FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON IDENTITY, RACE, AND CULTURE (SPRING 2009)

WGS 321
M & W, 10-11:20
Classroom: 248 Gerlinger

Prof. Ernesto J. Martínez, Ph.D.
Email: ejm@uoregon.edu
Office: 322 Hendricks Hall
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12-2:00, or by appointment
Office Phone: (541) 346-5523

DESCRIPTION:
This course takes as its object of study the experiences, strategies, and political perspectives of feminists of color negotiating oppression and working to end various forms of social injustice. Rather than present a “snap shot” survey of feminist perspectives across multiple racialized groups, this course presents three “case studies.” The first case study takes a close look at feminism within the African American cultural context, covering key debates, historical precedents, and political/theoretical/literary innovations. The second case study hones in on the fiction and non-fiction work of two acclaimed contemporary feminist writers of color: the South Asian writer and activist Arundhati Roy and the Chicana feminist writer Helena Maria Viramontes. The third case study engages the political vision and coalitional work of a contemporary grassroots social movement that goes by the name of “INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.” Overall, the goal of approaching feminism through these in-depth case studies is to avoid the pitfalls of overgeneralizations, while still engaging more broadly with the ways that race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to form systems of inequality, formations of identity, and sites of political agency.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
• Black Feminist Thought, Patricia Hill Collins
• The Color of Violence, INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
• Black Male Outsider: Teaching as a Pro-Feminist Man, Gary Lemons
• The God of Small Things, Arundhati Roy
• An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire, Arundhati Roy

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
• Essays (30%)
  Two essays (15% each, 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced). You may choose which readings you would like to write about, but your papers must follow the following restrictions: (a) One paper must be written before the midterm exam, and the other must be written after the midterm. (b) All papers must be turned in at the beginning of class and they must directly address the readings assigned for that day. Please note that these papers are not journal entries. Instead, they are a record of your critical engagement with the texts and/or with lectures. As such, you will want to approach the writing in a manner that shows us you have read the material. You paper will be grade on its ability to accurately summarize something important about the text (i.e., a key argument) and ask a question or set of questions that reflects critical thinking and engagement.

• Exams (70%)
  Two exams will be administered during the semester, one midterm in-class exam (35%) and one final take-home essay exam (35%).

Students with Disabilities
If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible. Also, for reasons of administrative documentation, please request that the counselor for students with disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.

Incomplete Policy
The University policy for incompletes is as follows:

An incomplete may be issued when the quality of work is satisfactory, but some minor yet essential requirement has not been completed, for reasons acceptable to the instructor.
Undergraduate students have one calendar year to make up an incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Earlier deadlines may be set by the instructor, dean, or department head. Failure to make up the Incomplete at the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of “I” automatically changing to a grade of “F” or “N.”

Incompletes for this course will not be given unless a student has extraordinary reasons for being unable to complete all required coursework. (Failure to drop the course by the drop deadline is not a sufficient reason for issuing an incomplete grade.)

E-mail Etiquette
As a rule, you should understand your relationships to professors as professional relationships. When corresponding by e-mail, always include a salutation (“Dear Prof. Martínez”) and a closing that identifies who you are (“Sincerely, Perla Ledezma”). Use complete sentences and try to be polite. Please also note that we are employees of the University and might not check our e-mail more than once per day, or at all on weekends or in the evening, and we might not have time to reply immediately. Please have patience and do not hesitate to follow up with a second e-mail or in person during office hours or after class if we have not replied to e-mail.

---

**Course Schedule (subject to changes)**

**Unit I: Explorations in Black Feminist Thought**

**Week One:**
- M (March 30): Introductions, ground rules, course expectations.
- W (April 1):
  - Reading: Hill Collins, Ch. 1-3 (pp. 1-75)

**Week Two:**
- M (April 6):
  - Reading: Hill Collin, Ch. 4-7 (pp. 51-160)
- W (April 8):
  - Reading: Hill Collin, Ch. 8-9 (pp. 161-216)

**Week Three:**
- M (April 13):
  - Readings: Gautier, TBA
  - *Guest Speaker: Professor Amina Gautier (St. Joseph’s University)*
- W (April 15):
  - Readings: Morrison, “Recitatiff”

**Week Four:**
- M (April 20):
  - Readings: Hill Collin, Ch. 9-12 (pp. 216-309)
- W (April 22):
  - Readings: Lemons, Black Male Outsider

**Week Five:**
- M (April 27):
  - Readings: Lemons, Black Male Outsider
- W April 29:
  - Readings: Lemons, Black Male Outsider

**Week Six:**
- M (May 4):
  - **Midterm In-Class Exam**

**Unit II: “A Storyteller Who Wants to Share Her Way of Seeing”—The Work of Arundhati Roy and Helena Maria Viramontes**
W (May 6):
Readings: Viramontes, “The Moths” and “Marks of the Chicana Corpus”
*Guest Speaker: Professor Paula Moya (Stanford University)

**Week Seven**
M (May 11):
Readings: Roy, *God of Small Things*.

W (May 13):
Readings: Roy, *God of Small Things*.

**Week 8:**
M May 18:
Readings: Roy, *An Ordinary People’s Guide to Empire*

**UNIT III: INQUIRIES INTO A GRASSROOTS SOCIAL MOVEMENT**

W May 20:
Reading: selections from INCITE! Anthology

**Week 9**
M May 25
**Holiday**

W May 27:
Reading: selections from INCITE! Anthology

**Week 10**
M June 1:
Reading: selections from INCITE! Anthology

W June 3:
Reading: selections from INCITE! Anthology

**Week 11**
M June 8:
TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM IS DUE (in my office by 5pm)

---

**Guest Speaker Bio’s**

**Paula M. L. Moya** (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor at Stanford University in Northern California. Her publications include essays on feminist theory, multicultural pedagogy, race and emotion, and Latina/o and Chicana/o literature and identity. She is the author of *Learning from Experience: Minority Identities, Multicultural Struggles* (UC Press 2002) and the co-editor with Michael Hames-García of *Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism* (UC Press 2000). Her most recent volume, co-edited with Linda Martin Alcoff, Michael Hames-Garcia and Satya Mohanty is *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (Palgrave 2006). Her current book projects include an interdisciplinary volume on race entitled *Doing Race: 21 Essays for the 21st Century* (co-edited with Hazel Rose Markus), and a scholarly study of literature written by women of color in the last three decades of the 20th century.

**Amina Gautier** (Ph.D.) is Assistant Professor of English at St. Joseph’s University in Western Pennsylvania. She received her B.A. and M.A. at Stanford University and her M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. Amina Gautier has published over 50 short stories in a range of well-respected literary journals and her work has been anthologized in a range of important books, including *Best African American Fiction: 2009* and *New Stories from the South: The Year’s Best, 2008*. Gautier’s stories have been honored with scholarships and fellowships from Breadloaf Writer’s Conference, Ucross Residency, and Sewanee Writer’s Conference. In addition to the Richey prize, she has been awarded the Jack Dyer Fiction Award from the Crab Orchard Review (2006), the Danahy Fiction Prize from the Tampa Review (2009), and a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.