Women Writers and Their Worlds:  
Body and Soul of Women Creators of the Americas

On the page, on the stage, in the street, between the sheets, women writers leave their unique marks on our cultural landscape as they explore, express, and represent our ever-expanding world. Beginning with the rebellious literary tradition of 17th-century Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to 21st-century testimonials and fantastic literature, we will read fiction, poetry, essays, and drama by some of the most notable and notorious women of the Americas. We’ll see their worldview translated into film, into visual and performance art, theatre, and cyber installations. Despite the suppression and censorship of women as intellectuals, creators and leaders in the patriarchal societies of the Americas, contemporary writers and artists continue to build upon the rich cultural heritage of their foremothers. We will study and apply a variety of theoretical frames (feminist, cultural, literary, postmodern) through which to view and interpret their works, as well as to explore how they have been interpreted and represented by their societies.

Course Objectives:

1. Provide students with an overview of women’s writing from the American continents.
2. Develop students’ ability to apply key components of feminist theories from Latin America and internationally.
3. Teach students to analyze the writing of women in order to identify the text’s approach to women’s writing.
4. Provide students with critical tools for analyzing women’s writing in its social, cultural context.
5. Emphasize the complex socio-historical factors that contribute to gendered identities.

The goal is not only to explore and read these women’s view of and place in their worlds, but to expand our understanding of our own.

REQUIRED TEXTS:


Cinsneros, Sandra. The House on Mango Street. Selections. 0-679-73477-5


**Additional: A Critical Response Diary**

**On-Reserve and on-line:** A series of books and films will be available in the library for use in throughout the semester. Students will also access on-line materials, post responses, and discuss readings on-line.

**II. Evaluation:** Your final grade will be based on the following components:

- **Participation:** 30%
- **Response Diary** 15%
- **Quizzes/presentations:** 15%
- **Exams I & II** 20%
- **Final Research Project** 20%

**University Grading Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>95 and above</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-94.9</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.7-89.9</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>83.3-87.6</td>
<td>B</td>
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**Participation** (30%)  
This component takes into account a number of variables including but not limited to: 1) your willingness and preparedness to participate, engaging in discussion about the texts being studied; 2) your preparation of daily reading assignments and ability to answer questions; 3) your cooperation in group and pair work and attitude toward the class and your peers. You will be given a participation grade every week. Absences and lack of preparations will affect your grade in this major component of your evaluation.

**Response Diary** (15%)  
Following each assignment, before coming to class, you will write a journal entry based on your observations on the reading or the film viewed. The entry must be clearly dated with day, date, and month. Although these are personal, and therefore, your opinions are neither right nor wrong, they must be based upon the reading and you must show an ability to apply the critical frameworks discussed in class. Journals will be handed in on the days indicated in the syllabus, however, they may be collected randomly and assigned a grade. Please buy a notebook that will serve exclusively for your journal. The writing must be legible.
**Presentations** (15%)
Periodically, quizzes will be given based on the prior night's reading or previous day's class discussion. Quizzes are unannounced and not made up. Periodically, students will be asked to prepare presentations on the readings or from Internet/library searches on topics pertinent to our discussions.

**Exams** (20%)
Two exams will be given, each worth 10% of your grade, on the days indicated in the syllabus. There are no make-ups without a legal, documented excuse (with phone number).

**Final Project** (20%)
1. Students will write critical reviews of 4 short stories from women of the Americas not studied in class. A list of sources will be provided and, after consulting with me, students will present their choices for approval on the indicated date. A comparative approach with references to appropriate critical theory are central. Reviews must be typed and a minimum of two pages each. MLA or another Style Format must be followed.
2. Annotated Bibliography (including on-line sites) of the authors selected for the project. Further details will be provided.

**Films**
A series of films will be viewed during the semester. Those scheduled during class time will be analyzed in the same fashion as the written literature: you will write journal entries on them, and students will be assigned in-class reports. Additional films will be shown at night, followed by discussions. These films will be made available on reserve in the library for one week for those unable to attend due to school/work conflicts.

**Library Reserve and Computer Resources**

**NOTE:** No assignments are accepted late without a legal, documented excuse. There is no extra-credit in this class.

**ATTENDANCE:** As participation is a major component of your grade, you must be present to participate. Absences and lates will lower your participation grade. Ten minutes late to class is equal to one absence, and is very disruptive to the class. Be considerate…arrive on time! Also, all cell phones and beepers off, please!

**When absent**, you are responsible for work done in class and for the homework assignments. You are expected to participate in class discussions and activities and you must take any quiz given on the day you return. Below, write the names and phone numbers of at least two classmates from whom you can get assignments when you are out.

