

**English 381R: Topics in Women's Literature**  
***Southern Women's Writing***  
**Fall 2015**

Tuesday/Thursday 1:40-3:20 pm

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Office location: Humanities Hall 205A  
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 pm, and other times by appt.

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**Texts**

Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding*  
Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories*  
Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard*  
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Copies of these books are available through the Oxford College Bookstore. You may choose to purchase these texts elsewhere; if so, please get the same editions that we are using in class.

**Articles & Films**

You are required to read several essays and articles as well. These are available as PDFs online via our course eReserves and Blackboard sites. Always bring your assigned text to class—**therefore, please print out the assigned articles or essays. Please do not bring laptops to class unless instructed to do so.**

**Course Theme:** In this course, we will examine the ways in which modern and contemporary southern women writers have sought to disrupt and disturb the dominant conceptions and images of "southern white womanhood" through their creative works (including novels, short stories, essays, memoirs, and songs) and through their activism. We will discuss how these writers have represented the South through their texts and what impact their racial, gender, sexual, class and regional identities have had on their lives and their writing. And we will also talk about the role that popular media has played in popularizing certain images of southern womanhood and what these images mean in terms of who is included in and excluded from such categorization. Although this course cannot touch upon all regions of the South nor upon all of its constituents and writers, it seeks to offer a varied sampling of women's experiences and creative contributions within the Southeastern United States.

**Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

Students will be able to:

1. Read more closely & critically
2. Identify key authors and texts within the subfield of Southern women's writing/ Southern literature
3. Understand key terms within Southern literary studies
4. Identify and explicate key themes within a text and make thematic connections across texts
5. Produce a research project that includes a paper of 10-plus pages (or alternative format) and an oral presentation

6. Appreciate the contributions of Southern women writers to the fields of women's literature, Southern literature, and American literature more broadly

### Email

I am always happy to speak with you in person about your coursework but am also happy to field your questions over email. When emailing me (or any professor or staff member, for that matter), please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1. Use an appropriate subject line for your message.
2. *Always* start your message with an appropriate greeting, such as "Dear Professor McGehee" or "Dr. McGehee—" (as opposed to "Hey").
3. Use a professional and respectful tone within your message.
4. Proofread your message before sending. (A good way to do that and to check tone is to read the message aloud before clicking Send.)

### Oxford College Writing Center

I strongly encourage you to take your essays to the Writing Center. You may do so at any stage in the writing process, but the Writing Center director and I advise you not to wait until the day before the essay is due. You could go for help to get started, to organize and develop your ideas in a rough draft, or to learn to recognize and correct errors in grammar and punctuation in a revised draft. **Fall 2015 hours are Sunday-Thursday, 3-11 pm.** The center is located on the second floor of the library. You may sign up online for an appointment at: <http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/centers-institutes-programs/writing-center/>.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and class participation	100 points
Weekly reading responses (5)	50 points
Essays (2)	200 points
Group Research project*	200 points
Final Reflection	50 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>600 points</b>

[Possible point total may change over the course of the semester due to schedule changes.]

### GRADING

The grading system for this course relies on a point system, meaning that **you start with a 0 in this course**. The only way to go is up, in other words! Each component of the course is worth a certain number of points (see Course Requirements below). Your grade will be determined by dividing the number of points *you earned* by the total number of *possible* points (not including extra credit), which totals **600** for this semester. The grading scale is as follows: A 100-92; A- 91-90; B+ 89-88; B 87-82; B- 81-80; C+ 79-78; C 77-72; C- 71-70; D+ 69-68; D 67-60, F 59 and below.

### DISCUSSIONS & ATTENDANCE

- **Class Participation:** The success of this class depends on you (and a little bit on me). You are responsible both for attending each class session and for participating in the lively and informed discussions that will no doubt result from your having thoroughly and thoughtfully completed the assignments for each day.

