LT313 - Writing and Gender: Virginia Woolf

Seminar Leader: Laura Scuriatti

Course Times: Tuesdays 15:15-16:45 and Fridays 11.00-12.30

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1.30-3.00 pm

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Course Description

Theories of language and of the writing process have played a decisive part in dismantling traditional notions of gender identity and subjectivity. The works of Virginia Woolf have been a powerful source in this exploration. A woman writer who contributed to the male-dominated realm of arts and letters through public engagement (publishing, lecturing, and mentorship) as well as writing, Woolf experimented in her fiction with transformations of sex and sexual desire. Her challenge to regimes of identity and their politics coincided with a challenge to the whole realm of representation itself, through new ways of portraying experience, consciousness, and time. Her methods were corroboration for her audacious claim that, in the modern era, human "character" had itself changed. We will read Woolf's works in conjunction with a range of theorists of language, gender, and sexuality, concentrating on the ways in which her work bequeaths an aesthetic, and a political and a theoretical legacy to artists and philosophers today.

Week 1

Tuesday 30 August and Friday 3 September
Introduction to the themes of the course and literature;
Readings for the week: V. Woolf, Orlando

Week 2

Tuesday 7 September
Screening of Sally Potter's film Orlando and discussion

Friday 10 September
Readings for the session: Rachel Bowlby, “Orlando’s Vacillation” and Elizabeth Meese, “When Virginia Woolf Looked at Vita, What Did She See; or Lesbian: Feminist: Woman – What’s the Differ(e/a)nce?”

**Week 3 – Feminism, Gender and Queer I**

**Tuesday 14 September**
Reading for the session: Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (selection)

**Friday 17 September**
Reading for this session: Monique Wittig, “One is not Born a Woman”

**Week 4 – Feminism, Gender and Queer II**

**Tuesday 21 September**

**Friday 24 September**

**Week 5 – Feminism, Gender and Queer III**

**Tuesday 29 September**

**Friday 2 October**
Readings for the session: Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (excerpts)

**Week 6 – Woolf’s Feminisms I**

**Tuesday 6 October** and **Friday 9 October**:
Readings for the week: *A Room of One’s Own*

**Week 7 - Feminism and Literary Criticism**

**Tuesday 13 October**:

**Friday 16 October**:
Reading for the session: Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (excerpts), Elaine Showalter, “A
Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory

Week 8 – MiD-TERM BREAK – NO CLASSES

Essay due: Friday 23 October

Week 9 – Woolf’s Feminisms II
  Tuesday 27 October and Friday 30 October;
  Readings for the week: V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*

Week 10 – The Modernist Novels I
  Tuesday 3 November and Friday 6 November;
  Reading for this week: V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*

Week 11 – The Modernist Novels II
  Tuesday 10 November and Friday 13 November;
  Readings for the week: V. Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

Week 12 – Shorter Writings I: Autobiography

  Tuesday 17 November:
  Reading for the session: Virginia Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past” and *Diaries* (excerpts)

  Friday 20 November:
  Written exam

Week 13 – Special week: Museum visit and Filming Woolf

  Tuesday 24 November: Museum Visit: Exhibition *Homosexualität_en* (Schwules Museum und DHM)

  Friday 27 November:
  Film screening: Stephen Dawldry, *The Hours* and comparative discussion of film and Woolf’s texts

Week 14 – Shorter Writings II: Modernism, Modernity and the Politics of Literature

  Tuesday 1 December: V. Woolf, “Modern Fiction”, “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown”
Friday 4 December
V. Woolf, “Professions for Women”, “Why Art Today Follows Politics”, “Memories of a Working Women’s Guild”

Week 15 – *The Waves*
Tuesday 8 December and Friday 11 December:
Readings for the week: V. Woolf, *The Waves*

**Requirements**

**Attendance**
Attendance at ALL classes is expected. Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness influences the class performance grade. More than two absences (that is absences from two sessions of 90 minutes) in a semester will significantly affect the grade for the course. Please consult the absence policy in the Student Handbook.

**Assessment**
Students will be assessed on the basis of one written exam to be held in class, one essay, one response paper, one oral presentation (details below), and participation during class.

**Writing Assignments**
Students are required to submit two response papers and to take part in two written exams to be held during class.

**Response papers** are short pieces of writing in response to a reading assignment. At the beginning of the course each student will choose one text to respond to. Response papers should be sent to Laura Scuriatti per email before class starts on the day in which the chosen text is discussed.
Length: approx. 1000 words

**Written exam**
To be held on: 20 November
Students will be asked to answer one or two questions in an essay-like format.

**Essay**
Approx. Legth: 3000 words
Due date: Friday 23 October
Please submit the essay electronically to the server.

**Oral presentation**
Each student will be in charge of an oral presentation. For the oral presentation, students will bring to class one or more pages of written notes with questions and bullet-points intended to introduce the assigned reading and to facilitate the discussion. These notes will be handed to Laura Scuriatti at the end of the class and will be part of the presentation grade.

**Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

All written work must be submitted electronically and on time. The network administrator will create a file for course essay submissions ahead of each deadline, and all essays are submitted electronically. The deadline for final essays needs cannot be after the end of completion week.

**Grade Breakdown**

- Class performance: 20%
- Oral presentation: 20%
- Response paper: 10%
- Written exam: 25%
- Essay: 25%

Classes start on Monday, August 31 and run until Friday, December 11, with fall break planned for October 19-15. Completion week is from December 14-18. Attendance is mandatory during completion week.

Scheduled class times are available online under the relevant course heading: http://www.berlin.bard.edu/academics/courses-new/fall-2015/

**Library and Book Purchase Policies**

If you have not yet contacted Catherine Laplante (c.laplante@berlin.bard.edu) regarding the preparation of your course reader or the ordering of reserve course texts for the library, please do so as soon as possible. For your information: the college book policy for 2015-2016 is that reserve stocks of books will be lent to students on the basis of need, or (thereafter) on a first come first served basis. Books not yet owned by the college will be purchased only to create a small library reserve collection, and for students receiving more than 70% financial aid. Otherwise, students must purchase all course books.