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## ENGL 265-01, Twentieth-Century american Women's Poetry, Spring 1999

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**Dr. Tina Barr**

**Course number: 265, 20<sup>th</sup>-Century American Women's Poetry**

**3:00-4:30 p.m. MW**

My office is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Palmer Hall, number 307. My phone number is 843-3979 and my email address is: [TinaBarr@rhodes.edu](mailto:TinaBarr@rhodes.edu). Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or to arrange a conference.

Course Description: This course will explore how a gendered perspective on reading and writing poetry might deepen our understanding of the forms and functions of a poetic response. We will contextualize our study through reading a number of essays. Although we will move back and forth between periods, as a general approach we will begin by readings poets of the modernist period, then poetry written postwar(s), and finally we'll conclude by reading contemporary work by writers whose reputations have developed more recently.

Required Texts: *No More Masks*, Florence Howe, ed., Harper Collins; *Shakespeare's Sisters*, eds. Gilbert and Gubar, Indiana UP; *Dwelling in Possibility*, eds. Prins and Schreiber; *Trilogy* by H.D., New Directions; *Geography III* by Elizabeth Bishop, Farrar, Straus; *West Wind* by Mary Oliver, Houghton Mifflin and a *coursepack*. The coursepack will include essays and poetry by Adrienne Rich and the essay, "The Feminist Literary Movement," by Carole Oles and Hilda Raz. You will read *Kinky*, by pop poet Denise Duhamel, in preparation for her reading on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

Structure of Course: Class will be based on discussion, so your response to the reading and poems is crucial to its success. You should read and aggressively make notations in your texts with ideas and questions. In addition, you should feel free to bring up topics for discussion.

Course Requirements: **1.** 1 page computer-processed (typed) responses to the weekly readings, due on Mondays. You will turn these in on a weekly basis, and I will return them to you with a check, check-plus, or check-minus on them. (A check will be the equivalent of a "B" range grade, a check-minus for a "C" range, or lower, meaning you need to put more effort into the responses, and a check-plus will mean superior work.) In addition, you must keep copies, because you will turn in the entire packet of your responses at the end of the semester. **2.** 5 page paper on a topic designed by each student and approved by professor, due towards the end of the semester **3. Active reading and class participation.**

**Note:** These 3 components will each count for approximately 33% of your grade.

Conferences: You may see me during the semester for a conference, but it is not mandatory. If I have never had you as a student, however, I would like to see you in conference at least once. Please see me if you have a question or would like to discuss an essay. It will be up to you to request a conference and schedule it.

***While I always endeavor to abide by the syllabus; it is a statement of course goals and we may, at times, run behind schedule.*** Please bring up questions and issues and we can respond to them as they arise.

**Week 1: 1/13** class orientation, paired interviews, poems

Assignment for next week: Read introduction to *No More Masks*, read in that text poems by Stein, H.D., Moore and Millay. Read chapters 10 and 12 in *Shakespeare's Sisters*, "The Art of Silence and the Forms of Women's Poetry," by Jeanne Kammer, and "Edna St. Vincent Millay and the Language of Vulnerability," by Jane Stanbrough. Take note of your responses to the reading and type up a 1-2 page response. You will want to engage in a response to some aspect of the reading: a particular poem, a response to an essay about a poet, a disagreement with an author, etc.

**Week 2: 1/18 & 1/20** \*\*\*Turn in 1-2 page response to your reading. Discussion.

Assignment for next week: Read H.D.'s *Trilogy* and the essay on her work in *Shakespeare's Sisters*, "The Echoing Spell of H.D.'s *Trilogy*" by Susan Gubar. Do response sheet.

**Week 3: 1/25 & 1/27**, Discussion and \*\*\*turn in response sheets.

Assignment for next week: Read "Afro-American Women Poets: A Bio-Critical Survey," by Gloria Hull in *Shakespeare's Sisters*, and then read poems in *NMM* by Angelina Grimke, Anne Spencer, Georgia Douglas Johnson, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Also read the essay on Brooks, "Gwendolyn the Terrible, Propositions on Eleven Poems" by Hortense J. Spillers. Do 1 page responses.

**Week 4: 2/1 & 2/3** Discussion of reading and hand in \*\*\*response sheet .

**2/4: Reading by Tina Barr, 7pm, Christian Brothers University, Buckman Hall**

Assignment for next week: Read poems by Louise Bogan, Levertov, Rich and Rukeyser in *No More Masks*. Read Rachel Blau DuPlessis's essay, "The Critique of Consciousness and Myth in Levertov, Rich, and Rukeyser" in *Shakespeare's Sisters*. Do 1 page responses.

**Week 5: 2/8 & 2/10** Turn in \*\*\*response sheet and discuss reading. Conference day on 2/10.

Assignment for next week: Read the work of May Swenson in *No More Masks* and the essay on her by Alicia Ostriker, "May Swenson and the Shapes of Speculation," in *Shakespeare's Sisters*. Also read from the coursepack, "The Feminist Literary Movement" essay. (You do not need to turn in a response sheet on the reading for this week.)

**Week 6: 2/15 & 2/17**, Discuss reading from last week; we will discuss the Swenson assignment and "The Feminist Literary Movement" essay on 2/17.