- If you tend to be a less vocal participant in classroom discussions, send your thoughts or questions to me via email, talk to me after class, etc.
- Participation also involves “active” listening, including eye contact, nodding, smiling, raising eyebrows, and taking notes.
- Texting and being generally disruptive during class meetings will **NOT** earn you participation points.
- If you are disruptive in class (talking while I am talking, sleeping, or engaging in any other form of distracting behavior), I will ask you to leave, and you will be marked absent for that day.
- **Attendance: You are allowed 2 absences in this course.**
  - For each absence beyond 2, you will lose 1 point from your final grade average. (For example, you have a 90 average at the end of term, but you were absent 5 times total. Because of the 3 excessive absences, you would lose 3 points on that average, leading to an 87 for the course.)
  - That said, please talk to me in advance about **accommodations for religious holidays/observances**.
  - Be on time. If you come to class more than 10 minutes late, you will be counted as absent.
  - If you miss class, you are responsible for obtaining notes from a classmate.
  - Please don’t email me with the following question: “Did I miss anything important in class today?” My answer will always be “yes.”
- **Technology: ALL CELL PHONES SHOULD BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS!**
  - Texting during class automatically negates any participation points earned during class that day. This is by far by #1 pet peeve—arrgghhhh!!!!
- **Grading:** At midterm, you will receive a participation grade out of 50 points. At the end of the semester, you will receive an additional participation grade out of 50 points. **Possible points: 100 points**

#### READING RESPONSES (5)

- See the handout at the end of this syllabus for more info about this assignment as well as the due dates.
- You will submit **5 reading responses** in this course—that is one per week except during weeks when a take-home test or portion of the research project is due. (Note: You have 7 opportunities for reading responses, but you only have to submit 5.)
- **Late responses will not be accepted.**
- These responses are to be 350 words (or more) each, and you should also include 1-2 discussion questions at the end of the response that you would like to address in our class meetings.
- You will post the responses to Blackboard under Assignments and be prompted to run each assignment through SafeAssign, a tool for preventing plagiarism.
- I recommend typing a response in Word first, checking your word count and spelling, and then cutting and pasting the response into Blackboard.
- These responses are intended to help prepare you for class discussion and to provide you with practice writing.
- The responses are also intended to take the places of quizzes. However, if I feel folks aren’t reading, I reserve the right to start giving quizzes.

- Each response is worth a maximum of 10 points. **Total possible points: 50 points maximum (5 responses x 10 points max each).**

### ESSAY TESTS (2)

- For the first essay, you will be asked to respond to a question in an essay of approx. 6-8 pages. For the second essay, you will formulate the question (with assistance from me) and write an essay of approx. 6-8 pages in response to that question.
- **Total possible points: 200 points max. (100 points per essay test)**

### GROUP RESEARCH PROJECT

Topic statement and research questions	20 points
Bibliography	30 points
Paper	100 points
Presentation	50 points
<b>Total</b>	<b>200 points</b>

**This project takes the place of a final exam, and you will work in a self-selected group of 2-3 to complete it. However, if you prefer to work solo, please talk with me as soon as possible.**

For the project, you are to research a topic of your choice related to the themes and main ideas of this course. You will be asked to turn in a topic statement, an annotated bibliography of approximately 6-8 sources, and a paper (or other “product”) in which you present your findings (approx. 8-10 pages). You will also be asked to share your research with the class in a presentation (time length TBD, but probably ~10-12 minutes).

In terms of topics, this is an open-ended assignment—you will just want to make sure that your topic relates in some way to the themes or ideas of the course. I will provide you with a possible list of ideas and work with you to develop your ideas...but you are free to choose your own focus. I do encourage you, however, to avoid topics for which there are very few peer-reviewed sources available.

If you have a format other than a research paper that you would like to try out—e.g., a short documentary film, some sort of website, etc.—come and talk to me, but just know that I have limited technical expertise to provide.

