

Fall 2008
Tuesday 10:10-12:05
Becker G32
255-9310; ssw6

Professor Shelley Wong
282 Goldwin Smith Hall
Office Hours: Tue 2-4

**English/American Studies/Asian American Studies 453:
Twentieth-Century Women Writers of Color**

This semester, the course will focus primarily on prose fiction written by African American and Asian American women writers. As used here, the term “American” refers to the broader geo-political territory of the hemispheric Americas. Over the past twenty years, the study of what used to more commonly be called “American literature” has increasingly shifted its purview to encompass this broader terrain, so much so that the study of American literature is now often referred to as the study of American literatures. The plurality of literatures includes the varieties of literatures (primarily English-language based) within the U.S. as well as those outside the geopolitical boundaries of the U.S. nation-state.

Course Readings:

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*
Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*
Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*
Ann Petry, *The Street*
Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone*
Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*
Carolivia Herron, *Thereafter Johnnie*

We'll also be reading selections from the following list of essays:

Frantz Fanon, “The Negro and Language”
Annette Kolodny, “Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism”
Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens”
Gloria Anzaldua, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue”
Deborah Cameron, “Why is Language a Feminist Issue?”
Alison M. Jaggar, “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology”
Mae Gwendolyn Henderson, “Speaking in Tongues: Dialogics, Dialectics and the Black Woman Writer’s Literary Tradition”
bell hooks, “Talking Back”
Lisa Lowe, “Work, Immigration, Gender: Asian ‘American’ Women”
M. Nourbese Philip, “The Absence of Writing or How I Almost Became a Spy”
The essays will be posted online on Blackboard.

Course Requirements:

This course will be conducted as a weekly seminar in which collaborative intellectual engagement and sustained dialogue will be the order of the day.

- Regular attendance and completion of assigned readings by the date we begin our discussion of a given text. I check attendance at every class meeting, and unexcused absences will affect your grade.
- Regular participation in class discussion

- Two short (approximately 10-15 minutes) class presentations and a 4-page (double-spaced, typed) write-up of each presentation (each presentation and each write-up constitutes 10% of your final grade). The “write-up” is due one week after the date on which the presentation was delivered in class.
- One 12-15 page term paper (60% of grade)

Syllabus (may be subject to change)

Week 1

September 2 – Introductory remarks

Week 2

September 9 – Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*

Week 3

September 16 – Articles: Frantz Fanon, “The Negro and Language”; Annette Kolodny, “Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism”; Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens”; Deborah Cameron, “Why is Language a Feminist Issue?”; Lisa Lowe, “Work, Immigration, Gender”

Week 4

September 23 – Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Week 5

September 30 – Joy Kogawa, *Obasan*

Week 6

October 7 – Ann Petry, *The Street*

Week 7

October 14 – Carolivia Herron, *Thereafter Johnnie*

Week 8

October 21 – Carolivia Herron, *Thereafter Johnnie*

Week 9

October 28 – Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Week 10

November 4 – Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee*

Week 11

November 11 – Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone*

Week 12

November 18 – Gwendolyn Brooks, *Maud Martha*

Week 13

November 25 – No Class – Thanksgiving Break

Week 14

December 2 – TBA

Term paper is due by 4:30 on Wednesday, December 10. Please leave a hard copy of your essay for me in my English Department mailbox (250 Goldwin Smith) and also send me an electronic version of it by way of an email attachment. The English Department mail room closes at 4:30. I'll be in my office that day from 3:30-4:30, if you'd prefer to leave your paper directly with me.

Plagiarism:

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and not another and must originate with you in form and content, with contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with Cornell's Academic Integrity Code, distributed to students in the Policy Notebook and available on-line at <http://www.cornell.edu/Academic/AIC.html>. The code, together with a guide to Acknowledging the Work of Others, can be downloaded from <http://www.cornell.edu/UniversityFaculty/docs/main.html>. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an "F" for the term.