

### Course Information:

GWS 310/350: Special Topics/Gender and Literature (3 credit hours)

Topic: Gender, Social Justice Movements & Literature

UW Madison, Spring 2018

Monday/Wednesday 2:30-3:45 – Sterling Hall 1333

Face-to-Face Traditional Course

### Instructor Information:

Dr. Sami Schalk

[sdschalk@wisc.edu](mailto:sdschalk@wisc.edu)

Sterling Hall 3408

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-2pm or by appointment. Schedule meetings at

<https://drschalk.youcanbook.me/>

### Course description:

What is the role of literature in contemporary social justice and activist movements? How can books allow us to question and explore the problems in the contemporary United States? How can writing raise awareness and create empathy in regard to issues of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability and more? How can literature allow us envision solutions and better futures? This course will focus on how creative texts, from novels to poetry to graphic novels, can serve as a compliment to social justice activism, from reproductive justice to disability rights to the Black Lives Matter movement. Students will have the opportunity to read, respond to, and produce social justice American literature.

### Learning Goals:

- To understand the social and political potential of literature
- To understand how literature can impart knowledge about gender, sexuality, race, and other intersectional social issues
- To understand interdisciplinary techniques to blend research with creative expression
- To develop critical thinking and creative writing skills

### Required Materials:

- Octavia E. Butler *Parable of the Sower*
- Claudia Rankine *Citizen*
- Kai Cheng Thom *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*
- Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro *Bitch Planet Vol. 1*
- Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown *Octavia's Brood*

### Course Policies:

**Universal Design & Accommodations:** I believe everyone has a right to a quality education and that classrooms can adapt to students' needs. Everyone learns differently. If you have ideas on how you can best learn and express your learning in this class, if you have an undocumented disability, or if you have a change in disability status during the semester, I encourage you to

meet with me as soon as possible to discuss a learning plan. If you have a documented disability, please provide me your accommodation information within the first two weeks of class. The University accommodation policy reads as follows:

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty will work either directly with the student [you] or in coordination with the McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Questions about documenting your disability can be directed to the McBurney Disability Resource Center ([mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu](mailto:mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu), 608/263-2741).

**Classroom Conduct:** Students are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful manner toward both their peers and faculty at all times. While disagreement and passion are welcome in our discussions, the emotional and intellectual safety of everyone is of utmost importance. Students behaving in a way which harms, threatens or otherwise significantly negatively impacts others in the classroom will be asked to leave class and be counted as absent for the day. Repeated violations will result in a zero for participation in the course. In this class, we will assume goodwill, educate each other, and strive to learn and grow, even when it is difficult or painful. Come to class open and willing to learn and change.

**Late Policy:** All assignments lose ten percent for each day they are late, unless an accommodation plan is already in place. In emergency cases, students may request extensions and must do so at least 24 hours before the assignment is due with evidence of the emergency situation *and evidence of progress on the assignment*. **A common complaint is work being lost on broken computers or missing flash drives. I highly recommend all students set up a cloud account like Dropbox or Google Docs to save their drafts and final work.**

**Technology:** Technology is a vital part of our everyday lives and, for many, a useful learning tool. You are welcome to bring laptops or tablets to use during class for referring to articles, taking notes, or looking up information related to the class discussion. Make choices about technology in the classroom that are right for you and your learning, however, please make sure all devices and your use of them are not distracting to your peers: turn off sound and vibrations before class begins. Internet is not required during class meetings, however, students should have regular, reliable access to the internet to access course readings online well as to submit their written work.

**Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to uphold University expectations for academic integrity by submitting only their own original works and ideas for all assignments in this course. Violations of academic integrity can result in a range of repercussions depending on the severity

of the violation, from having to repeat the assignment to expulsion from the University. All academic integrity violations will be recorded and reported to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards (OSCCS). For more on academic misconduct procedures at UW-Madison see: <https://students.wisc.edu/student-conduct/academic-integrity/>

### Assignments:

This course is graded on the UW-Madison grading system: A (93-100%), AB (88-92%), B (83-87%), BC (78-82%), C (70-77%), D (60-69%), F (below 60%). The assignments are weighted as follows:

Attendance:	5%
Participation:	5%
Social Justice Issue Essay:	5%
News Report:	10%
Activist Report:	10%
Research Report:	15%
External Education Activities (3):	15%
Final Project Proposal:	5%
Final Project:	30%

### Attendance

Attendance is graded by percentage of classes attended. The first three absences count as 50% attendance, all other absences count as a zero. If you anticipate frequently missing class, you should consider taking another course. If a medical or personal emergency results in your missing multiple class sessions, contact Dr. Schalk as soon as possible to set up a meeting to discuss how you can keep up with the course. Students with disabilities should meet with Dr. Schalk to set up an accommodation plan for their absences. Attendance counts for 5 percent of the final grade.

