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# ENG 153: Women Authors Women & the Environment

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Instructor: Christine Pepper | [pepperch@msu.edu](mailto:pepperch@msu.edu)  
Fall 2018 | TTH 12:40 - 2:30 | Wells Hall A228  
Office: Wells Hall C711 | Office Hours: Monday 10-12

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

ENG 153 looks at writings by women from various and overlapping racial, cultural, socio-economic, sexual, and historical backgrounds. In this course, we will focus on interpreting literary texts in a variety of different forms--including film and graphic novel--by using a hermeneutics of close reading, and by attending closely to the different conventions of genre and form. This particular section of ENG 153 will engage with texts by women that explore the intertwined aims of feminism and environmentalism.

We will investigate the extent to which our texts understand the oppression of nature and nonhuman animals as being bound up in the oppression of women, and we will foreground the importance of intersecting aspects of identity such as race, class, and ethnicity in pursuing environmental justice, specifically considering the gendered, raced, and classed effects of climate change, pollution, resource depletion, etc. Finally, we will consider the ways in which identity is bound up in the idea of "place." To what extent is identity dependent on physical places and spaces? In other words, does identity relate to ways of dwelling? Does a caring for (or a more conscious awareness of) place translate to a caring for self, for others?

## COURSE GOALS

1. Students will gain a deeper understanding of how to interpret literary texts composed in a variety of forms: the novel, short story, nonfiction essay, graphic novel, and film.
2. Students will gain an understanding of how literature can (re)present different perspectives, cultures, and ways of knowing, and will become attuned to the uniquely intersectional lived experiences of our authors.
3. Students will use skills in critical thinking (via methods of close reading) to analyze texts and thereby better understand interpretation: that is, the idea that texts have different, and often shifting meanings.
4. Students will become familiar with concepts of sex and gender, and the imbrication of these identity markers with one's emplacement within particular environments.
5. Students will learn to use cultural and historical contexts to better understand written and visual texts.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Alvarez, Julia. *A Cafecito Story/El cuento del cafecito*.  
Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*.  
Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*.  
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*.  
Kang, Han. *The Vegetarian*.  
Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit*.  
Tamaki, Mariko. *This One Summer*.  
Whiteley, Aliya. *The Beauty*.

NOTE: You are not required to purchase any specific editions of these texts. The MSU Bookstore will have copies available of each, but you can often find alternate editions, including electronic/Kindle editions, online for much cheaper.

## OTHER TEXTS

Any remaining readings (short fiction, nonfiction essays, film screenings etc.) will be made available to you either on our course D2L page or during class.

## GRADING

### GRADING BREAKDOWN

20%	Group Discussion Lead
10%	Reading Journal Entries (x10; combined and averaged for 10%)
20%	Attendance and Participation
20%	Close Reading Assignments (x4; combined and averaged for 20%)
30%	Final Project

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100%	Course Total
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### GRADING SCALE

A note on the 4.0 grading scale:

Grades on this scale do not correspond with simple percentages. For example, earning a 3.0 on an assignment does NOT mean you have earned a 75% on the assignment. A 3.0 is simply a 3.0. However, if you wish to equate your grade to a percentage or “letter” grade, please refer to the following scale:

4.0 (93-100) | 3.5 (87-92) | 3.0 (83-86) | 2.5 (78-82) | 2.0 (73-77) | 1.5 (68-72) | 1.0 (60-67) | 0.0 (< 60)

## SAMPLE GRADE CALCULATION

Grades for this course will be scored on the 4.0 scale. This means that you can calculate your grade using the scores you earn on each assignment, and the weights for each item. Review the example grade calculation chart below to see how you can calculate your grade throughout the semester.

