

**Syllabus**  
**ENG 432I: Studies in Southern Literature**  
**Southern Women Writers**  
**Fall 2009**

Location of Class Meeting: EVA 226  
Professor: Jim Watkins  
Telephone: 233-4072

Days/Time of Meeting: MWF 11:00-11:50  
Office: Evans 217  
E-mail: jwatkins@berry.edu  
Office Hours: MTWF 2-4; H 9-11 (and by appointment)

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**Course Description**

*Catalog Description:* Advanced study of southern writers with emphasis on the Southern Renaissance, especially the works of Faulkner, O'Connor, and Welty. May be retaken for credit, provided the content varies. Prerequisite: one 200-level literature course.

*Instructor's description:* This offering of ENG 432I will be a writing-intensive seminar in which we will examine the writings of women from the American South, from the Civil War era to the present, with an emphasis on writings from the so-called southern renaissance (beginning around the 1930s) to the present. Designed to take advantage of Berry's eighth biennial Southern Women Writers Conference (held September 24-26), the course will involve students in an investigation of the ways in which race, class, and region intersect with gender in the assigned texts and what those intersections can teach us about literary history, social justice, and some of the perennial concerns of humankind such as spirituality, romantic love, personal agency, etc. One assumption informing my design of the course is that some of you are more interested in/familiar with the regional focus while others of you are more interested in gender. I encourage each of you enrolled in the class to engage in questions that interest you most as you work with me to identify a research project for the semester. It is my strong hope that some of you will present your research at Berry's Undergraduate Research Symposium next April; I would be delighted to see some of you go on to present your work from this class at a regional or national conference as well.

This is a writing-intensive course, which means we will use a variety of formal and informal writing assignments to engage critically with the assigned readings and the questions they evoke.

*Semester Hours' Credit:* Students who pass ENG 432I will receive three semester hours' credit and the writing-intensive credit.

**Texts**

Zora Neale Hurston	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
Eudora Welty	<i>The Collected Stories Of Eudora Welty</i>
Flannery O'Connor	<i>The Collected Stories of Flannery O'Connor</i>
Alice Walker	<i>The Color Purple</i>
Dorothy Allison	<i>Bastard Out of Carolina</i>
Lee Smith	<i>Fair and Tender Ladies</i>

Supplemental readings will include short fiction, autobiographical writing, poetry, and critical essays on reserve.

**Purpose of the Course**

The course is designed to engage students in cross-disciplinary critical thinking tasks while also introducing them to the major female authors of the American South, the dominant themes they have addressed and the primary motifs they have employed, and the place of their work in the larger framework of contemporary gender studies and U. S. literary history. Students will increase their proficiency in textual analysis, literary research, and argumentation skills.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will demonstrate mastery of critical thinking skills, specifically the ability to explicate prose and poetry by drawing inferences from concrete textual details and expressing their findings in logical, precise written discourse. They will also demonstrate a solid grasp of the cultural and historical conditions that contributed to the flowering of women's writing in the U. S. South, a familiarity with the major female authors of the region, and the ways in which southern women's writing may—or may not—be distinguished from writing that comes from outside the region and from writing by men from the U.S. South. Finally, students will demonstrate proficiency in literary and related research and the ability to produce a focused, original research essay of 12-15 pages in length.

### **Assessment Measures**

Students will demonstrate a satisfactory level of competency (to an average of 78%) as assessed by their grades on the evaluation components described below.

### **Evaluation Components and Grading Scale**

In addition to keeping up with the assigned readings and contributing in a thoughtful manner to the class discussions and group work, students will give a short oral presentation and write five informal reaction papers and one research paper. For the oral presentation, each student chooses then presents to the class one distinctively southern cultural or historical phenomenon that can be related to gender or one broader gender-related phenomenon that can be related to the U.S. South. For your convenience, I have provided a partial list on the final page of the syllabus. Please make your selection by Friday, 8/28. I will distribute a handout containing instructions and possible approaches for the reaction papers, each of which should be about two typed pages, double-spaced, in length. Consult the schedule of assignments in your syllabus for due dates on the reaction papers. The research paper will focus on a work (or works) by any one of the authors we cover this term. (I may make exceptions for those of you who wish to write about an unassigned author, but you must plead your case convincingly.) Students will meet with me in individual conferences to discuss research paper topics and 30% of the research paper grade will be based on the quality of the project proposal, the annotated bibliography, and peer-review work on the rough draft(s). I give quizzes to encourage and reward attentive reading of the assigned texts; I also give a mid-term and a final exam.

The grading for this course will be as follows: A = 93-100; A- = 90-92; B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82; C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72; D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62; F = 59 or below. Please note the grade deductions for more than two unexcused absences, explained above in the Attendance Policy section of the syllabus.

