hour”
Finley, “Breaking Women’s Silence in Law: The Dilemma of the Gendered Nature of Legal Reasoning”
Cobbe, “Criminals, Idiots, Women, and Minors”
- 1/31 Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman: or, Maria: A Fragment*
Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (handout on coverture)

The next novel we will read is George Eliot’s *Adam Bede* (to be discussed February 7th and 14th).