Grade Item	Score/s Received	Weighted Score
Reading Journals	Average of all ten journal entries moves to next column	3.33 (counted once for 10% weight)
Close Reading Assignments	$3.0 + 3.25 + 3.25 + 3.5 = 13 / 4 = 3.25$ Average of all four close readings moves to next column	3.25 + 3.25 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Attendance & Participation	3.25	3.25 + 3.25 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Group Discussion Lead	3.75	3.75 + 3.75 (counted twice for 20% weight)
Final Project	3.25	3.25 + 3.25 + 3.25 (counted three times for 30% weight)
Total:	A note on rounding: *Grades round up to 3.5 when 3.25 or higher, rounds down when 3.249 or lower  *Similarly, a 2.75 and above would round up to a 3.0, and a 2.749 and below would round down to a 2.5	$33.58 / 10$ (# of weighted grade items) = $3.358 = 3.5$  Final grade for this example student: 3.5

## COURSEWORK

### GROUP DISCUSSION LEAD, 20%

To encourage peer-to-peer discourse about the novels and to give those of you interested in education an opportunity to develop your learning leadership, you will work in small groups to present on the reading assigned for your chosen presentation date. Presentation dates and accompanying readings are listed in the

course schedule at the end of the syllabus, and you will sign up for your date/text during the first week of class.

Your presentation should last roughly 20 minutes, should cover a significant aspect of the assigned reading for that week, and must include two things: 1) a close reading of a portion of the text that the group members collaborate on together and 2) a prepared discussion-based activity or lesson that will encourage discussion, reflection, and/or deeper engagement with the text.

Since your group will also be the de facto experts on that portion of the text for the day, you should also expect to take a leading role for the rest of the class period after your presentation has ended. I.e. being prepared to be called upon, or to jump in if discussion begins to lag at any point throughout the class.

### **READING JOURNAL ENTRIES, 10%**

Each week that a journal entry is due, you will write an informal, 200-word response to the text assigned for that week. Your journal entries are not intended for formal analysis, but rather for honest, thoughtful responses to that week's reading. These journal entries will help provide you with questions and ideas for in-class discussion. If a discussion is lagging, be prepared to be called on to share some of the questions and ideas you wrote about in your journal. The journal entries will guarantee that everyone will have had time to react to and engage with our texts, and will have something to contribute to our discussion.

Your reading journal entries should do the following (method):

- Pose 2-3 questions about the reading that you wish to pose to your classmates;
- Locate a short passage (3-5 sentences) from the reading that stood out to you in some way (this does not count as part of your 200 words), and briefly explain why you reacted strongly to that passage.

These journal entries will be posted to the corresponding Discussion Board on our course D2L page, under the Communication tab. Everyone should be able to earn full credit on every journal entry. If you complete them on time, put forth a good-faith effort to engage with the text, and follow the instructions for the word count and method described above, you will earn full credit.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION, 20%**

Pop quizzes will be a possibility during every single class. If it becomes apparent the group has not read, or if discussion for that week is limited, a pop quiz for the reading due that day will be distributed and will count in this category.

Otherwise, you will earn points for attendance and participation by engaging in class discussions. This means asking questions, offering forth ideas, being willing to respond to provocations posed by your instructor and classmates, etc. It also goes without saying that actions like sleeping, using your cell phone, etc. will be detrimental to your participation score.

Finally, we will complete several in-class writing assignments this semester that will be counted toward your participation score. If you are not present for these assignments, there will not be an opportunity to make them up unless you have an excused absence for that day.

## CLOSE READING ASSIGNMENTS, 20%

Several times this semester, you will be asked to respond to a specific prompt provided by your instructor in a short 500 word essay that will be uploaded to the corresponding Assignments folder on D2L. The prompts will ask for you to take a short, specific passage from any of the texts we have read/viewed up to that point, and write a coherent analysis of that passage. The purpose of these assignments is to build your understanding of the hermeneutic method known as close reading, as this method is foundational to any textual analysis you will do in this and future classes.

## FINAL PROJECT, 30%

Your final project can take a number of different forms, and is designed to invite you to experiment creatively with your response to any of our assigned texts from this semester. The form this project can take is flexible, but your project must engage with critical questions we will raise throughout the semester regarding the intersections of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and the environment. You might choose to write a traditional analytic essay using secondary sources, write your own piece of creative fiction or nonfiction memoir, write a screenplay, draw your own graphic novel/comic strip, create a reading blog that documents your thoughts on some of your favorite texts from the semester, record a vlog or podcast discussion of your favorite texts, create your own syllabus for a high school class on women and the environment, etc. You will need to have your final project idea approved, so start thinking early about the medium you might like to use.

