

Las Positas College
3000 Campus Hill Drive
Livermore, CA 94551-7650
(925) 424-1000
(925) 443-0742 (Fax)

Course Outline for ENG 32

U.S. WOMEN'S LITERATURE

Effective: Spring 2015

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

ENG 32 — U.S. WOMEN'S LITERATURE — 3.00 units

Chronicles the expression of U.S. women authors through readings in a variety of genres such as fiction, poetry, drama, and the essay. Study of the works of at least three of the following groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans, with a particular focus on the 20th century. Prerequisite: English 1A (completed with a grade of "C" or higher). 3 hours.

3.00 Units Lecture

Prerequisite

ENG 1A - Critical Reading and Composition
with a minimum grade of C

Grading Methods:

Letter Grade

Discipline:

	MIN
Lecture Hours:	54.00
Total Hours:	54.00

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

Before entering the course a student should be able to:

A. ENG1A

IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- A. Describe the writing of various women authors whose works are not often anthologized or discussed in general literature courses
- B. Demonstrate familiarity with the literature of writers from at least three of the following groups through compare/contrast analysis:
African Americans Asian Americans European Americans Latinos Native Americans
- C. Read women's literature critically, using pre-reading, reading, and post-reading techniques to engage with and process the text
- D. Write extensively on women's literature and/or texts across the curriculum that illuminate it, whether in journals, blogs, discussion board postings, essays, or documented research papers
- E. Analyze the diversity of the literature while identifying some common themes (such as alienation and self-realization) and topics (such as creative expression and motherhood)
- F. Analyze how an author's use of literary techniques develops a theme
- G. Evaluate the works studied in relation to and as expressions of cultural and historical influences
- H. Synthesize information from primary and secondary researched sources to deepen and broaden interpretation of women's literature
- I. Recognize aspects of students' personal experiences reflected in the literature
- J. Apply knowledge of shifting racial definitions, formation, identity, and relationships to the interpretation of literature
- K. Evaluate how national identity/ies inform the creation of literature, whether in terms of form or theme
- L. Evaluate the tension between individual artistry and resistance to stereotype and/or advancement of a group, whether defined by gender, sexual preference, racial group, or a combination of these, as well as tensions between "authentic" racial expression and assimilation to Anglo-American, male literary standards.

V. CONTENT:

- A. Representative samples of literary works by women, including poetry, drama, essays, and fiction, including at least one novel;
- B. Supplemental readings and lectures giving historical, critical, and thematic context for the literary works, highlighting the variety of perspectives, experiences, cultures, and classes of women and their interrelationships, especially in the 20th century;
- C. Evaluation of diction, form, and structure of the works and how they contribute to the writer's purpose;
- D. Thematic examination of the works, exploring both areas of diversity and commonality;
- E. Primary and secondary sources for further study including synthesis and critical analysis;
- F. Emphasis on critical thinking, reading and writing:
 1. recognizing and distinguishing between denotative and connotative language
 2. exploring social, cultural, and rhetorical uses of literary works;
 3. writing summaries, critical analysis, subjective responses.

G. Student Presentations

1. providing more information on an author or approach being considered in class (for example, providing information on the rediscovery of Kate Chopin in the 1970s by feminist literary critics if the class is reading Chopin's *The Awakening*).
2. introducing students to writers or literary movements not being covered in class (for example, presenting information on writers of the Harlem Renaissance to complement students' understanding of Zora Neale Hurston's essays and novel *Eyes Were Watching God*.)
3. providing background on a culture, cultural event, or cultural movement that impacted development of the literature (for example, the impact of black feminists' disputes with black male civil rights leaders and white feminists on the literature)

VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

A. Lecture -

B. Discussion -

C. Group Work

D. Reading and Writing 1. Reading of three full-length works as well as shorter works including poetry, short stories, autobiography, memoirs, as-told-to narratives; 2. Frequent focused reading responses; 3. Writing of at least two critical essays (including a final exam), a review, and a paper requiring research.