We will go through each step of the research and writing process in class, and I will provide handouts for each stage. Below is an overview of what will be required in this process. Along the way, we will meet about your research, but I am always happy to meet with you by appointment to discuss your ideas and progress. **Total possible points: 200 points maximum**

1. **Topic statement & research questions**—You should begin thinking about a research topic as soon as possible. Your topic should focus on a southern woman writer and her work(s) or on a topic related to southern women’s writing more broadly. Feel free to be creative and original in your topic selection, but also be sure to run your ideas by me after class or during office hours before committing to an idea. **20 points**

2. **Working annotated bibliography**—The next step is to begin formulating your research questions and compiling sources that will assist you in answering these questions. Our class meeting with a research librarian should aid you in this process. You will turn in a bibliography containing a minimum of 10 sources (primary and secondary sources). For each source, you should write a brief summary of the author's focus or main argument and also briefly discuss why this source is relevant to your topic. The bibliography should follow the proper MLA bibliographical format, which we will discuss in class. **30 points**
3. **Optional rough draft**—You may submit a rough draft for my review.
4. **Final draft**—Your final draft should incorporate suggestions from the feedback you receive on your draft. You should also review your essay tests from the semester to identify common grammatical or syntactical errors in your writing. Your final draft should include a correctly formatted Works Cited page. **100 points**
5. **Short Presentation**—You should prepare ~10-minute presentation, using Powerpoint or Prezi, in which you talk about the topic of your paper, what you argue in it, how you became interested in the topic, and anything else that you would like for us to know! Keep in mind that **structure, clarity, and enthusiasm** are the keys to an effective presentation. Feel free to bring images, video clips, or other forms of media into your presentation. Each person should contribute equally to the presentation (and project overall!). **50 points**

#### EXTRA CREDIT

Throughout the semester, I will give you opportunities to raise your point total by attending and writing up a summary of outside events—such as lectures, films, performances, or exhibitions—that relate to the topics and themes of this course. If you have suggestions for such events, email your ideas to me for approval, and I will post them to Blackboard. Most events will be worth **2-3 points**. The maximum you may earn is 8 points.

#### HONOR CODE

<http://oxford.emory.edu/academics/student-services/student-honor-code/>

The Honor Code applies to all assignments, in and out of the classroom. **All work in this course must be entirely your own.** The bottom line: don't use someone else's ideas or words without proper citation. (This includes websites like Sparks Notes!) I am always happy to discuss with you when something needs to be acknowledged and properly cited, but it is up to you to see me before your written work is due to ask your questions about documenting sources.

**OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES (ODS):** <http://www.ods.emory.edu/students/index.html>

ODS will offer qualifying students academic accommodations such as alternative testing, notetaking, interpretation, etc. **Students must register and request those services.** To do so, contact the Office of Disability Services at Emory University or Oxford College.

**COUNSELING AND CAREER SERVICES (CCS):** <http://oxford.emory.edu/counseling/>

CCS provides many services at no cost to help address students' personal and career development needs, including personal counseling, career counseling, and psychiatric services. To schedule an appointment, call 770.784.8394.

### Tentative\* Schedule of Reading and Assignments

[\*This reading schedule is subject to change should we need more time on a text; I will not change due dates of assignments except when it might be helpful to the class.]

#### Defining Modern & Contemporary “Southern Women’s Writing” (and “Southern Women” for that matter)

**Th 8/27** Introductions/ Review of Syllabus  
Discussion of images of and myths about “southern women”

**T 9/1** *Blackboard*:  
1) Anne Goodwyn Jones, “Other Southern Women and the Voices of the Fathers: On Twentieth-Century Writing by Women in the U.S. South,” from Melissa Walker, et al., *Southern Women at the Millennium*  
2) Kate Chopin, “Désirée’s Baby” (1894) and “The Story of An Hour” (1894)

#### Canonical Voices

**Th 9/3** *Blackboard*: short stories by Eudora Welty, “Why I Live at the P.O.” and “Flowers for Marjorie” from *A Curtain of Green* (1941)

Reading Response #1 due this week

**T 9/8** *Blackboard*: short stories by Eudora Welty, “Livvie” from *The Wide Net* (1943) and “Where Is the Voice Coming From?” (*The New Yorker*, July 1963)

