

# GENDER & WOMEN'S STUDIES/ENGLISH 350: SPECIAL TOPICS IN GENDER AND LITERATURE

## *NARRATING GENDER & SEXUAL DIFFERENCE*

**Class Time:** Tuesday & Thursday, 1:00pm-2:15pm, Van Vleck Hall: Room B231

**Professor:** Dr. Elaine Cannell (she/her) – [cannell@wisc.edu](mailto:cannell@wisc.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 2:45-4:00pm (in-person, Sterling Hall 3434) or by appointment (via Zoom)

**Canvas Course URL:** <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/428585>

**3 Credit Course:** This intermediate-level course contributes to the GWS major & certificate program requirements for the humanities approach; it also contributes to the English major as an elective course. The class meets for two 75-minute class periods each week over the fall semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of classroom time for every class period. This syllabus includes further information about meeting times and expectations for student work.

**Prerequisite:** GEN&WS 101, 102, 103, or SOC/GEN&WS 200

“I believe that **telling our stories**, first to ourselves and then to one another and the world, is a **revolutionary act.**” – Janet Mock, *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More*

“I don’t believe in safe spaces. They don’t exist. **I do, however, believe in dangerous stories:** The kind that swirl up from inside you when you least expect it, like the voice of a mad angel whispering of the revolution you are about to unleash... Where are those kinds of stories about trans girls like you and me?” – Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl’s Confabulous Memoir*

“But this story? **This one’s mine.**” – Carmen Maria Machado, *In The Dream House*

How might the written word and its embodied expressions testify to the experiences of gender and sexual difference—and to the ways those differences interact with race, culture, and class? In this session of Gender and Women’s Studies/English 350, we will traverse North American literary fiction, drama, manifestos, memoirs, and poetry in order to apprehend intersectional archives of gender and sexual expression from the 1960s to the present. As we interrogate how these vastly different texts might touch one another in unexpected ways, we will also contextualize them through their cultural and historical contexts in liberatory political movements in North America and abroad. Together, we will reckon with the literary and lived experiences of gender and sexual outlaws over the last half-century as they express new ways of being in the world and even new worlds.

**Required Texts:** The six required texts listed below can be purchased at the University Bookstore or elsewhere; the listed editions are preferred but not required. All other texts will be provided digitally.

1. Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (ISBN 9780441478125)
2. Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts* (ISBN 9780679721888)

3. Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir* (ISBN 9780994047137)
4. Mart Crowley, *The Boys in the Band* (ISBN 9780573640049)
5. Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf* (ISBN 9780684843261)
6. Young Jean Lee, *Straight White Men/ Untitled Feminist Show* (ISBN 9781559365031)

**Learning Outcomes:**

*By the end of this course, students will:*

- *Critical Thinking:* develop nuanced and informed perspectives on history, politics, and literature; improve key skills in reading comprehension and analysis; identify and reckon with the political implications of literary expression across gendered, sexual, raced, classed, and other sites of social difference
- *Analytical Writing:* hone writing skills for clarity, persuasiveness, organization, and originality of claims; practice both creative production and self-reflective analysis on that production
- *Literary Genre & Form:* identify common generic and formal characteristics of manifestos, memoirs, speculative fiction, drama, and poetry; unearth meaning through authors' formal choices, including those that bend or resist genre conventions

**Regular & Substantive Interaction:**

This course provides regular and substantive interaction by:

- Providing direct instruction twice weekly in seminar discussion on the scheduled and assigned weekly content.
- Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework throughout the semester based on the expectations of the learning activities described in this syllabus.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

- Participation, Engagement, Attendance, *150 points: 15%*
  - Attendance: *50 points*
  - Participation & Engagement: *100 points*
- Reading Quizzes (5, 30 points each): *150 points 15%*
- Manifesto Short Writing Assignment (2 pages): *100 points 10%*
- Thesis & Close Reading Assignment (2 pages): *150 points 15%*
- Final Essay/Creative Project (5-7 pages or equivalent): *250 points 25%*
- Take-Home Final Exam: *200 points 20%*
- Extra Credit Musical Analysis: *up to 50 points*

**GRADING SCALE:** *grades are not curved*

- 93-100% = A
- 88-92% = AB
- 83-87% = B
- 78-82% = BC
- 73-77% = C
- 68-72% = D

**Final Grades (Out of 1000 Points)**

930-1000 (A)	880-929 (AB)	830-879 (B)
780-829 (BC)	730-779 (C)	680-729 (D)
	Below 680 (F)	

