

Women's Literature and Sociopolitical Change: Feminist Utopias

WGSS 394-02 S. Sarker Spring 2014

Class: OM 9

Office: OM 317/Mailbox OM 409

PH: 696-6316

Hours: TTH 3-4:30 p.m.

Office Hours: TTH 4:30-6pm & by appt.

e-mail: sarker@macalester.edu

THE COURSE:

'U-topia' means 'a place (topos) that doesn't exist' and 'Eu-topia' means 'a good place.' Implicit as well as explicit in much of the 20th century's feminist critical analysis of the state of society and its politics is a desire for a better state yet-to-be (utopia) as well as a fear of catastrophe or nightmare (dystopia). This course investigates how women's literary writing from different parts of the world (Bangladeshi, British, African-American, Canadian, to name a few) produce visions of the present and the future, of the real and the imagined, beliefs about masculinity and femininity, socialist and capitalist philosophies, modernity, the environment (ecotopia), and various technologies including cybergenetics. The collection of texts is intended also to provide us with genealogies to construct as well as analyze our own fantasies and realities of sociopolitical change.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Doubleday & Co.: 1998.

Butler, Octavia. *Adulthood Rites*. Warner Books Incorp, 1997.

Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*. Dover, 1998.

Hossain, Rokeya Sakhawat. *Sultana's Dream*. The Feminist Press, 1988.

Piercy, Marge. *Woman on the Edge of Time*. Fawcett Book Group, 1990.

REQUIRED WEBSITES:

feministmagazine.org

feministsf.org

feministing.com

scumgrrls.org

REQUIRED ARTICLES (Moodle):

Crowfoot, James and Mark Chesler. "White Men's Roles in Multicultural Coalitions." In *Privilege*. Boulder, CO: Westview, 2003, pp. 349-380.

Connell, R. W. "Masculinity Politics" (pp. 204-224), "Practice and Utopia" (pp. 225-243). In *Masculinities*. Los Angeles: UC Press, 1995.

Engels, Friedrich. "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific in *Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 683-717(reserve).

Habermas, Jurgen. "Three Normative Models of Democracy." In *Democracy and Difference*.

Haraway, Donna. "Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

----. "Situated Knowledges" in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

Hill Collins, Patricia. "Toward a New Vision." In *Privilege*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003, pp. 331-348.

Hobbes, Thomas. Extracts from *Leviathan*.

Laduke, Winona. *All our Relations*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999. Introduction (pp. 1-

- 6), "Native Sun: Determining a Future" (187-193), "The Seventh Generation" (197-200).
Lykke, Nina. "Between Monsters, Goddesses and Cyborgs: Feminist Confrontations with Science." From a book of the same name. London: Zed Books, 1996, pp. 13-29.
Maciunas, Billie. "Feminist Epistemology in Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*".
More, Thomas. Extracts from *Utopia*.
Silbergleid, Robin. "Women, Utopia and Narrative: Toward a Postmodern Feminist Citizenship." *Hypatia*, Fall 1997, v. 12 no. 4, pp. 156-173.
Slicer, Deborah. "Towards an Ecofeminist Standpoint Theory: Bodies as Grounds." In *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 1998, pp. 49-62, 70-73.
Spivak, Gayatri. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography."
St. Louis, Brett. "Post-race/post-politics? Activist-intellectualism and the reification of race." In *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 25, no. 4, July 2002, pp. 652-675.
Tomc, Sandra. "The Missionary Position: Feminism and Nationalism in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*."
Woolf, Virginia. Extract from *Three Guineas*.
Zaki, Hoda. "Utopia, Dystopia, and Ideology in the Science Fiction of Octavia Butler."

REQUIREMENTS:

Your participation is the key to making this course intellectually stimulating and socially vibrant. Our careful reflection on what you and others are saying, and on communicating your different opinions with both respect and precision will make these following tasks exciting:

- A) Forum
- B) Moderator
- C) Mini-essays
- D) Oral presentations

A) FORUM: every week, when your group is due, submit an individual entry through Moodle **BY EVERY MONDAY MIDNIGHT**, that is composed of ONE question involving any ONE website and any ONE text assigned for the Tuesday of the upcoming week. You may reflect briefly on an aspect of the past week's discussion if you consider it relevant. Check Moodle to read the list of questions already posted, to look for correlations, before you post your own entry. The question should be followed by a short comment on the relationship of your query to a point of personal interest in a text. The recommended length is a maximum of 300 words. Please imagine questions that elicit responses about the implications of textual content, rather than 'yes'/'no' or factual research. Be prepared to summarize your point in class as a quick refresher.

You will be graded based on your own entry. I will check Moodle early Tuesday every week. Please take care to submit your entry on time; if you miss the deadline, you will forfeit your grade for that missed opportunity and you should wait till your group is due again. For grading guidelines, see page 4.

