

In Winter & Spring, 2009, I will be revising this course, with the help of a Discover Grant. The course will be revised so that it fulfills new core requirements in Diversity and Pathways BOTH in Justice and the Arts AND in Vocation. See new title in my starter draft of the new course description, also attached in a separate MS Word document.

English 168: Modern and Contemporary Women Poets and Spirituality Spring 2007

Office phone: 408 554 4001
Office: St. Joseph's 315
Office hours: TTh 3.45-5 pm and by appointment

Dr. Judith Dunbar
TTh 9.55-11.50 am
O'Connor 102

Modern and contemporary women poets have voiced ideas important to feminist criticism and theory as well as to feminist theology and spirituality, such as (1) finding a public as well as personal voice in the face of silencing and erasure of women's experience; (2) reshaping language: problems of naming, re-imagining the divine, and of seeking inclusive metaphors for God and for the sacred; (3) claiming agency in the face of systemic oppression; (4) liberatory practice, emphasizing women's experience as a matrix for the growth of spirituality and the struggle for justice. We will study British and American women poets selected from the following, among others: Denise Levertov, Adrienne Rich, Alice Walker, Lucille Clifton, Ntozake Shange, Paula Gunn Allen, Joy Harjo, Pat Mora, Gloria Anzaldua, Janice Mirikitani. Our study of these poets will be in the context of important essays in contemporary feminist, womanist, mujerista, and Asian feminist theory, literary criticism, and theology.

This course is cross listed with the Program for the Study of Women and Gender and thereby fulfills the multicultural course requirement; it also fulfills a requirement in the faith and culture section of the Catholic Studies minor and in gender studies for the English major. It will, in addition, count as an upper division honors course for students in the Honors Program.

Required Texts

Anzaldua, Gloria. Borderlands. La Frontera: The New Mestiza. 2nd ed., San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1999.

hooks, bell. Feminism is for Everybody. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.

Levertov, Denise. New and Selected Essays. New York: New Directions, 1992.

Levertov, Denise. The Stream and the Sapphire. New York: New Directions, 1997. Levertov, Denise. Selected Poems. New York: New Directions, 2002.

Mora, Pat. Aunt Carmen's Book of Practical Saints.

Rich, Adrienne. Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose. Poems, Prose, Reviews and Criticism. Selected and ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi. New York: Norton, 1993.

Sewell, Marilyn. Cries of the Spirit. Boston: Beacon, 1991.

Walker, Alice. Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth. New York: Random House, 2003.

Required Additional Readings in feminist theory, criticism, and theology: will be on ERES and in the Reserve Book area of the Library.

Course Requirements

First Essay: ca. 1000-1500 (on the work of Denise Levertov) 25%

Oral Presentation: ca. 10 minutes each panelist, accompanied by two copies of a full sentence outline, one to be handed in at beginning of class on the day of your presentation. 15%

Final Essay: ca. 1500 words (chosen in consultation with the professor; if you so choose, relate it to the topic of your oral presentation) 25%

Journals: Weekly writing assignments 20%

Participation 15%

Your active participation in class discussion is a vital aspect of the course, as is the quality of

words

your in class presence, active listening and response to others' ideas. You need to commit to completing the reading assigned for each class session prior to it. Your on time attendance is important, and unexcused absences will reduce your grade; to be excused an absence must have official documentation of illness (i.e., doctor's note) or of serious family emergency.

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Course Methods and Assignments (continued)

Attendance at on campus poetry readings may be assigned and will be encouraged.

I will give credit to those who attend the special event with poet Janice Mirikitani Wednesday, April 18, 7:30 p.m., Recital Hall.

Be alert, as well, for opportunities to attend off campus poetry readings and poetry performance events.

Video and audio readings of their work by most of the major poets to be studied will be used. Additional poems and essays may be substituted or added to the syllabus by the professor.

Essays should be typed and follow the MLA (Modern Language Association) format for the Humanities (the format should be in your College English Handbook; the format, with more details re. documentation is in the MLA Handbook for Writers (in bookstore and library). Essays are due at the beginning of class on the day on which they are assigned. In fairness to other students, late papers not accompanied by official documentation of illness or by written explanation of serious family emergency will be marked down (one letter grade for each day).

Essays will be evaluated (in this order) on (1) the quality and development of ideas in depth and detail, including supporting examples and quotations from the poetic text(s) and, when appropriate, from secondary sources; (2) clarity of organization, including a focused introduction and clear step by step argument (including transitions); (3) how effectively you express your ideas and the clarity of your writing style, including grammar, punctuation, spelling, which are integral to clarity and effectiveness; (4) correct documentation and format.