Reading Response #2 due this week

**Th 9/10** Carson McCullers, *The Member of the Wedding* (1946), read to p. 62

**T 9/15** *The Member of the Wedding*, read to p. 123  
**Th 9/17** Finish *The Member of the Wedding*

Reading Response #3 due this week

**T 9/22** Flannery O’Connor, selections from *The Complete Stories*:  
1) “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”/ “Good Country People” (1955)

Reading Response #4 due this week

**Th 9/24\*** O’Connor—“Everything that Rises Must Converge”/ “Revelation” (1965)

**\*Possible field trip to Milledgeville to see O’Connor’s home, Andalusia, departing 1:30 pm**

**T 9/29** 1) O’Connor—“A Late Encounter with the Enemy”  
2) *Blackboard*: Alice Walker’s essay, “Beyond the Peacock: The Reconstruction of Flannery O’Connor” from *In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens*

**Th 10/1** *Jump at the Sun* documentary about Zora Neale Hurston (in class)  
**TOPIC STATEMENT DUE in class**

#### Dynamiting the Rails

**T 10/6** Essay #1 due in class (hard copy) and post to Blackboard by classtime  
Library Information Session, location TBD

**Th 10/8**      *Blackboard:* 1) Lillian Smith, “When I Was a Child” from *Killers of the Dream* (1949) and 2) Anne Moody, Ch. 10-13 from *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1968)

**T 10/13**      **No Class—Fall Break**  
**Th 10/15\***      Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, 1-71  
                 **Possible Field Trip to MARBL at Woodruff Library,**  
                 **Atlanta Campus—transportation TBD**

**Reading Response #5 due  
for all on Th 10/15**

**T 10/20**      *The Color Purple*, 72-143  
**Th 10/22**      *The Color Purple*, 144-224  
**F 10/23**      **Annotated Bibliography due to Bb by 5pm**

**T 10/27**      Finish *The Color Purple*  
**Th 10/29**      *Blackboard:* 1) Bobbie Ann Mason, “Shiloh” (1988) and 2)  
                 Lee Smith, “The Interpretation of Dreams” (1990)

**Reading Response #6 due  
this week**

**T 11/3**      *Blackboard:* 1) Dorothy Allison, “Preface: Deciding to Live”; 2) Allison,  
                 “River of Names” from *Trash* (1988); and 3) Minnie Bruce Pratt, “No  
                 Place” and “Declared Not Fit” from *The Dirt She Ate* (2003)  
                 **Submit question for essay #2 via email by 5pm**

**Th 11/5**      *Blackboard:* Excerpts from Monique Truong’s *Bitter in the Mouth* (2011)

**T 11/10**      **Essay #2 Due in class (hard copy) and post to Bb by classtime**  
                 Southern “Chick Flicks”—clips from films and discussion  
**Th 11/13**      Natasha Trethewey, *Native Guard* (2006), 1-24

**T 11/17**      Finish *Native Guard*  
**W 11/18**      **REQUIRED—7pm: Natasha Trethewey Reading, Williams**  
                 **Auditorium**  
**Th 11/19**      No class—optional meetings to discuss research project

**Reading Response #7 due  
for all on T 11/17**

**T 11/24**      **Presentation on Effective Presentations**  
**Th 11/26**      No Class—Thanksgiving Break

**T 12/1**      **Research Presentations**  
**Th 12/3**      **Research Presentations**

**T 12/8**      **Research Paper/Project Due in class and to Blackboard by class time**  
                 **Research Presentations (extra day if needed)**  
                 Wrap Up

**W 12/16**      **Final Reflection due to Blackboard by 9am**

## **READING RESPONSES**

Reading responses are due to me via Blackboard under Assignments, by class time on Tuesdays or Thursdays, depending on your assigned day.

