

Course Title	: Special Topics in English: Transnational Feminist and Women's Writing
Course Code	: ENG3399h
Recommended Study Year	: 3 rd or 4 th Year
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture-Tutorial mode
Class Contact Hours	: 2-hour lecture per week : 1-hour tutorial per week
Category	: Discipline Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: Nil
Co-requisite(s)	: Nil
Exclusion(s)	: Nil
Exemption Requirement(s)	: Nil

Brief Course Description

Before our contemporary #MeToo Movement and “girlbosses,” there were suffragettes and flappers, birth control advocates, sex strikers, and feminists of all kinds. In this course, we take a grand world tour to explore the emergence of the “New Woman” as a figure of gender emancipation and resistance in the twentieth century. We will begin with Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and its famous ending, in which the protagonist, Nora, abandons her husband and children in search of an independent life. For some, Nora’s exit augurs the collapse of an entire social order; for others, she is celebrated precisely because that collapse promises new liberations. How does the modern woman’s self-definition against gender norms relate to the processes of modernity? And how do women’s movements connect with other international workers’ and anti-imperialist struggles?

Reading canonical feminist works alongside women’s magazines, avant-garde art, and other genres, we will see that in her various incarnations, the “New Woman” defies any single definition. As we learn to interpret literary techniques in these texts, we will also see how the imaginative construction of alternative modes of womanhood remained a common ambition for writers and activists determined to inspire social, political, and economic change. This course will examine the challenges the New Woman offers in different global situations, and will help us discover—to quote Lu Xun upon his reading of Ibsen’s play in translation—“what happens when Nora leaves home.”

Aims

This class aims to develop the skills of literary criticism, and to enhance student confidence in speaking and writing about fiction and film. The class will teach students to analyze literary features such as plot, character, and dialogue, as well as engage with more experimental narratives. The class will also teach students to relate literature to politics and history.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should:

1. be able to comprehend the assigned texts;
2. be able to use relevant theoretical concepts that can facilitate a structured understanding of fiction and film
3. be able to identify and describe major generic and structural features of fiction and non-fiction;
4. be able to relate literature to its social and historical contexts;
5. be able to write well-argued critical essays.

Indicative Contents

1. Introduction to transnational women's writing and feminist theories;
2. Presentation of texts chosen from various sources to provide extensive and intensive practice in responding to and analyzing literature and film;
3. Necessary historical and theoretical background to the chosen texts by women authors;
4. Presentation of the common critical vocabulary and terms used in feminist literary criticism;
5. Strategies and techniques for speaking and writing critically about literature and film.

Teaching Method

This class will be interactive and student-driven. Although the instructor will provide important information in short lectures, students are expected to keep up with the reading and contribute to class discussions.

Singly or in pairs, students will give presentations on the reading assignments. The presentation should give a brief outline of the major themes and arguments of the reading, with comments on the major issues and questions raised by the article. These comments may include questions or observations about approaches, frameworks, and perspectives; methods; the texts analyzed in the articles; specific viewpoints; and explicit or implicit points of disagreement (or agreement) among the authors.

Workshops on how to plan and write a research paper will be incorporated into the 3-hour weekly class. Students will spend the penultimate class critiquing and offering advice to their peers on the final paper.

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

The progress and achievement in learning will be gauged through class discussions, presentations, a collective creative project, and a final essay.

Learning Outcome	Assessment Method			
	Participation	Creative Project	Presentation	Final Essay
1. be able to comprehend the assigned texts;	X	X	X	X
2. be able to use relevant theoretical concepts that can facilitate a structured understanding of fiction and film	X	X	X	X
3. be able to identify and describe major generic and structural features of fiction and non-fiction;	X	X	X	X
4. be able to relate literature to its social and historical contexts;	X	X	X	X
5. be able to write well-argued critical essays.	X		X	X

Assessment

Participation (15%)

Students are expected to pay attention in class and actively participate in discussions. Marks for this category will also take into account students' willingness to work with their group mates as a team.

Creative Project (20%)

In the style of Margaret Sanger's radical magazine, *The Woman Rebel*, you will join your classmates to create a "zine" of your own, exploring contemporary social issues of today. Each student will contribute 2 short pieces of writing (no word count requirement for poetry; ~ 200 words for fiction or non-fiction.) You will be graded on both your individual contribution and the overall quality of the zine.

Presentation (20%)

You are expected to give a 5-10 minute presentation on a critical essay that is relevant to the primary texts. You may choose from the recommended reading list or find another article. The presentation should give a brief outline of the major themes and arguments of the reading, with comments on the major issues and questions raised by the article. These comments may include questions or observations about approaches, frameworks, and perspectives; methods; the texts analyzed in the articles; specific viewpoints; and explicit or implicit points of disagreement (or agreement) among the authors.

Final Essay (15%+30%)

Write an essay that discusses a work's theme (content) and style (form). In addition to the

primary texts, secondary sources related to the writer (critical essays, interviews, autobiography, personal letters) should also be taken into consideration. Official prompts will be distributed but you are also encouraged to come up with your own topic. To give you a chance to improve your work, you will hand in a draft version (15%) and a final version (30%) of your essay.

