

## ENGL 380-01, Topics in Literary Study, Women of Color Feminism & Queer of Color Critique, Spring 2015

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## **ENGL380—Women of Color Feminism & Queer of Color Critique**

**Professor Amanda Dykema**

**Spring 2015 – MW 2-3:15pm—Palmer 211**

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**Office: Palmer Hall 309B**

**Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 9-10:30am; Monday 3:30-4:30pm; & by appointment**

### **Required Texts & Materials**

The following texts have been ordered at the Rhodes Bookstore and are also available online. Please purchase the editions specified. Please also note that there will be additional important readings, all available to be downloaded at the Moodle site for this course ([moodle.rhodes.edu](http://moodle.rhodes.edu)).

Ferguson, Roderick. *Aberrations in Black*. Duke. 978-0816641291

Holland, Sharon. *The Erotic Life of Racism*. Duke. 978-0822352068

Hong, Grace, and Roderick Ferguson. *Strange Affinities*. Duke. 978-0822349853

Moraga and Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back*. Kitchen Table. 978-0913175033

Muñoz, Jose. *Disidentifications*. U of Minnesota P. 978-0816630158

Truong, Monique. *The Book of Salt*. Mariner. ISBN: 978-0618446889

### **Course Objectives**

This course examines two related strains of critical theory that have fundamentally shaped U.S. ethnic studies and contemporary literary studies: Women of Color Feminism and Queer of Color Critique. These theoretical analytics explore the intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class, allowing us to investigate how seemingly “proper” gender roles and “normal” sexualities also come to shape racial categories and structural inequalities. We will read anthologies by women of color feminists, notably Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *This Bridge Called My Back*, alongside work by contemporary feminist and queer of color theorists like Sharon Holland, José Esteban Muñoz, and Roderick Ferguson. Together, these texts register the distance between minoritized cultural productions and national/capitalist ideals, activating forms of critique grounded in queered, gendered, and racialized embodiments and ensuing cultural productions. *This class is cross-listed with Gender and Sexuality Studies and Africana Studies.*

By the end of the semester, you will:

- Improve your practices of critical thinking, writing, and reading to interpret texts
- Develop your interpretation of theoretical arguments based on close reading and textual analysis
- Conduct field-specific research and write persuasively about literature and theory
- Compare your analysis to peers and literary scholars
- Increase your familiarity with the theoretical analytics and political histories of Women of Color Feminism and Queer of Color Critique.

### **Course Policies & Requirements**

*Papers.* The essays in this course are designed to allow you to engage with the critical theory, set theorists in conversation, and examine how theory illuminates literature and literature illuminates theory. In addition to the regular short précis assignments (see below), you will write two primary essays. The first is a comparative essay (5-6 pages) that analyzes two articles, chapters, or introductions from different texts/theorists. The second is a research essay (8-10 pages) that engages with our theoretical readings, a literary text (Monique Truong’s *Book of Salt*), and external sources. For each essay, I will provide specific assignment sheets to explain the paper in greater detail. **All documents are due at the beginning of class on the date listed on the syllabus.** Unless alternate arrangements are made with me before the due date, late papers will lose one grade increment (ex. B to B- or C+ to C) per day.

*Précis Assignments.* You will complete ten of these assignments, each roughly one page (300-400 words). The first is required; for the rest, you will choose from readings indicated on the syllabus with an asterisk (\*\*). You will write six before Spring Break and four after. The purpose of these assignments is to encourage you to engage closely with the reading via summary, key terms, and questions. These précis will also help you formulate your major essays. Late précis assignments will not be accepted (as this defeats the function of helping you prepare for class). The assignment sheet will provide more details.

*Submitting work.* All out of class work for this course should be typed and submitted in **hard-copy form** (not email) unless you are otherwise instructed. Submitted work must use correct MLA format (title, page numbers, 1-inch margins, 11 or 12 point Times New Roman or Calibri font, etc.). All assignments are integral to the goals of the course. Failure to complete either of the major essays or the presentation will result in a grade of F for the course.

*Grade Distribution.* Your grade in this course will be determined out of 1000 possible points.

Participation & Homework	200
Précis Assignments	200
Comparative Presentation	50
Comparative Essay	200
Research Essay	350
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000</b>

(A: 930-1000, A-: 900-929, B+: 880-899, B: 830-879, B-: 800-829, C+: 780-799, C: 730-779, C-: 700-729, D+: 680-699, D: 630-679, D-: 600-629, F: 500 or below)

*Class Participation.* You are expected to come to class prepared for discussion, which means reading the assigned text carefully and marking significant pages/paragraphs before class so you can contribute to the discussion using specific textual evidence (quotes, references to specific page numbers, etc.). Please **bring your copy of the assigned text** to every class. If there is a reading assigned from Moodle, you should print it and bring it to class as well. In-class discussion may often include your general reaction to a text – always a good way to begin – but is ultimately meant to lead you to the ability to construct arguments that reflect the complexity of each assigned text. Participating and listening carefully to your classmates on a regular basis should help you strengthen your ability to develop and support a theoretical argument, skills you will need to succeed on the essays.