### Participation.

Participation is a vital part of the course and one of the primary ways through which students learn to become critical thinkers. Participation in this course means being actively involved in the class in a respectful manner. Participation includes communicating in class discussions (including asking questions), reading loud, participating in group or pair work, and posting on the Canvas discussion forums. Students will regularly be given advanced discussion questions or activities to complete prior to class. These will be shared in class, submitted via Canvas, or posted to the discussion forums. Since participation is essential to practicing expressing critical thinking skills, it is important that students be on time and prepared for class and ready to actively participate each day. Excessive tardiness, sleeping in class, or distracting use of technology will reduce your participation grade. Participation will be graded on a scale of poor (55%), below average (60%), average (70%), above average (85%), strong (95%), or exceptional (100%). Participation counts for 5 percent of the total final grade.

### Social Justice Issue Essay:

For this course you will choose one social justice issue that you will learn about, follow, research and write about throughout the semester. You should be specific in your choices. For example,

choose “police brutality” or “Confederate statues and building names” rather than “racism” or choose “sexual assault on college campuses” or “unhealthy beauty standards” rather than “sexism” or “feminism.” Choose something that will hold your interest for the entirety of the semester. Your first assignment is an essay in which you will identify your chosen social justice issue for the semester. In 2-3 double-spaced pages name the issue you will focus on and explain why you chose it. For example, you might talk about its contemporary or personal relevance or about how you learned about this issue in another course and want to explore it more. This is an informal paper in which you should center your own experiences, passions, and thought process. The social justice essay is due Monday, February 5. The social justice essay is worth 5 percent of the final grade.

#### News Report:

Read 3-5 news articles on your social justice issue from reputable sources (i.e. ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, BBC News, New York Times, Boston Globe, The Guardian, etc.). Write a 2-3 page, double-spaced, report summarizing current events, legal cases, or laws relevant to your topic based on these news stories. Note: You may read coverage of a single event from more than one source, but do try to cover at least two events/cases/laws. The news report is due February 21 and is worth 10 percent of the final grade.

#### Activist Report:

Research and report on 2-3 activist groups, individuals, or non-profit organizations working on your social justice issue. Write a 2-3 pages double-spaced, report explaining who the individuals/groups/organizations are and what they do or are currently working on regarding your social justice issue. The activist report is due March 7 and is worth ten percent of the final grade.

#### Research Report:

Read 3-4 current academic articles on your social justice issue (less than 5 years old). Create an annotated bibliography (a paragraph-long summary of the article’s topic, arguments, methods, and conclusions) and a synthesized summary (a summary of what you learned from locating and reading the current academic articles/chapters, including any gaps in the existing research on your topic). The research report should be 3-5 pages, double spaced. It is due March 22 and is worth 15 percent of the final grade.

#### External Educational Activity Reports:

Participate in an external educational activity related to your research topic. Activities may occur on or off campus and include attending, witnessing, or participating in a protest or rally, listening to a talk (in person or online, such as TedTalks), viewing a documentary, reading an additional book (fiction or nonfiction), or attending an artistic event (art show, theater performance, etc.). Students should do three external educational activities throughout the course of the semester and may not repeat the same genre more than once (i.e. you can only watch two documentaries or attend two protests for credit). If you have any questions about if something would count as an external education activity, ask Dr. Schalk *in advance*. Each external educational activity report should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, and explain what the activity was and what you learned. The external educational activity reports can submitted at any point in the semester, but must all be

submitted by April 23 at the latest. The external educational activities reports are each worth 5 percent of the final grade for a total of 15 percent.

#### Final Project and Proposal:

All students will be required to create a creative final project which has a major narrative/writing component. Students may work individually or with one to two partners (pair/group work will need to justify the rationale for collaborative work in the proposal; pair/group work is typically reserved for work that incorporates audio or visual elements). Examples include short story, beginning of a novel, chapbook of poetry, creative non-fiction essay, comic strip series, children's book, script, film, song/music video, or a mixed genre work. Written work should aim for the 8-12 page range, double-spaced but may vary based on genre. For example, a children's book may have only two typewritten pages of words that are spread out over 15 pages with illustrations. Each final project will also be accompanied by a 2-3 page artist statement in which the writer explains their artistic choices and the purpose/intention of their project. The artist statement serves as a self-analysis of the project and therefore should be specific in naming and explaining stylistic, content, and genre choices. **The final projects will be presented in class over the course of two days on May 2 and 6. All final project materials must be submitted by 5pm on Sunday May 6.** The final project is worth 30 percent of the final grade.

