Twentieth Century Reading Assignments

4/2: Literary Analysis Paper Revisions Due!

4/2: Read the Introduction to "Turn of the Century Literature" (Vol. 1, 1157-78) by Gilbert and Gubar and post about one of the questions below.

A. What is fin de siecle and what does it mean in relation to women's rights? Find an article in the library databases (American History Online, American Women’s History Online, Literary Reference Center Plus, Project MUSE, and JSTOR) that helps you define the role of women in relation to this concept.
B. How are women defined during the Nineteenth Century?
C. What occupations did women have during this time period? How did their positions change from the Victorian Period?
D. What were women's rights during this time period? How did their rights change?

4/2: Read the Introduction to "Early-Twentieth-Century Literature" (Vol. 2, 1-29) by Gilbert and Gubar and post about one of the questions below. Research and explain the concepts below in the library databases (American History Online, American Women’s History Online, Literary Reference Center Plus, Project MUSE, and JSTOR):

A. the role of the Anti-Feminist Movement of the 1920s
B. the role of the birth control movement of the 1920s and 1930s.
C. the impact of psychological studies in the early twentieth century.

4/2: Read the Introduction to "Later-Twentieth-Century Literature" (Vol. 2, 553-79) by Gilbert and Gubar and post about one of the questions below.

A. Explain the difference between the first and second waves of feminism and how those waves have affected literature. (Combine Gilbert and Gubar’s descriptions with Rampton’s below.)
B. Research the Latina, Chicana, and other Latin American perspectives on feminism in the library databases (American History Online, American Women’s History Online, Literary Reference Center Plus, Project MUSE, and JSTOR databases), describing how Latinas view the modern, rather African-American and Caucasian feminist movement.

4/2: Study the waves of feminism, using Martha Rampton’s article “The Three Waves of Feminism.” (See pages 4-6 of this handout).

C. Journal Entry: Define feminism, which is not a simple, one-sentence task. Absorb the dates and parts of each wave of feminism. Think about the eras and, using the library databases (American History Online, American Women’s History Online, Literary Reference Center Plus, Project MUSE, and JSTOR), find major issues, accomplishments, laws, or policies into those time frames. Part of the latter two waves will involve describing them regarding other minority groups, so think about the differences in the works we are reading and why conflict developed within the feminist movement.
4/2: Read the introduction to the author Charlotte Gilman Perkins (1888-90) and her works "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1392-03) and "Why I Wrote 'The Yellow Wallpaper'" (1403-4).

A. Define the following terms in relation to Perkins' "The Yellow Wallpaper": protagonist, antagonist, plot sequence (all five tenets), and character (round or flat, dynamic or static), showing examples in the work to illustrate the definitions.

B. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in the work and describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean.

C. Define this work as feminist or anti-feminist, using evidence from the story as well as a resource from Literature Reference Center Plus or JSTOR databases to help you define the work.

D. Apply the literary critique of psychological critique, specifically Jungian psychological study of archetypes, to the short story. Literature Reference Center Plus and JSTOR databases have many critiques applying Carl Jung’s principles, so that should be the first stop for research in this work. What archetypal roles do the characters play in the work? Describe them.

4/7: Julia Baty’s Twentieth Century Presentation, Read the introduction to the author Virginia Woolf (212-6) and her work “The Death of a Moth” (248-9) for Julia’s presentation. I will lead us with the excerpt from A Room of One's Own [Shakespeare's Sister] (237-44). “A Woman's College from the Outside” (231-3), and "Professions for Women" (244-7). Describe one unifying concept that you see in all three of Woolf's works, showing how it represents changes in the twentieth century.

4/7: Lillian Gomez Godinez’s Twentieth Century Presentation Read the introduction to the author Zora Neale Hurston (347-9) and her work "Sweat" (349-57).

A. Apply the literary critique of psychological critique, specifically Jungian psychological study, to the short story. Literature Reference Center Plus and JSTOR databases have many critiques applying Carl Jung’s principles, so that should be the first stop for research in this work. What archetypal role does Delia play in the work, and does she transform from that role into another?

B. How does Delia's role with her husband typify the role of the black woman in early- to mid-Twentieth Century life? Research and compare the role in Literature Reference Center Plus and JSTOR databases.

4/9: Read the introduction to the author Dorothy Parker (487): “One Perfect Rose” (488) and “News Item” (488). Explicate the poem assigned for the journal entry, writing a summary statement at the end.

A. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in the work. Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.

B. Explicate “One Perfect Rose.” What is the content of each stanza? How does the speaker’s perspective transition through the poem? Analyze the speaker’s message in the poem.

C. Apply a literary theory, such as feminist, Marxist, cultural, or psychological theory, to both works. Define the theory and trace it through each poem.
4/9: Read the introduction to the author Genevieve Taggard (494) as well as her works "With Child" (495) and "Mill Town" (497-8).