*Courtesy.* Please be respectful of everyone’s opinions, presence, and person in this course. A primary purpose of this class is to give you the opportunity to practice developing interpretations of the texts, and while you are encouraged to offer differing ideas, you should do so in a thoughtful manner. Further, I am committed to creating an academic climate that is safe, respectful, and appreciative of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic background, ability, religion, or any other aspect of one’s identity. A climate of mutual respect allows us to ask difficult questions and to participate in honest discussions, even in the context of strong disagreement. Creating this kind of open, honest, and respectful climate is our mutual responsibility.

*Quizzes.* I reserve the right to offer quizzes if discussion suggests that students are not staying current with the reading or reading thoroughly.

*Attendance.* Regular attendance and class participation are essential for this course. Come to class on time. In general, I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. **Each absence after the third class missed will lower your final course grade by 50 points (half a letter grade).** Students with college-sanctioned extracurricular activities (athletics, mock trial, etc.) or religious observances that will require them to miss one or more classes during the semester should talk to me in advance of their anticipated absence. All such absences that are not approved in advance will adversely affect your grade.

*Technology.* **Turn off cell phones** and other electronic devices before class. I expect that computers will be used only for class-related work. Get in the habit of regularly checking your email, as I will send out announcements and assignments this way. Email is also the best way to contact me (though please give me up to 24 hours to respond). Depending on your question, I may recommend that we discuss it in person. Please also regularly consult our course space on Moodle at [www.moodle.rhodes.edu](http://www.moodle.rhodes.edu), where you can view the syllabus, access assignments and other course materials, and communicate with me and your classmates.

*Intellectual Honesty.* All work turned in for this course is to be completed in accordance with Rhodes' Honor Code; it must be your own work, produced exclusively for this course. Plagiarism is a violation of the integrity of the occupation of learning and a serious act of disrespect toward me as professor and toward your fellow students. "Plagiarism" means directly copying someone else's work, paraphrasing someone else's words or ideas without giving them credit, or having someone else do your work for you. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, failure to cite the source of quoted/paraphrased/borrowed text and ideas) may likewise result in failure of the course, regardless of the Council hearing outcome. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not intentional plagiarism, will be penalized as I deem appropriate. If you have any concerns that your actions might violate this course's academic integrity policies, speak with me early in the assignment for help and clarification.

*Special needs.* If you have a registered disability that will require accommodations, please see me within the first two weeks of class so we can arrange for the resources you need. If you have a disability and have not yet registered with the Office of Student Disability Services, you should do so immediately (901-843-3885, <http://www.rhodes.edu/disabilityservices/>)

### Course Calendar – First Half of Semester

Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed. This calendar may be subject to change during the course; all changes will be announced in class and via Moodle. Readings marked (M) can be accessed at moodle.rhodes.edu. Readings marked \*\* are eligible for the précis assignments.

#### JANUARY

**Wed 15** Course Introduction & Syllabus – Women of Color Feminism/Queer of Color Critique

**Mon 19** **No Class – MLK Day**

**Wed 21** Combahee River Collective Statement, in *This Bridge* pp. 210-18\*\*  
*This Bridge Called My Back* Preface, The Bridge Poem, Introduction pp. xii-xxvi

**Mon 26** *This Bridge*, “Entering the Lives of Others” pp. 23-57 (esp. Moraga and Yamada) (M)

**Wed 28** *This Bridge*, “And When You” pp. 61-101 (esp. Lorde’s “The Master’s Tools”) (M)\*\*

#### FEBRUARY

**Mon 2** Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* Preface, Ch. 1, Ch. 5 (M)\*\*

**Wed 4** Lisa Lowe Interview with Angela Davis (M)

**Mon 9** José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications* Introduction\*\*

**Wed 11** *Disidentifications* Ch. 4, “The White to Be Angry”\*\*

**Mon 16** *Disidentifications* Ch. 6, “Pedro Zamora’s Real World of Counterpublicity”

**Wed 18** *Disidentifications* Ch. 7, “Performing Disidentity”\*\*  
[Nell Irvin Painter Lecture at 6 p.m.]

**Mon 23** Roderick Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black* Introduction\*\*

**Wed 25** *Aberrations in Black* Ch. 4

#### MARCH

**Mon 2** Grace K. Hong and Roderick Ferguson, *Strange Affinities* Introduction

**Wed 4** *Strange Affinities* – Kara Keeling, “I = Another: Digital Identity Politics”\*\*

**Mon 9** **No Class – Spring Break**

**Wed 11** **No Class – Spring Break**

[To Be Continued]