## COURSE POLICIES

### ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory and necessary to your success in this class.

#### UNEXCUSED ABSENCES:

You are allowed two unexcused absences this semester. Each additional unexcused absence beyond those will result in a 0.5 grade reduction from your course total at the end of the semester. Note that an unexcused absence does not require an explanation, but it will be your job to contact your instructor or classmates to ask for any work you missed. Missed your alarm? Fine. Needed a mental health day? Also fine. No questions will be asked unless you are seeking an excused absence.

#### EXCUSED ABSENCES:

If you are seeking to have an absence excused, you will need to submit documentation that proves your absence was related to a serious illness or death in the family, sporting event in which you are competing, performance in which you are performing, field trip required for your major, or other professionalizing

opportunity. Please refer to the university policy on grief absences:

<https://reg.msu.edu/ROInfo/Notices/GriefAbsence.aspx>

#### TARDINESS & EARLY DEPARTURE:

Tardiness and early exit from class will also count toward your unexcused absence total. Class begins when the instructor begins speaking, and ends when all students are dismissed. If you arrive after class has begun or depart before it has ended, this will count as half of an unexcused absence.

#### LATE WORK

Unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor, late work will not be accepted and will be graded as 0.0.

#### TECHNOLOGY

Laptops are allowed in class; however, if your laptop is open I will assume you are busy taking notes and are engaged in the class discussion—be ready to be called upon to answer a question. An open laptop is an invitation to be called upon. Cell phones are not allowed during class—if there is an emergency, please leave the room to take the call.

#### RESPECT

In order to create a positive and productive working environment, disruptive and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated—including and especially texting during class and other disruptions from cell phones. Students are expected to behave professionally: to arrive on time, to be sober, rested, and ready to work, and to come prepared with assignments read/turned in/completed. Anyone who disrupts the learning environment by acting inappropriately or unethically may be asked to leave. I also expect that we will treat one another with respect, and that we will not denigrate or dismiss the opinions of others (although respectfully disagreeing is okay and encouraged), and we will remember that what is said in the classroom stays in the classroom. Lastly, in our classroom we embrace all identities—including all expressions of race, religion, gender, and sexuality.

#### PARTICIPATION AND PREPAREDNESS

This class is heavily participatory and inquiry-driven. Thus, students are expected to be in class, participate, and maintain focus for the entire class session. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, and to come prepared with note-taking materials and a copy of the assigned text for that class session on hand. Serial under-preparedness will result in a grade reduction.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarizing all or part of another writer's work, intentionally or not, may result in earning a 0 for the class. We will be using the Turn It In tool on D2L with each major paper submitted.

Honesty and integrity will be vital to our work together this semester and to ALL academic work you do in the future (at MSU and in the workplace). Because one of our goals this semester is to further develop your confidence as writers, it is crucial that all work you complete is, in fact, YOUR work. Not only does plagiarism commit a serious breach of intellectual property rights, it also prevents you from improving your own writing and critical thinking skills.

In order to avoid plagiarism in this course, refrain from the following:

- Using word for word, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, etc. from any course without acknowledgment and citation;
- Incorporating material from another source with only slight changes in wording without acknowledgment and citation;
- Submitting the same piece of writing in two different classes, or commit self-plagiarism. If you want to double submit, you must obtain permission from BOTH instructors first.
- Attempting to pass off the work of other students or professional writers as your own.

All students are expected to follow the university guidelines for academic integrity, which you can access here: <https://www.msu.edu/~ombud/academic-integrity/index.html>

If at any point you have any specific questions regarding plagiarism or using proper citation, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

## DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services, and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at [rcpd.msu.edu](http://rcpd.msu.edu). Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a verified individual services accommodation (“VISA”) form.

Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc). Requests received after this date will be honored whenever possible.

## MANDATORY REPORTING/CONFIDENTIALITY

Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University’s student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, may not be able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report certain issues to protect the health and safety of MSU community members and others.

As the instructor, I must report the following information to other University offices (including the Department of Police and Public Safety) if you share it with me:

- Suspected child abuse/neglect, even if this maltreatment happened when you were a child;
- Allegations of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they involve MSU students, faculty, or staff;
- Credible threats of harm to oneself or others.