All students must submit a 1-2 page proposal for their final project idea, detailing the genre of the final project, the general narrative/story concept, and a timeline for completion. For pairs or groups the proposal should also justify the need for multiple people on the project and detail the specific roles/labor of each person. The proposal is due April 4 and is worth 5 percent of the final grade.

#### Extra Credit:

There are several extra credit activities built into this course. Students may complete many or few as they choose for up to 5 percent added to their final grade:

1. Read Octavia E. Butler's *Parable of the Talents*: This is a sequel to *Parable of the Sower*, the first book we will read this semester. Students may read the sequel and write a 2-3 page, double-spaced response paper for two percentage points added to their final grade.
2. Read Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro's *Bitch Planet Volume 2 "President Bitch"*: This is the sequel to *Bitch Planet Volume 1* which we will read for class. Students may read the sequel and write a 2-3 page, double-spaced response paper for one percentage point added to their final grade.
3. Complete up to 2 additional external educational activities and reports above the three required for class. Each extra external educational activity report will add one percentage point to the students' final grade for up to two percentage points added to the final grade.

All extra credit activities must be submitted by April 23.

#### Reading Schedule:

Week 1

Wednesday January 24:

- Hamid and Prose “Does Fiction Have The Power to Sway Politics?” from *New York Times* on February 17, 2015 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/22/books/review/does-fiction-have-the-power-to-sway-politics.html>)

#### Week 2

Monday January 29:

- Michael Henne “Narrative and Power” from *The Power of Story* (p1-42)
- Jonathan Gottschall “Why Fiction is Good for You” in *Boston Globe* on April 29, 2012 (<https://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2012/04/28/why-fiction-good-for-you-how-fiction-changes-your-world/nubDy1P3viDj2PuwGwb3KO/story.html>)

Wednesday January 31:

- Toni Morrison “No Place for Self-Pity, No Room for Fear” from *The Nation* on March 23, 2015 (<https://www.thenation.com/article/no-place-self-pity-no-room-fear/>)
- Katherine Brooks “Dear Artists: We Need You More Than Ever” in *Huffington Post* on November 10, 2016 ([https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/political-art-in-a-trump-presidency\\_us\\_582358c5e4b0d9ce6fc05d24](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/political-art-in-a-trump-presidency_us_582358c5e4b0d9ce6fc05d24))

#### Week 3

Monday February 5:

- Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 1-9 or pages 1-99 in Grand Central Publishing edition)
- **\*Social Justice Issue Essay Due\***

Wednesday February 7:

- *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 10-14 or pages 100-166 in Grand Central Publishing edition)

#### Week 4

Monday February 12:

- *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 15-20 or pages 167-257 in Grand Central Publishing edition)

Wednesday February 15:

- *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 20-25 or pages 258-329 in Grand Central Publishing edition)

#### Week 5

Monday February 19:

- **No Class: View *I Am Not Your Negro* on Kanopy and online class discussion** (<https://wisc.kanopystreaming.com/video/i-am-not-your-negro>)

Wednesday February 21:

- Matthew P. McAllister, Edward H. Sewell, Jr., and Ian Gordon “Introducing Comics and Ideology” from *Comics and Ideology* (NY: Peter Lang, 2001)

- Loryn Brantz (<https://www.instagram.com/lorynbrantz/>)
- Robot Hugs (<http://www.robot-hugs.com>)
  - <http://www.robot-hugs.com/privilege/>
  - <http://www.robot-hugs.com/emotions/>
- **\*News Report Due\***

#### Week 6

Monday February 26:

- Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro's *Bitch Planet Volume 1*

Wednesday February 28:

- Comics Workshop

#### Week 7

Monday March 5:

- Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* (entire book)

Wednesday March 7:

- *Citizen* discussion continued
- Claire Fallon "Woman Reading A Book At A Trump Rally Should Inspire A Movement" from *Huffington Post*  
[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-rally-woman-reading\\_us\\_56436212e4b060377347248d](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-rally-woman-reading_us_56436212e4b060377347248d)
- Kara Brown "A Conversation With Johari Osayi Idusuyi, the Hero Who Read Through a Trump Rally" from *Jezebel*  
<https://theslot.jezebel.com/a-conversation-with-johari-osayi-idusuyi-the-hero-who-1742082010>
- **\*Activism Report Due\***

#### Week 8

Monday March 12:

- Kai Cheng Thom's *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* (p 1-106)

Wednesday March 14:

- *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* (p107-188)

#### Week 9

Monday March 19:

- Mickenberg, Julia L., and Philip Nel. "Radical Children's Literature Now!" *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 36 4 (2011): 445-73.
- Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings *I am Jazz*
- Ogechi Emechebe "Mount Horeb school cancels reading of transgender book after lawsuit threat" in *The Capital Times* (November 27, 2015)