B) MODERATOR: every session, one of you will be selected randomly to structure and lead discussion for 10-15 minutes of the class. You will synthesize the responses submitted on Moodle, decide a focus topic, and present issues based on that topic for the class to discuss, in the form of questions or observations. If there is an oral presentation scheduled for that session, it will be presented first and the moderator will integrate issues into the already-prepared structure. You will be graded individually.

C) MINI-ESSAYS: an in-class assignment, not on a day when there is an oral presentation, where a topic or question and a structure will be offered by the instructor and on which you will write for 20-30 minutes. The focus will be on the readings from recent past sessions; you will have access to your books and notes, and extra credit will be given for using short, relevant quotations. **The assignment is completed and will be collected in class; absences cannot be made up or compensated.** You will be graded individually.

Mini-essays are graded on the basis of precision in your response, appropriate and well-chosen examples, and structured sequence of ideas. When beginning to write in class, it is useful to take a few minutes to sketch an outline of the main points you wish to make. Towards the end of the semester, you will have an option to re-do 2 of the mini-essays, keeping the same length, but writing with the knowledge gained post-exercise. You may also opt to write a 5-page paper as a revision. Please discuss each of these revision options with me in advance.

PLAGIARISM is defined as the use of another's ideas without acknowledgement. Since this is considered a serious matter, please consult a style handbook on the correct way to record another person's opinions; ask me if you are still confused.

D) ORAL PRESENTATIONS: a **one-time** in-class activity for which you will be graded. It is scheduled on a day other than a mini-essay day. It is based on the material assigned for the date that you sign up. The presentations can be in the form of artwork, poster show, lecture, or performance.

Advantages: Your moment in the spotlight! You may grasp this opportunity to display your individuality and teamwork in expressing ideas.

Disadvantages: None.

What do you do?

Provide a Title to your presentation that indicates your approach;
Outline ONE particular aspect/theme/idea of the texts for that day;
Compare/contrast these texts and previous/outside sources; you have the option to bring in a visual image or soundtrack to highlight a point;
Pose a couple of questions based on the theme to elicit discussion; points will be deducted for presentations composed largely of summaries of texts.

Time allotted: 20 minutes maximum (please observe time-limit). You are most welcome to consult me beforehand about the presentation, if you have any questions about organization and format. My suggestion is that the presentation be uninterrupted, followed by a general discussion; and that it lean more towards raising questions than summarizing the texts.

Reminder: Sign up for the group oral presentation as early in the semester as you can and make a note of this event in your diary. You are responsible for remembering the date. If you have to cancel a scheduled presentation, please let me know well in advance. You must reschedule but are allowed to do so only once, if there are available dates remaining.

Participation in class discussion as a moderator or participant, in the online forum, and in oral presentations, is extremely important. One suggestion is to write comments/questions in your notebook while reading and/or consulting past class notes.

CONFERENCES: I value individual conferences highly and encourage them since, for all of the above, frequent communication is necessary. My office hours are printed at the head of this information sheet and at the top of the syllabus sheet. Leave a note, with your telephone number, in my mailbox (or slip it under my office door), or e-mail me, or talk with me after class if you wish to make an appointment other than the times indicated, for any aspect of the class. I urge you to take advantage of this practice, especially because I take great pride in knowing you individually. Please time your appointments or questions with at least 24 hours notice. I am not available between Friday 5 p.m. and Monday noon.

Regular attendance is the basis of good performance on your part, and is an inspiration for me to work harder. I will make a record of your attendance. Remember, attendance also means punctuality, an important aspect of your presence as a member of the class. Please see the attached grade-guide (page 5).

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. The Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, will serve as the coordinator for services for students with disabilities. It is important to meet with her at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The Associate Dean can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email llandrem@macalester.edu.

P.S. This is an exciting and rigorous course. You must meet all the requirements, consistently and productively, so that you may reap the maximum benefit. Inability to complete the various assignments, to participate in an alert manner, or to present one's original and honest opinions, will result in great disappointment for you and for me. It will defeat the purpose of exploration.

I WELCOME YOU AND I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS COURSE!!

S. Sarker Spring 2014

WGSS 394
Guide to Grading

TTH 3-4:30 p.m.

For the Forum:

A for entries that raise thought-provoking questions, establish unique/interesting/significant connections to one's disciplinary interests, within/between texts, or to issues external to the class, maintain precision and clarity of thought, and provide succinct summaries of relevant ideas discussed.

B for entries that adequately summarize selected/relevant ideas from class-discussion, establish a valid and straightforward connection to one's disciplinary interests.

C for entries that summarize ideas in a sketchy manner, leave connections unclear, and dwell on obvious details that are not stimulating in their significance.