## COURSE POLICIES

### Rules, Rights, & Responsibilities

See: <https://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

### Academic Calendar & Religious Observances

See: <https://secfac.wisc.edu/academic-calendar/#religious-observances>

### Readings and Assignments

- **Course Readings:** Follow the reading schedule as it appears at the end of this document (and on Canvas); the material assigned should be read before the class meeting in which it will be discussed.
- **Quizzes:** There will be 5 quizzes of approximately 15 questions each throughout the course of the semester. These quizzes are meant to foster accountability, but also to reinforce course concepts, key terms, and reading retention. The quizzes will be available on Canvas at the dates listed above.
- **Assignments:** As listed above, you will complete one creative manifesto-writing assignment, a short assignment that asks you to draft a thesis statement and perform a brief close reading, and a longer written assignment that can be fulfilled with either a long-form literary analysis OR a creative project that will ask you to try your hand at speculative story-telling, memoir, drama, poetry, or an experimental combination of these genres paired with an analytical writer's memo. You will also complete a short-answer take-home final exam.
  - **At least two-three weeks before they are due, you will find additional descriptive assignment sheets and rubrics outlining my expectations for each assignment on Canvas, and we will discuss forthcoming assignments during class meetings.**
  - There is also an opportunity to receive extra credit in this class: you will find this supplemental assignment on Canvas (under "Assignments") by week 4.

### Communication, Participation, & Attendance

- **Drop by my office hours.** I strongly encourage you to stop by my office hours or arrange an appointment. You can come by for any reason: to discuss course material, brainstorm assignment ideas, or even just to say hello. I am truly excited to get to know you and want to act as a resource for your success in the course. On that note:
- **Keep me informed** of concerns, questions, or issues related to this class that come up during the semester. If you are confused or struggling with any aspect of the course, communicate with me. I cannot help you succeed if you do not share your needs.
- **Attend course meetings and actively participate in discussion.**
  - **Note on attendance:** of the 150 points you will receive in this course for participation, 50 points (or 5% of your final grade) will be determined by attendance, which will be documented every day on Canvas. If you need to miss class for any reason, please notify me ASAP and I will provide you with an alternative assignment to make up for that missed class period. **You may make up a maximum of 3 missed class periods by completing these alternative assignments within a week of requesting them.** Unexcused absences will result in a 10-point deduction from the attendance points per

absence; excessive absences will result in a significant deduction of your participation/engagement grade.

- With the above in mind, except for in the case of unusual, extenuating circumstances OR pre-arranged attendance accommodations, **students who miss more than 6 total class periods will be unable to pass the course.** *However*, I am a human being and I also recognize the human in you. Please communicate if issues arise that may significantly impact your attendance.
- **Note on participation:** we will collaborate to create a holistic rubric for participation and engagement during the first week of the class.
- **Always be respectful and considerate to your peers.** In and beyond our classroom, I expect absolute respect, kindness, and courtesy. Personal attacks, offensive language, or rudeness to your peers will not be tolerated. It is our goal to create an **inclusive** and safe learning community; we will establish shared guidelines and vocabularies for inclusivity and social and intellectual generosity. Relatedly:
- **A further note on diversity & inclusion:** In this course, we will be navigating difficult discussions on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other facets of identity as they relate to lived experience on a weekly basis. This means that as a community, we must expressly value one another's diversity and enact a daily commitment to collaboration and inclusivity in our classroom.
  - **UW Institutional statement on diversity:** "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."
- **Use technology appropriately.** During class time, please only use technology for course-related materials and tasks. If improper use of technology becomes a repeated issue, after a first warning, you may lose participation points or be marked absent.
- **Follow university guidelines—and common sense/consideration—for health and safety.** The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing; while masks are not currently required, we will be following university policy regarding masking, prevention, and quarantining as such policy is updated. You are required to follow the guidelines as listed [here](#). Please do not come to class if you are seriously ill. Communicate with me & we can work together to ensure that your absences will not pose a threat to your success in the course.

### **Accessibility, Late Work, and Academic Integrity**

- **Late Work:** For major assignments, in circumstances where you need an extension (which I reserve the right to grant on a case-by-case basis), please reach out a minimum 24 hours before the assignment is due to request the extension. Basically, if you are behind or struggling, COMMUNICATE! If I do **not** hear from you, you will lose 1/2 starting letter grade on the assignment for each day it is late, with a maximum of **four days** allotted before the grade is a zero. If you receive an extension, the policy starts on the new deadline. This late work policy applies to all major written assignments including:
  - Manifesto Short Writing Assignment