These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In almost all cases, it will be your decision whether you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting you are encouraged to make an appointment with the MSU Counseling Center (please see the additional resources section of this syllabus for that contact information).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Purdue Online Writing Lab, MLA Formatting and Style Guide

[https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/?\\_ga=2.19623804.558179429.1522454400-1709346682.1522454400](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/?_ga=2.19623804.558179429.1522454400-1709346682.1522454400)

MSU Writing Center

<http://writing.msu.edu/>

MSU Policies on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

<https://ombud.msu.edu/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html>

MSU Resources for Reporting Sexual Violence

<http://titleix.msu.edu/make-a-report/index.html>

<http://endrape.msu.edu/>

MSU Resources for Persons with Disabilities

<https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/>

Office of the Ombudsperson

<https://www.ombud.msu.edu>

## COURSE SCHEDULE:

	Tues	Thurs
Week 1		Aug 30
Utopia		<b>Welcome to ENG 153!</b>
Week 2	Sept 4	Sept 6
Utopia	<i>Herland, entire text</i>	<i>The Beauty, Part One</i> <b>Reading Journal 1 due</b>
Week 3	Sept 11	Sept 13
Utopia	<i>The Beauty, Parts Two &amp; Three</i>	<i>The Beauty, Part Four</i> <b>Reading Journal 2 due</b> <b>Group 1 discussion lead: <i>The Beauty</i></b>
Week 4	Sept 18	Sept 20
Dystopia	<i>Parable of the Sower, Ch. 1-6</i>	<i>Parable of the Sower, Ch. 7-9</i> <b>Reading Journal 3 due</b> <b>Close reading #1 due</b>
Week 5	Sept 25	Sept 27
Dystopia	<b>In class screening: <i>Mad</i></b>	<i>Parable of the Sower, Ch. 10-16</i> <b>Reading Journal 4 due</b> <b>Group 2 discussion lead: <i>Parable part one</i></b>

Week 6	Oct 2	Oct 4
Dystopia	<i>Parable of the Sower, Ch. 17-21</i>	<i>Parable of the Sower, Ch 22-end</i> <b>Reading Journal 5 due</b> <b>Group 3 discussion lead: <i>Parable</i> part two</b>
Week 7	Oct 9	Oct 11
Ecologies of Resistance	<i>The Vegetarian, Part 1</i>	<i>The Vegetarian, half of Part 2</i> <b>Reading Journal 6 due</b> <b>Close reading #2 due</b>
Week 8	Oct 16	Oct 18
Ecologies of Resistance	<i>The Vegetarian, finish Part 2, half of Part 3</i>	<i>The Vegetarian finish Part 3</i> <b>Reading Journal 7 due</b> <b>Group 4 discussion lead: <i>The Vegetarian</i></b>
Week 9	Oct 23	Oct 25
Ecologies of Resistance	<i>Yellow Woman: "Introduction," first three essays.</i>	<i>Yellow Woman, read through "Fifth World"</i> <b>Reading Journal 8 due</b> <b>Group 5 discussion lead: <i>Yellow Woman</i></b>
Week 10	Oct 30	Nov 1
An Attachment to Place	<i>This One Summer pp. 1-105</i>	<i>This One Summer pp. 106-143</i> <b>Reading Journal 9 due</b> <b>Close reading #3 due</b>

Week 11	Nov 6	Nov 8
An Attachment to Place	<i>This One Summer</i> pp. 144-259	<i>This One Summer</i> pp. 260-end <b>Reading Journal 10 due</b> <b>Group 6 discussion lead: <i>This One Summer</i></b>
Week 12	Nov 13	Nov 15
An Attachment to Place	<i>A Cafecito Story</i> , first half	<i>A Cafecito Story</i> , finish text <b>Group 7 discussion lead: <i>A Cafecito Story</i></b>
Week 13	Nov 20	Nov 22
Feminist Science	<b>“Situated Knowledges,” Donna Haraway</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK, NO CLASS</b> <b>Close reading #4 due</b>
Week 14	Nov 27	Nov 29
Feminist Science	<i>Silent Spring</i> , Ch 1-8. <b>In-class screening of <i>Silent Spring</i> documentary</b>	<i>Silent Spring</i> , Ch 9-10.
Week 15	Dec 4	Dec 6
Feminist Science	<i>Silent Spring</i> , Ch 11-14.	<i>Silent Spring</i> , Ch 15-end. <b>Group 8 discussion lead: <i>Silent Spring</i></b>
Finals	Dec 11	Dec 13
		Final exam time: 12:45-2:45 p.m. A228 Wells Hall <b>Final project due</b>