Each of the two essays counts as approximately 25% of your final grade; the second will be weighted more heavily in case of borderline final grades. Journals and oral presentations are 20% each. Additional class participation counts as 10%.

Academic integrity: Avoid plagiarism conscientiously in your papers and outlines for class presentations, noting especially that using general ideas of another person without acknowledgment, even when not specifically paraphrasing or quoting that person directly, is plagiarism. Provide documentation in accordance with standard academic conventions; for our course, follow the current MLA format for documentation. A definition from the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers:

The act of using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source. . . In short, to plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else.

This definition applies when you draw from materials from any source, whether printed or not (e.g., visual and electronic sources), that are quoted, paraphrased, or otherwise used in the preparation of a paper or class presentation. Plagiarism will result in failure in the assignment plus possible failure in the course, a record of your dishonesty filed in the Dean's office and, in some cases, expulsion from the University. When in doubt, document. Please be careful and know I will help with your questions regarding documentation. Department policy also prohibits recycling your own papers written for another class.

Disability accommodation Policy: To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Drahmman Center (Benson 214), 408 554 4111, TTY 408 554 5445, to provide documentation of a disability **prior** to receiving accommodations

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Schedule of Classes

Note: Further detailed assignment of poems and other readings will be made; schedule is also subject to revision. Give special attention and re-readings to poems named. Works marked with asterisks give context to the poems we are reading; they are essays from contemporary feminist, womanist, mujerista, and Asian feminist theory, literary criticism, and theology. * In one of our primary texts; **=on ERES and on Reserve; ***On Reserve

Week I

T 3 Apr Introduction to the course
bell hooks, □ Introduction: Come Closer to Feminism, □ in Feminism is for Everybody (Assignments from hooks will be made throughout the course)

Th 5 Apr Levertov

Essays from New and Selected Essays:

"A Poet's View"; "Work That Enfaiths"; "An Autobiographical Sketch"; "Some Affinities of Content"; "The Poet in the World"; "Poetry and Peace";

Read also, from Selected Poems, □ An Afterword, □ 203-11, and the following POEMS: □ Listening to Distant Guns, □ 1; □ The Instant, □ 7-8; □ Illustrious Ancestors, □ 8-9; □ The Ache of Marriage, □ 30; □ O Taste and See, □ 36; Eros at Temple Stream, □ 37; □ Life at War, □ 65-65; □ Divorcing, □ 104; □ Prayer for Revolutionary Love, □ 106.

Week II

T 10 Apr Initial Journal Assignment Due (see separate sheet)

**Reading: Gilbert, Sandra M. □ Revolutionary Love: Denise Levertov and the Poetics of Politics. □ Denise Levertov: Selected Criticism. Ed. And introd. Albert Gelpi. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 1993: 201-17.

from Selected Poems: "Mass for the Day of St. Thomas Didymus" 130-37; □ St. Thomas Didymus, □ 168-70

Be sure to read from New and Selected Essays: "On the Function of the Line"; "Linebreaks, Stanza-Spaces, and the Inner Voice"; "Technique and Tune-up"

Th 12 Apr Levertov, The Stream and the Sapphire:

Be reading the entire collection for study over the next two weeks, with especial re-readings of: "Human Being"; "Of being"; "The Avowal"; "I learned that her name was Proverb."; "Candlemas"; "Flickering Mind"; "On the Mystery of the Incarnation"; "In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being"; "Altars": "To Live in the Mercy of God"; "Primary Wonder"; "Dom Helder Camara at the Nuclear Test Site"; "The Showings: Lady Julian of Norwich"; "Annunciation"; "What the Figtree Said"; "Ascension"

**Johnson, Elizabeth A. Dangerous Memories. New York: Continuum, 2005, 84-99.

Poems by Janice Mirikitani to be given out

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Week III

T 17 Apr Denise Levertov, The Stream and the Sapphire (see above) and poems by Janice Mirikitani

W 18 Apr I will give credit to those who attend the special event with poet Janice Mirikitani Wednesday, April 18, 7:30 p.m., Recital Hall.

Th 19 Apr from Selected Poems, read whole section from This Great Unknowing, 194-20

VIP: *Have read essays from New and Selected Essays on poetic form:
□Some Notes on Organic Form"; "On the Need for New Terms"; **Re-read** and be sure you know how to apply, for your essay, "On the Function of the Line"; "Linebreaks, Stanza-Spaces, and the Inner Voice"; "Technique and Tune-up"

Week IV

T 24 Apr Alice Walker Poems to be assigned from Absolute Trust in the Goodness of the Earth for today and Thursday 26th
Video of Walker; interview and reading her own poems
Essay on Levertov due

Th 26 Apr Alice Walker
**Walker, Alice. Definition of Womanist from In Search of Our Mother's Gardens, 1983.
Oral Presentation (2-3 persons): on 2-3 selected poem/s of Alice Walker

**Williams, Delores S. □Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities. □ Sisters in the Wilderness. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993, 178-203.

