Course Information:
GENWS/ENGL 350: Special Topics: Gender and Literature
Topic: Social Justice Literature

UW-Madison Fall 2020
Online, Asynchronous course with optional live lectures once per week (exact date and time TBD)
3 Credit Hours with Optional Honors Component (45 hours of work per credit)
Canvas Course URL: https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/223518

Credit Hour Workload: This class meets for 75 minutes per week online (lectures can be viewed live or watched later). Additional learning will occur via reading, writing, group work, studying and participating in online forums. For a 3 credit hour course, students should expect 135 hours of labor over the course of the semester, approximately 9 hours per week on average.

Instructor Information:
Dr. Sami Schalk
Associate Professor
sdschalk@wisc.edu
Virtual Office Hours: TBD on BBC Ultra 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 can serve as a compliment to social justice activism. Students will have the opportunity to read, respond to, and produce social justice American literature. Requisites: A previous GWS course or permission of instructor

Learning Outcomes
- Understand the social and political potential of literature to impart knowledge about gender, sexuality, race, and other intersectional social issues
- Develop interdisciplinary techniques to blend research with creative expression
- Develop critical thinking and creative writing skills
Required Materials

- Octavia E. Butler *Parable of the Sower* (any edition)
- Kai Cheng Thom *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* (2016)
- Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown *Octavia’s Brood* (2015)

Course Policies

*Universal Design and Disability 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, 608/263-2741).

*Diversity and Inclusion:* This is a course invested in justice which moves beyond notions of diversity and inclusion to seek systemic change to end oppression and liberate all people. I acknowledge as an educator that the University of Wisconsin-Madison is a place that has long been—and continues to be—hostile to marginalized people, especially people of color, disabled people and queer and trans people. The University statement on diversity and inclusion reads as follows:

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. [https://diversity.wisc.edu/](https://diversity.wisc.edu/)

*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/

Rules, Rights, and Responsibilities for UW students:
During the global COVID-10 pandemic, we must prioritize our collective health and safety to keep ourselves, our campus, and our community safe. As a university community, we must work together to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote the collective health and welfare of our campus and surrounding community. For more see: https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilities and the Badger Pledge (https://smartrestart.wisc.edu/badgerpledge/)

COVID-19
Official UW Statement reads: “Students should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Students should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.”

Further, I ask that we each be patient and understanding with each other and ourselves as we try to learn, teach, work and survive during a global pandemic. This will not be a “normal” semester for any of us and I want us all to do our best while recognizing that our best is going to vary from person to person based on our resources, support networks, personal obligations and health. Take care of yourself and each other this semester.

Grading and 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:

Social Justice Issue Essay: 5%
Creative Writing Skills Development: 15%
News Report: 10%
Activist Report: 10%
Research Report: 15%
External Education Activities (3): 15%
Final Project Proposal: 5%
Final Project: 25%

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 worth 5 percent of the final grade.

**Creative Writing Skills Development:** Throughout the semester you will be asked to participate different short creative writing activities to develop your skills in this area. Each assignment will be graded as complete (100%), incomplete (50%), or missing (0%). The goal is to get better at creative expression as the semester goes along. The journal is worth 15 percent of your final grade. Your lowest score will be dropped.

**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 worth 10 percent of the final grade.

**Activist Report:** Research and report on 1 or 2 activist groups, individuals, or non-profit organizations working on your social justice issue. Write a 2-3 page, 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 worth 10 percent of the final grade.

**Research Report:** Read 3-4 current academic articles on your social justice issue (less than 10 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 total 3-5 pages, double spaced. It is worth 15 percent of the final grade.

**External Educational Activity Reports:** Participate in 3 external educational activities 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 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, 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 8-10 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 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 worth 5 percent of the final grade.

*Honors Students:* Honors students are expected to write one page above the maximum for each assignment except the social justice topic essay. Honors students will also be held to higher quality standards for the final project.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: September 2, 2020**
*Welcome Week*
- Watch welcome video by the end of the week

**Week 2: September 7, 2020**
*Creating a Virtual Learning Community*
- Practice using Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

**Week 3: September 14, 2020**
*The Power of Story*
- Read:
  - Michael Henne “Narrative and Power” from *The Power of Story* (p1-42)

**Week 4: September 21, 2020**
*Introducing Visionary Fiction*
- Read:
  - 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)
- *Social Justice Topic Essay due*

**Week 5: September 28, 2020**
*Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler
• Read:
  o Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 1-9 or pages 1-99 in Grand Central Publishing edition)

**Week 6: October 5, 2020**
*Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler
  • Read:
    o Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 10-17 or pages 100-213 in Grand Central Publishing edition)
  • News Report due

**Week 7: October 12, 2020**
*Parable of the Sower* by Octavia Butler
  • Read:
    o Octavia E. Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (Chapters 18-25 or pages 214-329 in Grand Central Publishing edition)

**Week 8: October 19, 2020**
*Bitch Planet*
  • Read:
    o Matthew P. McAllister, Edward H. Sewell, Jr., and Ian Gordon “Introducing Comics and Ideology” from *Comics and Ideology* (2001)
    o *Bitch Planet: Extraordinary Machine* Book 1, Volume 1
  • Activism Report due

**Week 9: October 26, 2020**
*Bitch Planet*
  • Read:
    o *Bitch Planet: Extraordinary Machine* Book 1, Volumes 2-5

**Week 10: November 2, 2020**
*Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*
  • Read:
    o *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* Parts I & II (page 1-79)
  • Research Report due

**Week 11: November 9, 2020**
*Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars*
  • Read:
    o *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* Parts III-V (page 80-188)

**Week 12: November 16, 2020**
*Octavia’s Brood*
  • Read:
    o David F. Walker “The Token Superhero” in *Octavia’s Brood* (p 15-22)
• adrienne maree brown “the river” in Octavia’s Brood (p 23-32)
• Waldish Imarisha “Black Angel” in Octavia’s Brood (p 43-56)
• Final Project Proposal due

Week 13: November 23, 2020
Cancelled for holiday

Week 14: November 30, 2020
Octavia’s Brood
• Read:
  o Morrigan Phillips “The Long Memory” in Octavia’s Brood (p 57-78)
  o Mia Mingus “Hollow” in Octavia’s Brood (p 109-122)
  o Tara Betts “Runway Blackout” in Octavia’s Brood (p 167-176)
• External Activity Reports due

Week 15: December 7, 2020
Octavia’s Brood
• Read:
  o Vagabond “Kafka’s Last Laugh” in Octavia’s Brood (p 177-186)
  o Jalani Wilson “22XX: One-Shot” in Octavia’s Brood (p 187-196)
  o Dani McClain “Homing Instinct” in Octavia’s Brood (p 239-248)

Week 16: December 14, 2020 (Exam Week)
• Final Projects due December 14 before midnight