A. How does Taggard represent sexuality in "With Child"? How is it different from previous descriptions of pregnancy we have read? What kind of twentieth-century commentary is she making with this work?
B. Apply a literary theory, such as feminist, Marxist, cultural, or psychological theory, to both works. Define the theory and trace it through each poem.
C. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in "With Child." Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.
D. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in "Mill Town." Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.

4/14: Read the introduction to the author Muriel Rukeyser (644) and her works “Who in One Lifetime” (646), “Night Feeding” (647), and “Waiting for Icarus” (handout/in-class audio).

A. Explicate “Who in One Lifetime,” writing a summary statement at the end. Consider discussing how Rukeyser represents sexuality, how her discussion of pregnancy to previous readings (do this for future readings, too), and what twentieth-century commentary she is making in each of the works.
B. Define symbol. Identify one symbols in each poem. Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.

4/14-16: Creative Works Presentations by Randy, Lizzie, Kirstin, and Julia – All other students need to upload a second literary analysis paper or “Foundational Feminist Text” book report by April 16 to meet the Student Choice assignment requirement.

4/16: Read the introduction to the author Gwendolyn Brooks (780-1) and her works "the mother" (781-2) and "We Real Cool" (787).

A. Apply a social movement to the poem "the mother." Which movement from the Twentieth Century seems to be her biggest commentary, grounding the answer with dates and occurrences that tie to the poem. Find one resource in addition to the poem in the Literature Reference Center Plus and JSTOR databases to support the analysis.
B. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in “the mother.” Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.
C. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in “We Real Cool.” Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.
D. Apply a social movement to the poem “We Real Cool.” Which movement from the Twentieth Century seems to be her biggest commentary, grounding the answer with dates and occurrences that tie to the poem. Find one resource in addition to the poem in the Literature Reference Center Plus and JSTOR databases to support the analysis.

4/16: Carnatta Spencer’s Twentieth Century Presentation, Maya Angelou’s background (926) and her poem “Phenomenal Woman.” (See page 7 below.) excerpt from I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings “[The Peckerwood Dentist and Momma’s Incredible Powers]” (926-931)
4/21: Sydney Corley’s Twentieth Century Presentation Read the introduction to the author Toni Morrison (994-996) and her work “Recitatif” (996-1009) and the excerpt from Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature (1009-1025). Simply write for the journal entry.

4/21: Taylor Richard’s Twentieth Century Presentation, Audre Lorde (1069-70) and her works “Now That I Am Forever With Child” (1072) and the excerpt from Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (1076-78).

4/23: Read the introduction to the author Alice Walker (1295-6) and her excerpt from In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens (1296-1303). Write about what she expresses about black feminism in the work.

4/28: Read the introduction to the author Sandra Cisneros (1399-1400) and the excerpts from Woman Hollering Creek (1400-8).

A. Research Latina Feminism in the library databases (American History Online, American Women's History Online, Literary Reference Center Plus, and Project MUSE). What views does this work support that are different from and similar to what might be deemed as Caucasian Feminism?

B. Define symbol. Identify two symbols in the work. Describe what the symbols literally and figuratively mean and how they add value to the poem.

4/30: Catch up on the final works, reflection on feminism, and finals study period.

5/5: The final exam will be held Tuesday, May 5, from 9:40-11:40 a.m. in Betts 108. Please bring a pencil, your journal entries, and a calm spirit, and you will do fine on the exam.


This piece was originally published in the Fall 2008 issue of Pacific magazine. Martha Rampton is a professor of history and director of the Center for Gender Equity at Pacific University. Her specialty is the early medieval period with an emphasis on social history and the activities and roles of women. She holds an MA in medieval history from the University of Utah and a doctorate in medieval history from the University of Virginia.

It is common to speak of three phases of modern feminism; however, there is little consensus as to how to characterize these three waves or what to do with women's movements before the late 19th century.

For instance, some thinkers have sought to locate the roots of feminism in ancient Greece with Sappho (d. c. 570 BCE) or the medieval world with Hildegard of Bingen (d.1179) or Christine de Pisan (d.1434). Certainly Olympes de Gouge (d.1791), Mary Wollstonecraft (d.1797), and Jane Austen (d.1817) are foremothers of the modern women's movement. All of these people advocated for the dignity, intelligence and basic human potential of the female sex. However, it was not until the late 19th century that the efforts for women's equal rights coalesced into a clearly identifiable and self-conscious movement, or rather a series of movements.
The first wave of feminism took place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, emerging out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The goal of this wave was to open up opportunities for women, with a focus on suffrage. The wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, when 300 men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (d.1902) drafted the Seneca Falls Declaration outlining the new movement's ideology and political strategies.