A+	100 - 97
A	96 - 94
A-	93 - 91
A-/B+	90
B+	89 - 87
B	86 - 84
B-	83 - 81
B-/C+	80
C+	79 - 77
C	76 - 74
C-	71 - 73
C-/D+	70
D+	69 - 67
D	66 - 64
D-	63 - 61
F	60 and below

When averaging final grades, any number at the upper limit that carries a +0.5 value will be rounded to the next highest number at the discretion of the instructor—for instance, a final average of 89.5 could become 90, meaning a final grade of A-/B+ rather than a B+ (which is not bad in itself). That will enhance the value of your attendance, participation and journal assessment, give you some advantage and a lot of credit!

GRADE DISTRIBUTION FOR THE COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Mini-essays	30%
Oral Presentation	20%
Forum	20%
Moderator	10%
Participation	10%
Attendance	10%

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to talk to me.

GENDER & SOCIO-POLITICAL ACTIVISM In 20th CENTURY FEMINIST UTOPIAS
WGSS S. Sarker Spring 2014

Class: OM 09 Hours: TTH 3-4:30 p.m.
Office: OM 317/Mailbox OM 409 Office Hours: TTH 4:30-6 p.m. & by appt.
PH: 696-6316 Email: sarker@macalester.edu

Week 1

Tu 1/28 Introduction; readings from Manu, Plato, and Margaret Fuller.

Th 1/30 Hossain's *Sultana's Dream*, xi-18, 37-57; extracts from Thomas More's *Utopia* (moodle).

Week 2

Tu 2/4 *Sultana's Dream*, 19-36, 58-85; Hobbes's *Leviathan*, "Of Reason and Science" (moodle).

Th 2/6 Hossain review; Gilman's *Herland*, Introduction and chapters 1-4; Engels (moodle).

Week 3

Tu 2/11 *Herland*, chapters 5-8; Engels (contd.). **Practice Mini-Essay.**

Th 2/13 *Herland*, chapters 9-12; Slicer (moodle). **Moderator role begins.**

Week 4

Tu 2/18 Gilman review; Woolf's *Three Guineas*, 129-152 (moodle); Connell, pp. 204-224 (moodle). **MINI ESSAY #1**

Th 2/20 Woolf, 152-198 (moodle); Connell, pp. 225-243 (reserve).
PRESENTATION #1

Week 5

Tu 2/25 Library Session

Th 2/27 Woolf, 198-220, Laduke (moodle); Spivak (moodle).

Week 6

Tu 3/4 Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, chapters 1-5; Spivak (contd.).
PRESENTATION #2

Th 3/6 *Woman on the Edge of Time*, chapters 6-13; Maciunas (moodle); Spivak (contd.).

Week 7

Tu 3/11 *Woman on the Edge of Time*, chapters 13-16; St. Louis (moodle).

MINI ESSAY #2

Th 3/13 *Woman on the Edge of Time*, chapters 17-20; Hobbes's *Leviathan*, "Of the Ends or Resolutions of Discourse" (Chapter VII) (moodle); Habermas (moodle).

SPRING BREAK	Saturday, March 15–Sunday, March 23
--------------	-------------------------------------

Week 8

Tu 3/25 Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 1-10; Hobbes and Habermas (contd.). **[Group Governed Session]**

Th 3/27 *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 11-15; Habermas (contd.); "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies" (moodle). **PRESENTATION #3**

Week 9

Tu 4/1 *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 16-25; Tomc (moodle). **MINI ESSAY #3**

Th 4/3 *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 26-30; Tomc (contd.).

Week 10

Tu 4/8 *The Handmaid's Tale*, chapters 31-42 and Historical Notes; Silbergleid (moodle). **PRESENTATION #4**

Th 4/10 Atwood review; Butler's *Adulthood Rites*, Part I; Crowfoot and Chesler (moodle).

Week 11

Tu 4/15 *Adulthood Rites*, Part II, chapters 1-10; Crowfoot and Chesler (contd.); "Situated Knowledges" (moodle). **MINI ESSAY #4**

Th 4/17 *Adulthood Rites*, Part II, chapters 10-23; Haraway (contd.).

Moderator role ends

Week 12

Tu 4/22 Hill Collins (moodle); Haraway (contd.). **PRESENTATION #5**

Th 4/24 *Adulthood Rites*, Part III; Hill Collins (moodle).

Week 13

Tu 4/29 *Adulthood Rites*, Part III; Lykke (moodle).

Th 5/1 *Adulthood Rites*, Part IV; Zaki (moodle).

Week 14

Tu 5/6 Discussion of revisions and review of course.

FINAL REVISED MINI-ESSAYS DUE ON Friday 5/9 at 5 p.m. by email to sarker@macalester.edu

MOVIES OF RELATED INTEREST:

Antonia's Line (available at Mac)

Born in Flames (available at Mac)

The Bridge of Time

Children of the Setting Suns

Die Uhr tickt total

El Entusiasmo

Gandahar

Grosse Freiheit/Kleine Freiheit

La Jetee

Liquid Sky

Lost Horizon (available at Mac)

Metropolis (available at Mac)

One Inch from Victory

Tigerstreifenbaby wartet auf Tarzan

Vacancy