Assignment for next week: Read the work of Adrienne Rich in the coursepack, both poetry and prose. Also read the essay in *Dwelling in Possibility*, "Where are We Moored," on Rich. (We will begin our discussion with its focus solely on Rich next

week, and may take an extra session to conclude it. This is a heavy reading assignment.) Return to a 1-2 page response sheet, which will be due next week.

**Week 7: 2/22 & 2/24,** Turn in \*\*\*response sheet. Discuss the reading.

Assignment for next week: Read the work of Mona Van Duyn and Carolyn Kizer in *NMM*. Read the following poems in Bishop's *Geography*: "In the Waiting Room," "The Moose," and "One Art." (*No Journal requirement this week.*)

**Week 8: 3/1 & 3/3,** Discussion of reading. In-class small group discussion and exercises.

**Assignment over Spring Break.** Read the work of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton in *NMM*. Read essays in *Shakespeare's Sisters*, "A Fine, White Flying Myth: The Life/Work of Sylvia Plath," by Sandra Gilbert and "Seeking the Exit or the Home: Poetry and Salvation in the Career of Anne Sexton," by Suzanne Juhasz. Turn in a one page journal responses on 3/15.

**Week 9: 3/15 & 3/17** Turn in \*\*\*journal and initiate discussion.

Assignment for next week: Read the work of Lucille Clifton, Jayne Cortez, Sonia Sanchez, and Audre Lorde in *NMM* and read the essay on Clifton in *Dwelling in Possibility*, entitled "In Her Own Images: Lucille Clifton and the Bible" by Gloria Hull. (No journal due this week.) **Also, decide on a topic for your 5 page paper, due on 4/19. Turn in your proposal form to Dr. Barr on 3/29.** You need to pick a poem you'd like to write on and complete a technical analysis, *or* you might want to address an issue that has come up for discussion in relation to a particular poem or group of poems. You may come up with your own topic.

**Week 10: 3/22 & 3/24,** Discuss reading.

Assignment for next week: Read the work of Alicia Ostriker and Eleanor Wilner in *NMM* and essays/comments they have written in *Dwelling in Possibility*, "Entering the Tents," and "Wrestling the Angel of Inscription." (263, 318) Complete 1 page journal response.

**Week 11: 3/29, Topic proposal form due.** Discussion of Ostriker and Wilner, \*\*\*turn in journal response.

**Complete the following assignment over Easter Break:** Read selected poems in Mary Oliver's *West Wind*. (No journal assignment, but mark up your book with your responses.) **Your paper is due on 4/19.**

**Week 12: 4/5 & 4/7,** Complete discussion of Ostriker, Wilner, and Oliver.

Assignment for next week: Read work by Marilyn Hacker in *NMM* and her essay "A Few Cranky Paragraphs on Form and Content," in *D in P.* (No journal due)

**Week 13: 4/12, Reminder: paper due on 4/19.** Discussion of Hacker's work. **No class on 4/13 (AWP conference) (work on your paper or prep your reading for next week)** Assignment for next week: Read work of Toi Derricote, ("The Feeding," "Black Female Corpses) Marilyn Nelson Waniek, ("The House on Moscow Street") Joy Harjo ("Anchorage") and Rita Dove ("The Great Palaces") in *NMM*. Read **brief** commentary & poems by them in *D in P*: "On Voice," by Dove and "An Interweaving of Worlds," by Joy Harjo. (No journal due.) You can do this assignment during the class time we miss on 4/13, and work on your paper over the weekend.

**Week 14: 4/19 & 4/21, Attention: 5 page paper due on 4/19.** Discuss work of Derricote, Harjo, Dove and Waniek.

Assignment for next week: **read selections from *Kinky* by Denise Duhamel.** (pages 17, 19, 21, 24, 38, 41, 58, 68, 70) Read work by Sharon Olds, ("The Girl," "First Sex") Louise Gluck, ("Pomegranate," "Brown Circle") Carolyn Forché ("The Island") and Jorie Graham ("From the New World") in *NMM*. *Response packets are due on 4/28.*

**Week 15: 4/26 & 4/28** Discussion of Duhamel's poetry, and work of other contemporaries. Reading by Denise Duhamel on 4/27, at 7:30 pm. You are ***strongly urged to attend.*** **4/28: \*\*\*Turn in copies of 1 page response sheets stapled together.** **(You should have 7 from the semester)** *Class evaluations, class party, final discussion*

*Dr. Tina Barr, 20<sup>th</sup> c American Women's Poetry course  
Proposal for 5 page paper  
You should hand in this form on 3/29.*

*You may see me in conference to talk about your idea, as well, but you must hand in this sheet, with a brief paragraph explaining your idea.*

*You might want to write on a technical aspect or aspects of a poem: such as imagery, diction, line breaks, formal organization, musical strategies, governing metaphors, similes or analogies, tonal qualities, etc. These considerations will be distinctive for each poem. On the other hand, you might want to consider a particular topic or issue that is addressed in a poem or poems, by one or more poets. You may devise a topic, but it must be approved by Dr. Barr.*

*Name:*

*Phone #:*

*Comments by Dr. Barr:*