

Feminist Literature HL 4010

Lecturer: Dr Jenny Mak

Semester 1 AY 2021-2022

Time and Venue: TBC

*Please note that this course syllabus is subject to change.

This course aims to introduce students to the central concepts in feminist theory, and to apply these to the analyses of literary texts. The course will begin with the work of Simone de Beauvoir, whose ideas remain central to the development of feminist literary criticism, feminist theory as well as feminist philosophical thought. In a bid to question prevailing (masculine) representations of women, we move on to consider "the male gaze" in both cinema and literature, and then to the development of "New French" feminisms and *écriture féminine*, or feminine writing, which poses a challenge to Western (masculine) philosophical thought, in order to create a cultural space for female self-representation. We will finally arrive at an evaluation of how contemporary feminism situates itself in relation to postmodernism, whose perspective raises uncertainties about the existence of "the female subject" and therefore the possibility of political agency for women. Such a perspective forces feminism to interrogate the 'nature' of woman and femininity, and question 'universal' statements about what women want, or what 'the female experience' comprises. To this end, this module will also engage in intersectional feminism. Students will be expected to engage with feminism as both an ideology and a literary tool of analysis.

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Wk 1 Introduction: 'One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman'**
Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
Toril Moi, *What is a Woman*
- Wk 2 Women and Representation I: Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Madness and Motherhood**
Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*
- Wk 3 Women and Representation II: The Male Gaze**
Vertigo, dir. Albert Hitchcock
Alien, dir. Ridley Scott
- Wk 4 Women and Representation III: The Female Gaze?**
Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*
- Wk 5 Women and Representation IV: Do Women Write Differently? + Introduction *Écriture Feminine*: Irigaray and Cixous**
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*
Marguerite Duras, *The Lover*
Helene Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*
Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman; This Sex Which Is Not One*
- Wk 6 Gender and Sexuality I**
Monique Wittig, *One is not Born a Woman*
Adrienne Rich, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*
Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*

Wk 7	Postmodernism and Feminism <i>Alien Resurrection</i> , dir. Jean-Pierre Jeunet Donna Haraway, <i>A Cyborg Manifesto</i>
Wk 8	RECESS
Wk 9	Gender and Sexuality II Judith Butler, <i>Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory</i> ; <i>Bodies That Matter</i> Jeanette Winterson, <i>Oranges are Not the Only Fruit</i> Carmen Maria Machado, <i>Her Body and Other Parties</i>
Wk 10	Intersectional Feminist Criticism I: 'Women of Color' Kimberle Crenshaw, <i>Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color</i> Alice Walker, <i>The Color Purple</i>
Wk 11	Intersectional Feminist Criticism II: The Third World Woman? Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, <i>Can the Subaltern Speak?</i> Nawal El Saadawi, <i>Woman at Point Zero</i> Jean Rhys, <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>
Wk 12	Intersectional Feminist Criticism III: The Third World Woman? Continued Jamaica Kincaid, <i>Lucy</i> Balli Kaur Jaswal, <i>Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows</i>
Wk 13	New Materialism, the Post-Human and Feminist Theory + Overview Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> <i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> , dir. George Miller
Wk 14	Class Test

Method of Instruction

3-hour seminar

Student Assessment

Assessment dates TBC Term 1

100% Continuous Assessment

Essay 1 (2500-word context-based essay) 25%

Essay 2 (2500-word general essay) 25%

Blog Project (3 posts over 14 weeks) 25%

End of Term Assessment (2.5h open book essay test) 25%