Name: _____________________________ Phone______________________

Name: _____________________________ Phone______________________

Name: _____________________________ Phone______________________
Course Schedule: Subject to Change According to Class Needs and Progress

Week 1 (1/14, 1/16): Women of the Americas and their Worlds. Struggles for identity and interpretative power.  
*Background Reading:* Skidmore and Smith, *Modern Latin America, The Happy Critic,* selected readings  
*Literary Readings:* Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1660s), Rosario Castellanos, *The Liberation of Love, The Cooking Lesson*; Gabriela Mistral, selected poems.  
*Critical Reading:* Jean Franco, *Plotting Women,* Intro., *The Feminist Reader,* Intro.;

Week 2 (1/21, 1/23): A Feminine Voice / Feminine Writing?  
*Literary Reading:* Nellie Campobello, *Cartucho,* Rosario Ferre, *Sweet Diamond Dust,* Rosario Castellanos *El eterno femenino,* selections  
*Critical Readings:* Toril Moi, “Feminist, Female, Feminine,” (TFR);

Week 3 (1/28, 1/30): Identity: The Body, Race, Class, and Gender  
*Literary Readings:* Julia Alvarez, selections; Judith Ortiz Cofer *The Latin Deli,* “The Line of the Sun,”; Esmerelda Santiago, selections; Cherrie Moraga *La Guerra,*  
*Critical Readings:* Selections from Gloria Andalzua *Borderlands/Fronteras; Latino/a Literature,* selections; *Luscious Latinas* (Más Magazine)

Week 4 (2/4, 2/6): On Becoming: Place and Language  
*Literary Readings:* Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street,*  
*Critical Readings:* Audre Lourde, “Poetry is Not a Luxury”; “How to be a Chicana”

Week 5: (2/11, 2/13) New Ways of Being  
*Literary Readings:* Rosario Castellanos *El eterno femenino,* Carmen Boullosa (*The Pirates´Medic*),  

Week 6 (2/18, 2/20): Struggle for Interpretive Power  
*Literary Readings:* Cristina Perri Rossi *La nave de los locos,* selections; Jesusa Rodriguez, excerpts “Barbie and the Revenge of the Devil” and “Excepts from Genesis.”  
*Critical Readings:* *Holy Terrors. Latin American Women Perform.* Selections  

Week 7 (2/25, 2/27): Representing Woman  
*Readings:* Noami Linstrom, ed., *Woman as Myth and Metaphor,* selections  
*Video:* Astrid Hadad

EXAM I: Thursday, February 27

Week 8 (3/4, 3/6): Woman and The State: Metaphor and Failed Identity  
*Literary Reading:* Clarice Lispector, *The Hour of the Star*  

3/1 Women in/on Films: Maria Luisa Bemberg, *The Hour of the Star*  
6pm Slept TV Lounge
March 10-March 14  Spring Break

Week 9 (3/11, 3/13): Women’s Roles in La Madre Patria/Fatherland
Literary Reading: Laura Esquivel Like Water for Chocolate
Critical Reading and videos: In Woman’s Hands: Women and Social Change in Chile; The Official Story (Cuts); Griselda Gambarro; Debra Castillo, selections.

Week 10 (3/18, 3/20): Violence, Testimony and Controversial Women’s Voices
Literary Reading: I, Rigoberta Menchú
Critical Readings: Selections: Women and Genres of Testimonials and Documentaries
Videos: Rigoberta Menchú; Lourdes Portillo, Señorita Extraviada: Women in Juarez; Chavas Banda.

3/18 Women in/on Film: Film 2 La historia oficial / Camila
6pm Slep TV Lounge

Literary Readings: Secret Weavers, selections
Critical Readings: Approaches to the Fantastic

3/27 Women in/on Film: Film 3
5:30pm Slep TV Lounge

Week 12 (4/1, 4/3): Resisting Gender. Divergent Sexualities
Literary readings: Cherrie Moraga, “Loving in the War Years”
Critical Readings: Jean Franco, Plotting Women, “Re-writing the Family”
Film: You, Me, and Them

Week 13 (4/8, 4/10): Humor as a Strategy for Survival
Literary Readings: Holy Terrors: (Astrid Hadad, Jesusa Rodriguez, Diana Raznovich); Rosario Castellanos,
Critical Readings: Ahern, Taylor
Videos: Hadad, Rodriguez, Nao Bustamante,

Week 14 (4/15, 4/17): The Body on Stage: Whose Gaze Is It Anyway?
Literary Readings: Gambaro, Strip-Tease

Week 15 (4/22, 4/24): Writing in Exile
Literary Readings: You Can’t Drown the Fire, selection

Exam II: Thursday, April 24

Week 16 (4/29, 5/1): Presentations of Final Projects

Final Projects Due: Monday, May 5, 4:00 pm. in my office.