[http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local\\_schools/mount-horeb-school-cancels-reading-of-transgender-book-after-lawsuit/article\\_479e8c88-b4b3-57bf-aadb-cf79b239c618.html](http://host.madison.com/ct/news/local/education/local_schools/mount-horeb-school-cancels-reading-of-transgender-book-after-lawsuit/article_479e8c88-b4b3-57bf-aadb-cf79b239c618.html)

- Amanda Finn and Doug Erickson “In response to controversy, hundreds pack Mount Horeb library for reading of transgender book” in *The Wisconsin State Journal* (December 3, 2015) [http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/in-response-to-controversy-hundreds-pack-mount-horeb-library-for/article\\_095da109-0caf-534e-9879-3cb4e0c769ee.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/in-response-to-controversy-hundreds-pack-mount-horeb-library-for/article_095da109-0caf-534e-9879-3cb4e0c769ee.html)
- Doug Erickson “Inspired by Mount Horeb, 'I Am Jazz' book is read across the country Thursday” in *The Wisconsin State Journal* (January 14, 2016) [http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/local\\_schools/inspired-by-mount-horeb-i-am-jazz-book-is-read/article\\_f489c2da-33cd-50a9-ba8f-54879057fe95.html](http://host.madison.com/wsj/news/local/education/local_schools/inspired-by-mount-horeb-i-am-jazz-book-is-read/article_f489c2da-33cd-50a9-ba8f-54879057fe95.html)

Wednesday March 22:

- Children’s Literature Visit to the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (401 Teacher Education Building at 225 N. Mills Street) *Meet at the CCBC NOT Sterling Hall*
- **\*Research Report Due\***

Week 10 Spring Break No Classes

Week 11

Monday April 2:

- Walidah Imarisha “Introduction” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 3-6)
- adrienne maree brown “Outro” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 279-281)
- Bao Phi “Revolution Shuffle” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 7-14)
- David F. Walker “The Token Superhero” (p 15-22)

Wednesday April 4:

- adrienne maree brown “the river” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 23-32)
- Alexis Pauline Gumbs “Evidence” (p 33-42)
- Waldish Imarisha “Black Angel” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 43-56)
- Morrigan Phillips “The Long Memory” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 57-78)
- **\*Final Project Proposal Due\***

Week 12

Monday April 9:

- Autumn Brown “Small and Bright” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 79-88)
- Alixa Garcia “In Spite of Darkness” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 89-108)
- Mia Mingus “Hollow” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 109-122)
- Gabriel Teodros “Lalibela” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 123-134)
- Tunde Olaniran “Little Brown Mouse” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 135-144)

Wednesday April 11:

- Creative Writing Workshop



Week 13

Monday April 16:

- Dawolu Jabari Anderson “Sanford and Sun” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 145-166)
- Tara Betts “Runway Blackout” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 167-176)
- Vagabond “Kafka’s Last Laugh” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 177-186)
- Jalani Wilson “22XX: One-Shot” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 187-196)
- Kalamu ya Salaam “Manhunters” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 197-214)

Wednesday April 18:

- LeVar Burton “Aftermath” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 215-224)
- Terry Bisson “Fire on the Mountain” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 225-238)
- Dani McClain “Homing Instinct” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 239-248)
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha “children who fly” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 249-254)

Week 14

Monday April 23:

- Social Justice Music Playlist  
(<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLdEIjJa8XfQ9LOTnnBBzQlBT6Tomxwlvk>)
  - TLC “Unpretty” (Unrealistic beauty standards; plastic surgery and eating disorders)
  - Miss Eaves “Thunder Thighs” (Body positivity)
  - Solange “Don’t Touch My Hair” (Black hair/beauty)
  - Macklemore and Ryan Lewis “Same Love” (Same sex marriage)
  - Mary Lambert “She Keeps Me Warm” (Queer love)
  - Lady Gaga “Till it Happens to You” (Sexual Assault)
  - 4 Wheel City “The Movement” (Disability Rights)
- **\*All External Education Activity Reports Must Be Submitted by This Date\***

Wednesday April 25:

- Peer Review Workshop: Bring 2 hard copies of your project first draft (unless electronic) and two hard copies of your artist statement draft. ***Drafts should be complete even if imperfect or short.***

Weeks 15 & 16

Monday April 30:

- Work Day (attendance optional. You may come to class to workshop ideas with your peers and talk with Dr. Schalk or you may work on your project from home)

Wednesday May 2:

- **Final Project Presentations Part 1**

Sunday May 6 7:25-9:25PM:

- **Final Project Presentations Part 2**