#### Grading Scale

Quizzes (to encourage and reward care and diligence in reading) 10%

Class Participation	10%
Five informal reaction papers on the assigned readings	15%
Class Presentation	10%
Mid-term take-home examination	15%
Term Paper	25%
Final Exam	<u>15%</u>
	100%

### **Methods of Instruction**

Most class meetings will involve a combination of lecture and class discussion. Some classes will involve student presentations or student-led discussions. Students are required to attend at least one event at the Southern Women Writers Conference and one of the film screenings in the Southern Women Writers Film Series.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences will result in a drop of your final grade by three points. Each subsequent absence will result in an additional drop of your final grade by three points. Students participating in college-sponsored events will be excused if there is a note from the appropriate authority. Students excused for absences are responsible for any work assigned or performed during the missed class meeting(s). Habitual late arrivals will be treated as absences.

All out-of-class written work must be typed, double-spaced. Please photocopy or save on disk any work submitted in the event of a misplaced assignment. Grades for late papers will be reduced by 10 points for each day past the due date.

### **Academic Integrity**

Unless indicated otherwise by me in relation to group work, all writing must be done individually and unassisted. Collusion (working with another student or tutor) or plagiarism (use of another's ideas, data, or statements without acknowledgment, and /or extensive use of another's ideas, data, or knowledge with only minimal acknowledgment) is totally unacceptable. I reserve the right to fail for the semester any student I suspect of plagiarizing work submitted to me.

### **Accommodation Statement**

Students with disabilities who believe they have special needs which should be accommodated in this class are required to contact the Academic Support Center in Krannert Room 329 (extension 4080) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations can be implemented in a timely manner.

### **Schedule of Class Sessions and Assignments**

- M 8/24** introductions and explanation of course goals  
**W 8/26** Baym, Chesnut, Jacobs (on reserve)  
**F 8/28** Chopin, "Desiree's Baby" and "The Storm" (on reserve); **selections for presentation topics due in class**
- M 8/31** Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, chapters 1-4  
**W 9/2** Hurston, chapters 5-7  
**F 9/4** Hurston, chapters 8-13
- M 9/7** **Labor Day; no class meeting**  
**W 9/9** Hurston, chapters 14-18  
**F 9/11** Hurston, finish; **Reaction One due in class**

- M 9/14** Porter, “Old Mortality” (on reserve) ; **Ashley presents on the Southern Belle**  
**W 9/16** Welty, “Petrified Man” and “Why I Live at the P.O.”  
**F 9/18** Welty, “The Hitchhikers,” “A Curtain of Green,” and “A Worn Path”
- M 9/21** Norman, *Getting Out* (on reserve)  
**W 9/23** Cofer, Coke, Segrest (on reserve)  
**F 9/25** **Southern Women writers Conference; no class meeting (must attend at least one session of SWWC)**
- M 9/28** Welty, “The Wide Net,” “Where is the Voice Coming From”  
**W 1/30** Welty, “June Recital”; **Taylor presents on the Steel Magnolia**  
**F 10/2** Lillian Smith, Angelou (handout); **Reaction Two due in class; Lauren W. presents on True Southern Womanhood**
- M 10/5** O’Connor, “A Good Man is Hard to Find” and “The Displaced Person”  
**W 10/7** O’Connor, “Encounter with the Enemy” and “The Artificial Nigger”; **Kayla presents on the Cult of the Lost Cause**  
**F 10/9** O’Connor, “Good Country People” and “Everything the Rises Must Converge”; **Rebecca presents on Southern Gothic/Southern Grotesque**
- M 10/12** **Fall Break; no class meeting**  
**W 10/14** O’Connor, “Revelation”; **Reaction Three due in class; take-home midterm exam distributed**  
**F 10/16** follow-up on O’Connor; **mid-term exam due at beginning of class**
- M 10/19** Walker, *Color Purple* (1-53); **Mary presents on Domestic Violence**  
**W 10/21** Walker, continued (54-106); **Abstract for term project due in class; Lucy presents on The Blues**  
**F 10/23** Walker, continued (107-77); **Rachel presents on Domestic Servants; Paige presents on the Mammy**
- M 10/26** Walker, continued (178-255); **Hannah presents on Native Americans**  
**W 10/28** Walker, finish; **Reaction Paper Four due in class; Scott presents on Conjuring**  
**F 10/30** Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, chapters 1-5
- M 11/2** Allison, chapters 6-9  
**W 11/4** Allison, chapters 10-13 ; **Clare presents on White Trash**  
**F 11/6** Allison, 14-18; **Courtney presents on Southern Women Filmmakers**
- M 11/9** Allison, finish; **Reaction Five due in class**  
**W 11/11** Lee Smith, *Fair and Tender Ladies*, Book One  
**F 11/13** Smith, Book Two; **annotated bibliography due in class; Lauren P. presents on the Scots-Irish South**
- M 11/16** Smith, Book Three  
**W 11/18** Smith, Book Four; **Alli presents on Cuisine**