E. Multimedia viewing and analysis

F. Guest Lecturers - Guest lectures by writers and critics when possible

G. Student Presentations -

VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Group Work

1. Read the assigned poem both aloud and to yourself. Freewrite an immediate response. Underline anything in the poem that you don't understand (use one color pen). Discuss your freewrite and the parts you underlined in your small group. After your discussion, reread the poem to yourself and underline anything that you don't understand in a different color. Discuss your new underlined parts with your small group.
2. Working in groups, discuss and analyze why Clare decides to pass as white and Irene decides not to in Nella Larsen's *Passing*. Have one of your group members be the notetaker. All students should write down relevant quotations and page numbers that support the group's observations.

B. Student Presentations

1. Research one of the writers we will read this semester and be prepared to give a 10 – 15 minute background presentation about that writer on the day we are scheduled to discuss her. This presentation will not only provide your classmates with valuable information, but give you an opportunity to develop a deeper appreciation of this writer and her world. You should prepare a bibliography (that lists sources of information about the writer) to hand out in class. Also, there should be some sort of visual / audio component of the presentation – a picture, transparency, video clip, audio recording, collage. There are no strict requirements regarding what you should include in the presentation; however, here are some suggestions which may help you focus your research:
 - a. describe the historical / social / political contexts in which the writer was / is writing;
 - b. discuss relevant or important biographical information about the writer
 - c. summarize critics' opinion of the writer's work;
 - d. as relevant, provide any important information about the literary movement of which the writer was / is a part and describe the writer's style or chosen form. C.

C. Multimedia viewing and analysis

1. View films adapted from the literature assigned: *The Joy Luck Club*, *Smooth Talk*, *Fried Green Tomatoes*. Discuss how they differ from the original literature and whether the theme, message, or impact is changed.
2. View excerpts from documentaries on the writer's under consideration

D. Guest Lectures

1. Scholars of women's literature (A Willa Cather scholar and teacher)
2. Scholars of women's history (Mary Straight)
3. Scholars from interdisciplinary fields like American Studies or Cultural Studies that look at the intersecting issues of race, class, and gender in women's writing.

E. Reading

1. For this assignment, you will select a book by a U.S. woman writer to read and review. The review is due the day of the final, and you must make copies of your review or the entire class. If you would like me to make copies, please give me your review by . You may single or double space your review, but it must be typed or word-processed. You should also be prepared to briefly summarize your opinion of this book for the class (in about two minutes). Attached is a sample, annotated review and a list of guidelines. Remember, you shouldn't describe the whole book; your reader is someone who might be reading this book.

F. Writing

1. Essay

- a. In an essay, compare and/or contrast the images of motherhood presented in three of the following texts: Brent's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harper's *The Slave Mother*, Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Chopin's *The Awakening*, Brooks' "The Mother," LeSeur's "Annunciation," Olsen's "Tell Me a Riddle," Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," Paley's "Enormous Changes at the Last Minute," Russ's "When It Changed." Consider the following questions in your essay as applicable:
 1. How does each of the female protagonists view her role as mother?
 2. What might the similarities or differences in the depictions of the role of mother suggest about each protagonist's social/economic class?
 3. In what ways do their roles as mothers help or hinder their attempts to satisfy their personal/creative/intellectual needs? How might each writer's depiction of the role of the mother and its effects on women reflect the time in which the story was written? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support our claims.
 - b. Many of the texts we've read explore the formation of personal and/or social identity. In your essay, compare and/or contrast two to three of the following texts, examining the way(s) in which the authors portray changes in the characters' perceptions of themselves: Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Chopin's *The Awakening*, Davis' *Life in the Iron Mills*, Sin Far's "The Inferior Woman," Paley's "Enormous Changes . . ." Piercy's "Barbie Doll," Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been," Tan's "Two Kinds," Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*. Consider the following:
 1. How does the character perceive him/herself in the beginning of the story and how does this change?
 2. What causes the change?
 3. What is significant about the change? Be sure to use evidence to support your claims.
2. In an essay using 2-3 outside sources, relate how Alice Walker's fiction challenged the African-American literary establishment.
 3. Reading Journal a. Writing can be a powerful means of gaining a greater understanding of our experiences. Your assignment is to keep a weekly journal in which you will use writing to explore your experience with the texts we're reading in this class. Write two pages a week responding to an assigned text. The only requirement is that your response begin as a reaction to the text. You might focus on some aspect of the text(s) you find particularly intriguing or memorable: an idea, an episode, a character, an image, a description. Please cite page number for quick reference.
 4. In-class writing: Some of the poems we have read revise myths. In your essay, discuss one of these poems, focusing on the

following questions:

