**CORE106 Fall 2015**

**September 9, 2015**

**Lecture Notes**

Virginia Woolf *A Room of One's Own*: Chapters 1 & 2

Several themes emerge:

1. The modern style of writing. Reporting a dream.
2. Social construction in action, raising the question: Why? Survival maybe. Protection of a hierarchy? Likely, a theme that pervades chapter 2, capturing the psychological need to preserve superiority, in a social context where everyone suffers.  
     
   The moral: elevating the stature of the individual has not yet fully emerged, especially in a civilization like Britain’s.
3. Relationship of space to be still, meditate, let nothing intrude. Certain the material expectation (£500) is part of this.
4. Another theme: Beauty is living and living is temporary. P. 16 “Beauty of the world which is so soon to perish has two edges: one of laughter, one of anguish…”
5. “Why did men drink wine and women water?” “What effect has poverty on fiction?

“Yet it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top.” (31)

The men who ran the show are STILL angry. (34)

“Life for both sexes is arduous.” (34)

Why can’t women be honest about men?  
  
Does sustenance end hatred?

The story of the dismal origins of the women’s college.

Notice the “Spirit of Peace” reference. Peace is inextricably linked to art and creation. Notice the significance of the war disrupting it.

Note the dreamlike quality of the poetry on page 12. Woolf is trying to suggest that the trance of pre-war upper class Britain could produce the narcotic effect of such breathtaking words. Great literature after the war was jolted by reality that lifted the status of women.

Particularly important in the wake of WWI. Reality intrudes. ““Why, if it was an illustion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place?”

**Questions**:  
  
What does Woolf mean when she says when a subject is highly controversial we cannot hope to tell the truth.” (4)

**Key Quotes:**  
“Fiction is likely to contain more truth than fact.” (4)

“That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library.” LOL (8)

“Why, if it was an illusion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place?”

Notice how Woolf captures human experience in her description of the sensual pleasure of eating on page 10.