- Thesis & Close Reading Assignment
  - Final Essay/Creative Project
  - Take-Home Final Exam
- Reading quizzes are meant to foster accountability for maintaining the course reading schedule. For this reason, **reading quizzes will not be accepted late without advance notice.** In other words, in order to receive an extension on a reading quiz, you must ask me prior to the deadline.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** 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. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.
    - Please meet with me within the first two weeks of the semester to discuss necessary accommodations. For example, if you have attendance accommodations, **we must make a plan for how absences will be accounted for.** Plans, of course, can change, but it is imperative that we remain in communication about them.
    - Even if you do not have a disability documented with the [McBurney Center](#), if you need accommodations, communicate with me and I will work with you to help you succeed.
  - **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** Plagiarism—meaning taking credit for words or ideas that are not your own or re-using work from previous classes without prior approval—will not be tolerated. It is always better to seek help and/or to ask for an extension than to plagiarize. See the university's statement on academic misconduct [here](#).
    - **Institutional Syllabus Statement:** By virtue of enrollment, each student agrees to uphold the high academic standards of the University of Wisconsin-Madison; academic misconduct is behavior that negatively impacts the integrity of the institution. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these previously listed acts are examples of misconduct which may result in disciplinary action. Examples of disciplinary action include, but is not limited to, failure on the assignment/course, written reprimand, disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion.
    - **AI Use & Expectations for this course:** ChatGPT and other AI software has particular uses in the college learning environment. **However, this course considers the use of AI software to compose any part of your graded written assignments academic dishonesty.** One of the key learning outcomes for this course is growing your analytical skills and expressing them through writing, a goal which hinges on you doing the writing. At its current level, it is easier to identify AI-generated writing than you may think; further, AI often fails to account for the nuances of experimental literary texts/ assignments about them. If you have any questions about this, please reach out to Elaine.

**Sexual Harassment & Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct:** As an instructor, scholar, and ally, I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, sexual harassment,

dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation. UW–Madison offers a variety of resources for students impacted by sexual misconduct.

- If you wish to seek out free, confidential support, there are a number of [services](#) available on campus and in the community.
- If you would like to report sexual misconduct to the campus, a number of [reporting options](#) are available. In addition, each department has staff members, known as Responsible Employees, who can assist you. If you are an undergraduate student, most of the academic and career advisors you work with are designated Responsible Employees. Please note that Responsible Employees are required to report specific disclosures that you share about sexual misconduct to UW-Madison’s [Title IX Office](#). The Department of Gender & Women’s Studies has the following Responsible Employees:
  - Department Chair, Dr. Judy Houck ([jahouck@wisc.edu](mailto:jahouck@wisc.edu))
  - Department Administrator, Jamie Gratrix ([jamie.gratrix@wisc.edu](mailto:jamie.gratrix@wisc.edu))
  - Graduate Coordinator, Duachi Yang ([duachi.yang@wisc.edu](mailto:duachi.yang@wisc.edu))
  - Undergraduate Advisor, Lachrista Greco ([lachrista.greco@wisc.edu](mailto:lachrista.greco@wisc.edu)).

### **Privacy of Student Records & The Use of Audio Recorded Lectures**

- Materials for this course are protected intellectual property at UW-Madison. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. Students may also take notes solely for their personal use. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to course materials without my permission—please communicate if you need to for an accommodation. Students may not copy or have lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Students are also prohibited from providing or selling their personal notes to anyone else or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the instructor’s express written permission.

### **Course Evaluations**

- Students will be provided with several opportunities to evaluate this course and your learning experience, both formally and informally. In addition to an anonymous, mid-semester survey that will track your experiences and changing needs in our course, we will also be using UW-Madison’s course evaluation survey tool called [HELIOCAMPUS](#) at the end of the semester. For this course, you will receive an official email two weeks prior to the end of the semester, notifying you that your course evaluation is available and providing a link to complete it. Your feedback is important to me, and I strongly encourage you to participate in the course evaluation.

## OVERVIEW: READINGS & DEADLINES

For UW Academic Calendar & Religious Observances, click [here](#).

### WEEK 1:

- Thursday September 5 – Class Overview & Introductions; Read Syllabus; Watch Chappell Roan, "[Casual](#)"

### THE MANIFESTO

### WEEK 2:

*Recommended this week:* begin reading *The Left Hand of Darkness*

- Tuesday September 10 – Breanne Fahs, "[What Are Manifestos?](#)"; Zoe Leonard, "[I want a president](#);" Queer Nation, "[Queers Read This!](#)" (excerpted; CW: anti-gay language); [the S.T.A.R. Manifesto](#); introduction to manifesto assignment
- Thursday September 12 – Audre Lorde, "[The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House](#);" "[The Uses of the Erotic](#);" June Jordan, "[Poem about My Rights](#)." (CW: references to sexual violence); Robin Becker, "[A History of Sexual Preference](#)."