**F 11/20** Smith, Book Five

**M 11/24** wrap-up on Smith; **rough draft for Research Essay due; peer-review instructions distributed**

**W 11/26** **Thanksgiving Break; no class meeting**

**F 11/28** **Thanksgiving Break; no class meeting**

**M 11/30** Mason, "Shiloh" (on reserve)

**W 12/2** Trethewey, from *Native Guard*, (on reserve)

**F 12/4** Last class Meeting; evaluations and review for Final Exam; **Research Essay due**

**Final Exam is scheduled for 8:00-10:00 on Thursday, December 10.**

## **Selected Bibliography**

### **Books of Interest**

Will Brantley, *Feminine Sense in Southern Memoir: Smith, Glasgow, Welty, Hellman, Porter, and Hurston*  
W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South*  
Betina Entzminger, *The Belle Gone Bad: White Southern Women Writers and the Dark Seductress*  
Joe Flora and Lucinda Mackethan, *The Companion to Southern Literature*  
Frances Smith Foster, *Witnessing Slavery: The Development of Ante-Bellum Slave Narratives ---Written By Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892*  
Fred Hobson, *But Now I See: The White Southern Racial Conversion Narrative*  
Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day: The Woman Writer in the South, 1859-1936*  
Jones and Susan Donaldson, ed., *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*  
Lucinda MacKethan, *Daughters of Time: Creating Women's Voice in Southern Fiction*  
Tara MacPherson, *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*  
Carol Manning, *The Female Tradition in Southern Literature*  
Charles Wilson Reagan and William Ferris, eds., *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (in reference section of Memorial Library)  
Louis D. Rubin, et al, eds., *The History of Southern Literature*  
Linda Tate, *A Southern Weave of Women: Fiction of the Contemporary South*  
Mary Louise Weaks and Carolyn Perry, *The History of Southern Women's Literature*  
Patricia Yaeger, *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990*

### **Periodicals that Focus on Southern Literature**

*Mississippi Quarterly*  
*Oxford American* (non-scholarly)  
*Southern Cultures*  
*Southern Literary Review*  
*Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South*  
(also, some that typically include articles on southern writers in each issue):  
*African American Review*  
*Callaloo*

### **Periodicals that focus on Women's Literature or Gender Studies**

*Differences: A Journal of Cultural Studies*  
*Feminist Studies*  
*Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies*  
*Women's Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*  
*Women's Studies Quarterly*

### **Some nice webzines (see our class's Viking Web page for direct links)**

*Story South* (<http://www.storysouth.com/>)  
*Southern Spaces* (<http://www.southernspaces.org/>)

## **Instructions for Class Presentations**

Please submit a sheet of paper listing in order of preference the three topics, selected from the list below, that you are most interested in doing your report on. I will confirm your selection as soon as possible so you can begin your research. If you are interested in presenting on a topic not listed here, please see me and we will discuss its relevance to one or more of the readings.

The presentations should be 10-15 minutes in duration and are intended to complement, either directly or indirectly, the assigned readings for the day or a theme we have previously discussed. When preparing your presentation, try to establish your topic's relevance to the concerns of the class. *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, ed. Wilson and Ferris, and *The History of Southern Literature*, ed. Rubin, and *The History of Southern Women's Literature*, ed. Weeks and Perry, are good places to begin your research, but please feel free to consult with me about any aspect of this assignment. I can give you bibliographic references and other useful information.

Reports should be accompanied by a 2- to 3-page written report in which you discuss your original interest in the subject, your research methods and materials, and, ideally, the insights you have drawn from your work.

Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

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|----------------------------------|-----|--|
| <u>Content</u>                   | 25% | Substance of the report should complement rather than replicate whatever introductory material is found in the adopted editions of the texts we are reading this semester. You should extract from your research the information that is, in your judgement, most relevant to the concerns of the class.   |
| <u>Research:</u>                 | 25% | Please provide a bibliography of sources consulted and cited, including non-print materials. Some topics will be easier to research than others, so I will use some latitude here in determining this part of your grade.  |
| <u>Organization and Delivery</u> | 25% | Information should be presented in a coherent fashion with some attention given to pacing, emphasis, and elaboration of difficult concepts. I like to see some ad lib, spontaneous elements in your presentation, even if you feel you must read from a prepared text.   |
| <u>Written Report</u>            | 25% | I want you to give me a 2-3 page report in which you describe the techniques you used to research the project, the initial interest you had in the topic, any insights into the subject you gained in the process of preparing the report, and what you perceive to be the relevance between your topic and the readings assigned for the rest of the class on that day. |

### **List of Presentation Topics**

Abolitionism/Defense of Slavery  
Conjuring  
Cuisine  
Cult of the Lost Cause  
Cult of True (Southern) Womanhood  
Domestic Servants  
Domestic Violence  
The Ethnic South  
Evangelicalism/Southern Protestantism  
Lesbian Movement  
Lynching/Anti-Lynching League  
The Great Migration  
Jim Crow/Segregation  
Liberalism/“Savage Ideal”  
Music  
    Blues  
    Country  
    Gospel/Spirituals  
Native Americans  
Plantation Myth  
Southern Social “Types”:  
    Southern Belle  
    Steel Magnolia  
    Mammy  
    Baby Doll  
    Tragic Mulatta  
    White Trash  
Southern Grotesque/Southern Gothic  
Suffrage  
Women in the Civil Rights Movement  
Women’s Movement(s)