- a. What is the original myth?
 - b. How does the writer revise this myth?
 - c. What does the revision suggest about the underlying message of the poem? You have seventy-five minutes to write this essay.
5. Oral History Project
- a. The purpose of this assignment is to deepen your understanding of a woman considered an "elder" in your family or a "mentor" in your community. To complement your reading about U.S. women's literature, you'll have the opportunity to learn by designing and asking questions, actively listening and taking notes, and interacting with your interviewee. You'll write a three-page paper and give a short presentation to the class, sharing the results of your interview. Your paper should describe:
 1. background information
 2. outcomes of the interview
 3. analysis of the interview, and
 4. other observations, responses, and interpretations.

VIII. EVALUATION:

A. **Methods**

1. Exams/Tests
2. Quizzes
3. Research Projects
4. Papers
5. Oral Presentation
6. Projects
7. Class Participation
8. Class Work
9. Final Performance
10. Other:
 - a. Final Exam
 - b. Reading quizzes
 - c. Research required for homework or one more extensive research project
 - d. Formal, graded essays responding to the literature
 - e. Oral Presentation of an author or a trend/theme/dilemma in women's literature
 - f. Reading Journal
 1. Regular 2-page journal entries responding to an assigned text. Evaluation based on: Accurately summarizing the text and relating ideas from the text to one's own experiences, thoughts, and / or ideas from other texts.
 - g. Oral History Project
 - h. Participation in Group Work and Class Discussions

B. **Frequency**

1. One final exam
2. Multiple reading quizzes
3. One or more small research assignments, one more extensive research project if assigned
4. Two formal, graded essays
5. One oral presentation, if assigned
6. Multiple journal entries
7. One oral history project, if assigned
8. Daily participation in small group work and class discussion

IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Cahill, Susan *Growing Up Female: Stories by Woman Writers from the American Mosaic.*, Penguin, 1993.
2. Cisneros, Sandra *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories.*, Vintage Books, 1991.
3. Erdrich, Louise *The Master Butchers Singing Club.*, Harper Perennial, 2005.
4. Gilbert, Sandra, and Susan Gubar. *Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism: A Norton Reader.*, Norton, 2007.
5. Martine, Wendy, ed. *More Stories We Tell: The Best Contemporary Short Stories by North American Women.*, Pantheon Books, 2004.
6. Setterfield, Diane *The Thirteenth Tale: A Novel.*, Atria Books, Simon & Schuster, 2006.
7. Showalter, Elaine *Sister's Choice: Tradition and Change in American Women's Writing.*, Clarendon Press, 1991.
8. Tan, Amy *The Joy Luck Club.*, Ivy Books, 1989.
9. Wagner, Linda Martin, and Cathy N. Davidson *The Oxford Book of Women's Writing in the United States.*, Oxford University Press, 1995.
10. Walker, Alice *The Color Purple.*, Mariner Books, 2003.
11. Senna, Danzy *Caucasia.*, Riverhead, 1999.
12. Lahiri, Jhumpa *The Interpreter of Maladies.*, Mariner, 1999.
13. Karim, Persis. *Tremors: New Fiction by Iranian-American Writers.*, U of Arkansas P, 2013.
14. Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches.*, Crossing Press, 2007.
15. Mourning Dove. . *Cogewea, The Half-Blood: A Depiction of the Great Montana Cattle Range.*, U of Nebraska P, 1981.
16. Piatt, Beth. *Domestic Subjects: Gender, Citizenship, and Law in Native American Literature.*, Yale UP, 2013.
17. Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.* 4th ed., Aunt Lute, 2012.
18. Lee, Rachel. *The Americas of Asian American Literature: Gendered Fictions of Nation and Transnation.*, Princeton UP, 1999.

X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: