

## Honors Women in Literature: American Women's Poetry (LIT4383)

3 credits; Satisfies: Lit, American Studies Elective, Women's Studies Elective, WAC

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**Required Texts:** *No More Masks! An Anthology of 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Women Poets*  
ed. Florence Howe

Elizabeth Bishop's *Poems* (FSG 2011)

**Recommended:** *Moving Borders: Three Decades of Innovative Writing by Women*, ed. Mary Sloan

**Course Description:** The twentieth century witnessed a renaissance in writing by women, particularly in America. The Women's Movement was at once political and aesthetic (but isn't all art?). Waves of poets, writing together and alone, renovated the American Literary canon from within the confines of otherwise traditional spaces: closed poetic forms. In this way, these poetesses invite us to consider the ways in which the page may be a place for processing and permitting change.

**Course Objective:** We will spend each week examining one or two poets who embody varying aesthetic and political brands of writing. As this is a seminar class, you will be assigned at least six poems by each poet to read *in depth* before the class begins, alongside a critical essay, and everyone will be encouraged to contribute freely throughout our weekly meetings. These assigned readings will include all of the poems published by that week's poet(s) in *No More Masks!*, alongside additional material posted on our class blog. You are encouraged to comment on that material on the blog. There will also be critical readings from *Moving Borders* assigned each week. By the end of this course, students will be familiar with the evolution of women's poetry within the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they will have been introduced to various concepts in feminist theory, they will have learned "how to read a poem" (to borrow Terry Eagleton's phrase), and they will have advanced their college writing skills further, to help ensure a high quality of work on the Honors Senior Thesis.

Blog address : [forthcoming in class] \_\_\_\_\_

**Note of Honors Distinction:** *This course differs substantially from the non-Honors version. First, and most importantly, the course is an agreement between the student and instructor that they will work together collaboratively to ensure a significantly enriched learning experience in a manner consistent with other Honors-designated courses at FAU. This means the course will produce substantive work that reflects interdisciplinarity and connections among academic fields, research and direct access to sources of knowledge pertinent to the field, leadership, creative and critical thinking, and engagement with the world outside the university. Secondly, the writing component of the course will be much more demanding, and will prepare students for upper-division college writing and for work on the **Honors Thesis**. Students will be exposed to vocabulary of a specifically theoretical nature, and will be expected to comprehend new concepts and to deploy these new terms in their own critical thinking and writing. In addition, we will begin professionalizing our own readings and analyses of these texts.*

Students will be expected to familiarize themselves with the history and the ongoing critical and scholarly conversation about these works, and will give in-class presentations about critical history and about the living scholars in the field as it now stands. Students will also engage with the theoretical tools used by today's reading community to study literature. Finally, the course will develop critical attitudes and analytic skills that will teach the student to think for him-or-herself

## **Grading**

**Project (20%):** Your midterm project will be creative and academic in nature. You'll be asked to utilize our virtual learning environment to create an intertextual (and hypertextual) map and analysis of the development and movement(s) of Women's Poetry in mid 20<sup>th</sup> century America. We will discuss this more in class. For now it's important to remember that you'll turn in a 500 word written summary alongside the posting of this project, and that the project will consist of 2000 written words. For each day that this project is late, 10 points will be deducted from your midterm grade. "Late" is defined as one minute past due date and time.

Midterms will be graded according to the following:

- a) Fulfilled details of assignment ( Three Poems are treated; Each poem has five links; Each link includes 100 words of explication/analysis; Introduction of 200 words; Conclusion consists of 300 words)
- b) Engagement (via explications) and precision
- c) Creativity / Imagination
- d) Strength of Argument (as evident throughout explications and conclusion)
- e) Eloquence in 500 word summary/presentation.

**Participation (20%):** Graded according to the following

- 1) Presence on time, in class, fully there (no phones; no naps)
  - 2) Preparedness bringing necessary material to class; a form of presence
  - 3) Contributions thinking deeply about things on your own and sharing those thoughts—even if in the nuanced and relatively safe question form with the class. Being part of seminar. Again, presence.
- Being prepared and present yields 5 participation points per class. The other two possible points per class will be fulfilled by contributions.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required. Should you need to miss class due to health or personal reasons, please present written notice of this at least one hour *before* the class you'll miss, by phone. Each student is permitted one unquestioned personal absence. Using your phone in class will constitute an absence. Each day missed takes 7 points off of your participation grade.

**Final Essay (30%):** Your final essay should engage deeply in the nuances of the primary texts assigned, while also suggesting an awareness of literary, historical and critical contexts. This "awareness" is performed by citing at least two critical essays (not given in class) within your essays. The goal of these essays is to present a structured coherent and persuasive argument. Arguments are made persuasive through sound logic, supportive evidence, and solid writing with

thoughtful (and not perfunctory) transitions. Cite examples and engage with texts, and criticism. No late papers will be accepted.

Papers should be 2500 words in length (give or take 100 words). Topics will be chosen by *you* and approved by the last week of class. Essays will be graded according to the following:

- Coherency (20%)
- Strength of argument (40%)
- Formatting (10%)
- Originality (15%)
- Depth of analysis (which includes research) (15%).

**A note on WAC:** As this is a WAC course we will have an in class workshops on writing, revision and formulating arguments. We will spend a significant time working on improving your writing, and your grade will be based largely on your performance in writing. While we'll be engaging with the words of other writers, we will also become writers ourselves, and will be looking to improve our sense and employment of the relationships between form and content. Before you submit your midterms, you will engage in an in-class peer-review of each other's "argument" paragraphs (to be on the first page of your website). Following the submission of your midterms we will have an in class workshop on writing, in which you will be afforded the opportunity to revise your midterm work. We will also have individual meetings together to rewrite portions of your final papers. As explained above, your written work will constitute a total of 60% of your grade.

**Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) General Requirements:** *This class meets the University-wide Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) criteria, which expect you to improve your writing over the course of the term. The University's WAC program promotes the teaching of writing across all levels and all disciplines. Writing-to-learn activities have proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, learning discipline-specific content, and understanding and building competence in the modes of enquiry and writing for various disciplines and professions. You must receive at least a "C" grade (not a C-) to receive WAC credit.*

*If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide WAC assessment program, you will be required to access the online assessment server, complete the consent form and survey, and submit electronically a first and final draft of a near-end-of-term paper.*

**Presentations (20%):**

Each student will present once. Your presentation should attend to that week's poet and her biographical and historical situation, address two "interesting" details within the work, and note two critical arguments about that work. A detail is "interesting" if it sparked a response in you—agreement, disagreement, confusion, interest, curiosity—these are all responses. Spend time talking about why you felt the way you did, and what other details in text confirm or problematize that feeling. Each presentation should conclude with three discussion questions posed to the class. Please bring a bullet point handout with you to class—one for yourself and one for the professor. You are welcome to bring in handouts for your peers, though they are by no means required. You are required, though, to read this paragraph before your presentation (and before asking what your presentation should entail).

**Online Commentary (10%):**

Each student should comment on at least two blog posts of around 250 words (Blog posts will contain weekly reading assignments). In blog commentary, a less formal voice is welcome. You are encouraged to use this space to practice forming casual and visceral opinions coherently. Comment on anything that you find interesting in the week's reading. Commentary will be graded for individuality of thought, and for concision (making a strong point or leaving a strong impression within 250 words).

**Disability policy statement**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) -- in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Jupiter, SR 119 (561-799-8585) – and follow all OSD procedures. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) -- in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Jupiter, SR 119 (561-799-8585) – and follow all OSD procedures. <http://www.osd.fau.edu/Rights.htm>

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated. “Plagiarism” means representing someone else’s writing as your own – whether that writing is stolen outright, copied off another paper, purchased, or downloaded from the web. FAU presently subscribes to several services that track web sources for student papers in order to discover plagiarism in student writing. The Honors College presently has an Honor Code covering all types of cheating in course work. [http://wise.fau.edu/divdept/honcol/academics\\_honor\\_code.htm](http://wise.fau.edu/divdept/honcol/academics_honor_code.htm). And here is the FAU policy on Academic Integrity: <http://www.fau.edu/ctl/AcademicIntegrity.php>

## **Schedule**

### **1/11 Week 1: Introductions and Contexts**

Mary Wollstoncraft and Margaret Fuller

HW Shakespeare's sister

### **1/18 Week 2: Put Chaos Into Fourteen Lines**

Edna St Vincent Millay and Emily Dickinson

### **1/25 Week 3: Daddy Issues?**

Sylvia Plath

### **2/1 Week 4: Modernist Movements**

Gertrude Stein & Criticism: **In Class Writing Workshop on Lit. Criticism (and writing it)**

### **2/8 Week 5: Objectivism**

HD, Lorraine Neidecker and Amy Lowell

### **2/15 Week 6: National Geographic\***

Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop

### **2/29 Week 8: Making Waves and Wac Work (peer-review of midterm intros)**

Gwendolyn Brooks

### **3/7: Week 9 Spring Break (Midterms Due 3/12 at noon)**

### **3/14 Week 11: Blood Bread and Poetry and Midterm Presentations**

Adrienne Rich

### **3/21 Week 12: "Damn the Fathers"**

Alice Ostriker and Rita Dove

### **3/28 Week 11: "The Pope's Penis"**

Sharon Olds and Elaine Showalter's "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness"

### **4/4 Week 12: LANGUAGE and Black Mountain**

Denise Levertov and Lyn Hejinian. **In class peer-review of writing assignment (homework)**

### **4/11 Week 13: Beatnik Blues**

Anne Waldman and Fanny Howe

### **4/18 Week 14: The Nineties\***

Jorie Graham and Alice Notley

### **4/25 Week 15: Here and Now**

AE Stallings, Mary Oliver and Kay Ryan

**Final Papers Due 4/30 at noon**