### **To post your response to Blackboard:**

1. Write your reading response in Microsoft Word and save as a .doc or .docx file.
2. Log into Blackboard at classes.emory.edu.
3. Select our course ENG 381R.
4. Go to Assignments (listed in the Menu on the left).
5. Click on View/Complete for the reading response you wish to complete.
6. Follow the instructions on screen for uploading your response.
7. Please allow Blackboard to run your assignment through SafeAssign. This program will tell you the percentage of content that is in question. The percentage should typically be less than 20%, but be sure to review your work for proper citation and attribution of ideas.
8. Submit the response.

You will write a total of 5 responses throughout the semester. (Note: You have 7 opportunities to write responses, but you only have to submit 5, meaning that you may skip 1 response without penalty.) With each response you can earn a maximum of **10 points** towards your final grade for a total of 50 possible points. Below, you will find the list of due dates for these responses.

- Students whose last names begin with A to M will submit responses on Tuesdays, with the exception of response 5.
- Students with last names N to Z typically submit responses on Thursdays, with the exception of response 7.
- **If you prefer to switch due dates one week, you must let me know by Sunday, 10pm, of the week that the response is due.**

<b>Due Dates</b>	<b>Group 1 (last name A-M)</b>	<b>Group 2 (last name N-Z)</b>
Response 1	T 9/1	Th 9/3
Response 2	T 9/8	Th 9/10
Response 3	T 9/15	Th 9/17
Response 4	T 9/22	Th 9/24
Response 5	*Th 10/15	Th 10/15
Response 6	T 10/27	Th 10/29
Response 7	T 11/17	*T 11/17

**You will not have a response due the same week that an essay OR a major part of your research project is due!**

### **Objectives**

The responses are meant to accomplish the following:

- 1) get you writing on a regular basis,\* and
- 2) ensure that you are not only completing the readings assignments but thinking about them critically before coming to class.\*\*

\*Just like with exercise, it's important to write on a regular basis. If you don't, then your writing weakens. If you do, then you not only become a stronger writer, but writing becomes easier and less daunting. Furthermore, the more writing assignments you have, the more chances you have to get an A!



**\*\*Because this is a discussion-heavy course, I want to make sure you are doing the reading in a way that will allow us to have lots to talk about when we meet each day. I also want to make sure that each of you is able to participate even if you are one of the less vocal members of the class.**

**How do I get 10 out of 10 on each response?**

- These responses are to be at least 350 words in length. Type your response in Word; check the word count using “Word Count” under Tools; and then cut and paste into Blackboard to be sure you have met the required count.
- The response should reflect upon the reading due in class that day. On the days that you have more than one essay or article to read, you may write about only one of the readings without penalty.
- The response should be grammatically correct.
- You should incorporate textual evidence to support your point or conclusion.
- **At the end of your response, you should include 2 questions for in-class discussion.**
- Submit your response by classtime on the day it is due. Late responses will not be accepted.

These responses should be very thoughtful and reflective. They should show that you understand the main points or premises of the reading. But they are also meant to provide you with a more relaxed space in which to play with your ideas and to make connections to your personal experiences. You can use humor and colloquial language, but your response should be intelligent and articulate...and of course, grammatically correct.

What you choose to write about is essentially up to you, but I have provided some prompts for you below. You can respond to one of these, or you can choose to write about a single idea, metaphor, phrase, or fact that piqued your intellectual curiosity.

**The response should relate in some way to the reading that is due in class the following day, not about something you just pulled out of the air.**

**Some prompts** (but feel free to come up with your own!):

The most interesting moment in the reading was: (include reasons)

The biggest surprise in the reading was: (and what does it change about your thinking?)

The most perplexing moment in the reading was: (include reasons)

One moment reminded me of something we read previously... (discuss the parallels you see)

The most powerful moment in the reading was: (include reasons)

This reading turned me off because: (include reasons but avoid ranting)

This reading raised a central question for me: (include the question and your thoughts about it)

**\*\*I will add comments and a grade within a week of your submission, so be sure to check back from time to time to view my comments/suggestions.\*\***