In its early stages, feminism was interrelated with the temperance and abolitionist movements and gave voice to now-famous activists like the African-American Sojourner Truth (d.1883), who demanded, "Ain't I a woman?" Victorian America saw women acting in very "un-ladylike" ways (public speaking, demonstrating, stints in jail), which challenged the "cult of domesticity." Discussions about the vote and women's participation in politics led to an examination of the differences between men and women as they were then viewed. Some claimed that women were morally superior to men, and so their presence in the civic sphere would improve public behavior and the political process.

The second wave began in the 1960s and continued into the 1990s. This wave unfolded in the context of the anti-Vietnam War and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world. The New Left was on the rise, and the voice of the second wave was increasingly radical. In this phase, sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues, and much of the movement's energy was focused on passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the constitution guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex.

This phase began with protests against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969. Feminists parodied what they held to be a degrading "cattle parade" that reduced women to objects of beauty dominated by a patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or in dull, low-paying jobs. The radical New York group called the Redstockings staged a counter pageant, in which they crowned a sheep as Miss America and threw "oppressive" feminine artifacts such as bras, girdles, high-heels, makeup and false eyelashes into the trashcan.

Because the second wave of feminism found voice amid so many other social movements, it was easily marginalized and viewed as less pressing than, for example, Black Power or the effort to end the war in Vietnam. Feminists reacted by forming women-only organizations (such as NOW) and "consciousness raising" groups. In publications like "The BITCH Manifesto" and "Sisterhood is Powerful," feminists advocated for their place in the sun. The second wave was increasingly theoretical, based on a fusion of neo-Marxism and psycho-analytic theory and began to associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother. Sex and gender were differentiated — the former being biological, and the later a social construct that varies culture-to-culture and over time.

Whereas the first wave of feminism was generally propelled by middle class white women, the second phase drew in women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity and claiming, "Women's struggle is class struggle." Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as "the personal is political" and "identity politics" in an effort to demonstrate that race, class and gender oppression are all related. They initiated a concentrated effort to rid society top-to-bottom of sexism, from children's cartoons to the highest levels of government.

One of the strains of this complex and diverse "wave" was the development of women-only spaces and the notion that women working together create a special dynamic that is not possible in mixed-groups
Shannon McGregor, Women Writers (LIT 190), Twentieth Century

and that would ultimately work for the betterment of the entire planet. Women, whether due to their long "subjugation" or to their biology, were thought by some to be more humane, collaborative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, democratic and holistic in their approach to problem-solving than men. The term eco-feminism was coined to capture the sense that, because of their biological connection to earth and lunar cycles, women were natural advocates of environmentalism.

The third phase of feminism began in the mid-1990s and is informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking. In this phase many constructs have been destabilized, including the notions of "universal womanhood," body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity. An aspect of third wave feminism that mystifies the mothers of the earlier feminist movement is the readoption by young feminists of the very lipstick, high heels and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression. Pinkfloor expressed this new position when she said; "It's possible to have a push-up bra and a brain at the same time."

The "grrls" of the third wave have stepped onto the stage as strong and empowered, eschewing victimization and defining feminine beauty for themselves as subjects, not as objects of a sexist patriarchy. They have developed a rhetoric of mimicry, which reappropriates derogatory terms like "slut" and "bitch" in order to subvert sexist culture and deprive it of verbal weapons. The web is an important aspect of the new "girlie feminism." E-zines have provided "cybergrrls" and "netgrrls" another kind of women-only space. At the same time — rife with the irony of third-wave feminism because cyberspace is disembodied — it permits all users the opportunity to cross gender boundaries and so the very notion of gender has been challenged.

This is in keeping with the third wave's celebration of ambiguity and refusal to think in terms of "us-them" or in some cases their refusal to identify themselves as "feminists" at all. Grrl-feminism tends to be global and multi-cultural, and it shuns simple answers or artificial categories of identity, gender and sexuality. Its transversal politics means that differences such as those of ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc., are celebrated but recognized as dynamic, situational and provisional. Reality is conceived not so much in terms of fixed structures and power relations, but in terms of performance within contingencies. Third wave feminism breaks boundaries.

Where feminism will go from here is unclear, but the point is that feminism, by whatever name, is alive and well both in academia and outside of it. Some older feminists feel discouraged by the younger generation's seeming ignorance of or disregard for the struggles and achievements of the early movement. They see little progress (the pay gap has not significantly narrowed in 60 years), and are fearful that the new high-heeled, red-lipped college grrls are letting us backslide. This, however, is not likely the case. There have always been feminisms in the movement, not just one ideology, and there have always been tensions, points and counterpoints. The political, social and intellectual feminist movements have always been chaotic, multivalenced, and disconcerting, and let's hope they continue to be so; it's a sign that they are thriving.