Week V

T 1 May Adrienne Rich
Have read from Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose:
*Rich, □When We Dead Awaken: Writing As Revision□
Of Rich's poems: "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"; "Snapshots of a Marriage in the Sixties"; "The Roofwalker"; "Trying to Talk with a Man"; "The Phenomenology of Anger"; "From a Survivor": "For the Dead"; "Power"; "Transcendental Etude"; "Integrity"

*Also have read essays from Gelpi edition of Rich: *W.H. Auden, Foreword to A Change of World; *Albert Gelpi, □Adrienne Rich: The Poetics of Change□

JOURNALS DUE

Th 3 May Adrienne Rich

Oral Report (2-3 persons) on "Diving into the Wreck"
All: Have read this poem & Rich's "The Stranger," and *Margaret Atwood's
review of Diving into the Wreck, in Gelpi, ed., Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose
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Week VI

T 8 May Adrienne Rich

Oral Report (2-3 persons) on "Sources"
(All members of class to have read this poem)

All have read also: "Yom Kippur, 1984": ; "Solffiggietto"; "Turning"; "Tattered Kaddish"
"Darklight"; "Final Notations"

*Essays: Rich, "Split at the Root: An Essay on Jewish Identity";
"The Genesis of "Yom Kippur 1984"

*Albert Gelpi, "The Poetics of Recovery: A Reading of Adrienne Rich's "Sources""

**Reading: Showalter, Elaine. "A Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in
Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory." Feminisms: An Anthology of
Literary Theory and Criticism. Revised Edition. Ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane
Prince Herndl. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 213-33.

Statement of Topic for Long Paper Due (for all in class)

Th 10 May Sewell, Cries of the Spirit

*Have Read Preface on issues in feminist theory and spirituality
Selections to be assigned to read for class during this week and next to include, and be
supplemented by, poems by the following poets: Lucille Clifton, Ntozake Shange,
Paula Gunn Allen, Joy Harjo

Poems by Lucille Clifton: "Cutting greens," 231; "February 13, 1980," 75; "God send
easter," 212; "holy night," 272; "how he is coming then," 198; "i am running into
a new year," 29; "Kali," 249, "the making of poems," 291, "mary," 271, "raising
of lazarus," 271; "spring song," 212, "to joan," 274

Week VII

T 15 May Sewell, Cries of the Spirit

Lucille Clifton: Oral Report (2-3 persons)

Th 17 May Sewell, Cries of the Spirit

Ntozake Shange, "for colored girls who have considered suicide when the
rainbow is enuf," 252

Oral Presentation (2-3 persons) on this work (draw on full text, not only the
extract in Sewell)

Week XIII

T 22 May Joy Harjo: "Early Morning Woman," 64; "Remember," 234
Video of Harjo performing poems with her band, "Poetic Justice," and of
Interview of Joy Harjo with Greg Sarris

Th 24 May Joy Harjo
**Paula Gunn Allen, from The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in
American Indian Traditions (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

Week IX

T 29 May Anzaldua
*Read: Introduction to the Second Edition by Sonia Saldivar-Hall, which locates
Anzaldua in relation to New Metiza hermeneutics (pp. 1-15); Preface to
the First Edition by Anzaldua, pp. 19-20; interview with Anzaldua by
Karin Ikas, pp. 227-46.

Anzaldua's poems: "Cultures," p. 142; "Cihuatllyotl, Woman Alone," p. 195;
"To live in the Borderlands means you," pp. 216-17

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Th 31 May Anzaldua's essay: "How to Tame a Wild Tongue," pp. 75-86, and
Oral Presentation: 2 persons on the above essay

Anzaldua's poem: "Holy Relics," 176-81

Pat Mora (poems to be assigned)

**Extract from mujerista theologians from Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz and
Yolanda Tarango, taken from their Hispanic Women

Week X

T 5 June Pat Mora (poems to be assigned)

Th 7 June Final Special Journal Entry Due and Final Paper Due

From: Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism. Revised Edition. Ed. Robyn R. Warhol and Diane Prince Herndl. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 1997.

Gilbert, Sandra M. [Revolutionary Love: Denise Levertov and the Poetics of Politics.] Denise Levertov: Selected Criticism. Ed. and introd. Albert Gelpi. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993. 201-17.

Johnson, Elizabeth A. Dangerous Memories. New York: Continuum, 2005. 84-99.

Williams, Delores S. [Womanist-Feminist Dialogue: Differences and Commonalities.] Sisters in the Wilderness. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993. 178-203.