Required/Essential Readings

Readings for this course are short texts or excerpts and will be provided electronically on Moodle.

Cai, Chusheng (dir.). *New Women*. 1935

Han, Banqing, and Eileen Chang. *The Sing Song Girls of Shanghai*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House*. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2542/2542-h/2542-h.htm>

Loy, Mina. Auto-Facial-Construction, in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover, 165-66. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996.

---. "Feminist Manifesto," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 153-56.

Lu Xun, "Regret for the Past." In Marxist Internet Archive.

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lu-xun/1925/10/21.htm>

---. "What Happens After Nora Leaves Home?" In *Women in Republican China: A Sourcebook*, ed. Hua R. Lan and Vanessa L. Fong, 176-85. New York: East Gate Book, 1999.

Potter, Sally (dir.). *Orlando*. 1992.

Sanger, Margaret & Emma Goldman (eds.), *The Woman Rebel*. The Margaret Sanger Papers Project. <http://modeleditions.blackmesatech.com/mep/MS/docs/lb.html>

Showalter, Elaine. "Towards a Feminist Poetics." In *Women Writing and Writing about Women*, ed. Mary Jacobus, 25-40. London: Routledge, 1979.

Simone de Beauvoir, "Introduction" & "Childhood," *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. <https://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/woolfv-aroomofonesown/woolfv-aroomofonesown-00-h.html>

Recommended Readings

Chien, Ying-Ying. "Feminism and China's New "Nora": Ibsen, Hu Shi, and Lu Xun." *The Comparatist* 19 (1995): 97-113.

Craft-Fairchild, Catherine. "'Same Person...Just a Different Sex': Sally Potter's Construction of Gender in 'Orlando.'" *Woolf Studies Annual* 7 (2001): 23-48.

Finney, Gail. "Ibsen and Feminism." In *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, ed. James McFarlane, 89-105. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Fowler, Catherine. *Sally Potter*. University of Illinois Press, 2010.

Goldman, Jane. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Harris, Kristine. "The New Woman Incident: Cinema, Scandal, and Spectacle in 1935 Shanghai" In *Transnational Chinese Cinemas: Identity, Nationhood, Gender*, 277-302. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

Hollinger, Karen, and Teresa Winterhalter. "Orlando's Sister, Or Sally Potter Does Virginia Woolf in a Voice of Her Own." *Style* 35, no. 2 (2001): 237-56.

- Hong, Guo-Juin. "Framing Time: New Women and the Cinematic Representation of Colonial Modernity in 1930s Shanghai." *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 15, no. 3 (2007): 553-579.
- Lee, Christopher. "The Strange Smell of Truth: Ethnicity, Translation, and Realism in the Cold War Writings of Eileen Chang" In *The Semblance of Identity: Aesthetic Mediation in Asian American Literature*, 23-47. Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2012.
- Lusty, Natalya. "Sexing the Manifesto: Mina Loy, Feminism and Futurism," *Women: A Cultural Review*.19:3 (2008): 245-260
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1985.
- Norden, Martin F. "Reproductive Freedom, Revisionist History, Restricted Cinema: The Strange Case of Margaret Sanger and Birth Control." *Cultural Sutures: Medicine and Media*. Ed. Lester D. Friedman. New York: Duke University Press, 2004. pp. 263-279
- Pan, Lynn. *When True Love Came to China*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2015.
- Rosenman, Ellen Bayuk. "Sexual Identity and *A Room of One's Own*: 'Secret Economies' in Virginia Woolf's Feminist Discourse." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14:3 (1989): 634-650.
- Saloman, Randi. "'Unsolved Problems': Essayism, Counterfactuals, and the Futures of 'A Room of One's Own.'" *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 32:1 (2013): 53-73.
- Stetz, Margaret D. "Mrs. Linde, Feminism, and Women's Work, Then and Now." *Ibsen Studies* 7:2 (Dec 2007): 150-168.
- Tam, Kwok-kan. *Chinese Ibsenism: Reinventions of Women, Class and Nation*. Singapore: Springer, 2019.
- Walter, Christina. "Feminist Manifesto and Auto-Facial-Construction." *The Modernism Lab at Yale University* (2010). <https://www.berfrois.com/2013/02/mina-loys-personality/>
- Weinbaum, Alys Eve, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Yue Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, eds. *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*. Duke University Press, 2008.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3 hours of class contact and 6 hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations and Course Work. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is "the presentation of another person's work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student's own work". Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students' understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course "Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness" is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.
- (5) Students must adhere to the University's guidelines and practices when using Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. The official documents "Guidelines for Using GAI Tools at Lingnan University" and "Best Practices for Ethical and Responsible Use of GAI Tools in Course Assessments" can be found here: <https://www.ln.edu.hk/tlc/generative-artificialintelligence/gai-guidelines-best-practices>.