### WEEK 3:

- Tuesday September 17 – E. Jane, "[Nope \(a manifesto\)](#)" from *Burn It Down! Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*; [RIOT GRRRL Manifesto](#); Grimes, "[I Don't Want to Have to Compromise My Morals in Order to Make a Living](#)," from *Burn It Down! Feminist Manifestos for the Revolution*; Chappell Roan, "[For the past 10 years](#)," Instagram post

### FROM FANTASY TO FANTASTICAL MEMOIR

- Thursday September 19 – Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Chapters 1-7; pp. 1-103. **Skip the author's note**

**Quiz 1** (Available from Thursday, September 19 at 5pm – Monday, September 23 at 11:59PM)

***Manifesto Assignment Due Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 11:59pm to Canvas***

### WEEK 4:

- Tuesday September 24 – Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Chapters 8-11, pp. 104-173
- Thursday September 26 – Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Chapters 12-15, pp. 174-237

### WEEK 5:

- Tuesday October 1 – Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Chapters 16-end, pp. 238-323
- Thursday October 3 – Charlie Jane Anders, "Afterword," *The Left Hand of Darkness*, pp. 329-341; Octavia Butler "[The Book of Martha](#)" + N.K. Jemison, "[The City Born Great](#)"

**Quiz 2** (Available from Thursday, October 3 at 5pm – Monday, October 7 at 11:59PM)

**WEEK 6:**

- Tuesday October 8 – Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts*, “No Name Woman” & “White Tigers,” pp. 3-53
- Thursday October 10 – Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts*, “Shaman,” pp. 57-109

**WEEK 7:**

- Tuesday October 15 – Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts*, “At the Western Palace,” pp. 113-160
- Thursday October 17 – Kingston, *The Woman Warrior: A Memoir of a Childhood Among Ghosts*, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe,” pp. 163-end

**Quiz 3** (Available from Thursday, October 17 at 5pm – Monday, October 21 at 11:59PM)

**WEEK 8:**

- Tuesday October 22 – Carmen Maria Machado, [\*In the Dream House\*](#) (excerpts)
- Thursday October 24 – Kai Cheng Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir*, “Dangerous Stories”-“On the Uses of Elbows and Knees” pp. 1-90

***Thesis & Close Reading Assignment Due Sunday, October 27' at 11:59pm to Canvas***

**WEEK 9:**

- Tuesday October 29 – Thom, *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir*, “The Legend of Valaria the Goddess of War”-end, pp. 91-188

**PERFORMING GENDER & SEXUAL DIFFERENCE**

- Thursday October 31 – Mart Crowley, *The Boys in the Band*, “original version,” Act I., pp. 110-155

**WEEK 10:**

- Tuesday November 5 – Crowley, *The Boys in the Band*, “original version,” Act II., pp. 157-212 + “Introduction” by Tony Kushner
- Thursday November 7 – Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*, Introduction (“Beginning, Middles and New Beginnings—A Mandala for Colored Girls”) – “sechita,” pp. 1-39; end at “catchin stars tween her toes.”

**Quiz 4** (Available from Thursday, November 7 at 5pm – Monday, November 11 at 11:59PM)



### WEEK 11:

- Tuesday November 12 – Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*, “tousaint” – “a layin on of hands,” pp. 39-88
- Thursday November 14 – Cherríe Moraga, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, “[Playwright Note & Setting](#),” and [Act I, pp. 297-329](#)

### WEEK 12:

- Tuesday November 19 – Moraga, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea*, [Act II, pp. 329-362](#)
- Thursday November 21 – Young Jean Lee, *Straight White Men*, Characters/Setting/Notes – Act II, pp. 73-127

### WEEK 13:

- Tuesday November 26 – Lee, *Straight White Men*, Act. III, pp. 129-153; Peer Review Workshop
  - Poem/poet sharing open
- Thursday November 28 – *no class*

## **POETICS OF DIFFERENCE**

### WEEK 14:

- Tuesday December 3 – June Jordan & Pat Parker
- Thursday December 5 – Essex Hemphill & Poet TBD

***Final Essay/ Creative Project Due Sunday, December 8<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm to Canvas***

**Quiz 5** (Available from Thursday, December 5 at 5pm – Monday, December 9 at 11:59PM)

***Take-home final exam available starting Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at noon***

### WEEK 15:

- Tuesday December 10 – Poet TBD, closing remarks

***Extra Credit Assignment Due Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> by 11:59PM to Canvas***

***Take-Home Final Exam Due Sunday, December 15<sup>th</sup> by 11:59pm to Canvas***

**No late work will be accepted after December 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.**