Course Description
This course will serve as an introduction to feminist literary theory as well as to feminist literary criticism. We will trace the emergence of theoretical and critical approaches that seek to understand the ways in which the category of gender functions in the creation and reception of literature. We will explore various approaches collected under the two broad rubrics of Anglo-American and French Feminist literary theory. Initially distrustful of theory, Anglo-Americans sought to recover previously ignored or unknown works by women writers, to understand the particular experiences of women writers in their struggle to write and publish their work, and to examine the representation of women in literature. Anglo-American scholars slowly became more receptive to the kind of theorizing about gender, language, and culture that French scholars had been engaged in since the 1960s, and which made forays into philosophy, linguistics, and psychoanalysis. We will ask questions about the connections between gender and genre, and about issues of voice and representation. We will consider whether one can talk meaningfully about a women’s “tradition” in literature, and why, until recently, women writers were almost entirely left out of the literary canon. We will also consider the dangers of “ghetto-izing” women’s writing. One aim of the course will be to instill an historical awareness of how long these kinds of questions have been asked and debated (since Sappho!) and why it was only in the later twentieth century that we saw the emergence of women’s studies as an academic discipline. In the last half of the course we will choose a couple of texts on which to “practice” the feminist literary theories we learn about in the first half of the course. Possibilities include Christine de Pizan’s Book of the City of Ladies, Chaucer’s Wife of Bath in the Canterbury Tales, the plays of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre, Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh, Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, Vladimir Nabokov’s Lolita.

Required Texts
Also useful:

Assignments and Evaluation

(371):
• 2 reports on class readings (4-5 pages each) 30% (2 x 15%)
• final paper and presentation (8-10 pages) 40%
• Blackboard and classroom participation 30%

100%

(471):
• 3 reports on class readings (4-5 pages each) 30% (3 x 10%)
• final paper and presentation (15 pages) 50%
• Blackboard and classroom participation 20%

100%

Additional graduate readings TBA

Reports on class readings:
Your reports should summarize a reading (article, chapter or excerpt from book) for the class as a whole. In about 1,000 words you should describe the article’s purposes, premises, and key points and perhaps also give some sense of the alternatives it contests or engages. (Note that you are not obliged to provide a critique, although such analysis is not strictly forbidden either.) Via the course roundtable on Blackboard, the reports will then get published to and for the class. A paper copy must also be available for perusal and copying in my mailbox.
N.B. In most cases a competent review or report will require some research into background and contexts. Feel free to consult the instructor and to share resources with one another, but do not expect to begin work the night before the paper is due.

Final Papers and Presentations:
Students will present a literary text to the class, highlighting theoretical issues. Using class feedback, they will then write up this presentation as a formal essay. More instructions will be supplied later in the semester.

Blackboard:
You are asked to contribute at least five messages to this roundtable over the course of the semester, not including the summaries that get posted. Three of those messages should appear before spring break. Roundtable messages are usually much less formal than papers. Most are likely to be comments and questions about the readings at hand, further thoughts about topics addressed earlier in the course, remarks about subjects neglected or not yet taken up, and responses to what others have had to say in class or on the roundtable. The content, format, tone and stance of these messages are up to you. You will be evaluated on whether you contribute but not on what. In addition to writing messages to the roundtable, you are responsible for keeping up with reading the messages of others. Try to read the new messages at least once a week, if not shortly before each class meeting.

N.B. ALL components of the evaluation must be completed to pass the course.
N.B. Use the following as a rough estimate: to earn a B in this course, devote 2.5 hours to thoughtful reading and writing outside of class for each hour of class time.
Students are invited to meet individually with me in my office to discuss their work and their progress in the course. **All students are more than welcome to drop by during office hours or schedule an appointment to ask questions, continue discussion of issues from class, or to offer comments.** This is especially true during the first week of class and especially true for students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368-5230) and who may need individual arrangements. **Make use of your professors!!** We’re here to help you learn and we don’t expect you to be perfect (who is?).

**Course Policies**

- Class attendance is mandatory. I expect students to come to class **on time** and fully prepared to participate in class discussions and group work. **More than two unexcused absences or repeated late entry will affect your grade.** Repeated absences will jeopardize your continuation in the course. Extended holidays, doctor/dentist appointments, sports events, etc. are not valid excuses for missing class. Note the term “EXTRA-curricular”? If you are ill, please call me **before** class to let me know you’ll be absent and please bring a doctor’s note to the next class.
- Your written work must be word-processed, double-spaced with margins of 1 inch on every side, and use a 12-point font. Please number your pages and staple them together. Students should keep copies of all work submitted.
- I do not accept late assignments except on compassionate grounds (serious medical illness supported by a doctor’s note or a death in the family). Failure to submit assignments on the due date will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. If you are having problems writing I **strongly urge** you to come and see me to discuss the problem before you’ve missed a deadline. Computer problems are rarely a valid excuse for missing a deadline. Leave yourself enough time for such contingencies!

**Plagiarism is a SERIOUS academic offense.** I consider its practice to be an indication of a lack of respect for yourself, the instructor, other students, and the purpose(s) of a university education. Please familiarize yourself with CWRU’s policy on plagiarism. If you are at all unsure, please come and ask me.

**Reading Schedule:**

N.B. I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus, as it is scheduled below, during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class.

+ Please arrive in class having already completed the readings listed for that day.
+ Please bring your texts and any hand-outs/photocopies to class in order to participate meaningfully in discussion.
+ Readings followed by an asterisk will be available in KSL at the circulation desk under the course title.

**I. Anglo-American Feminist Literary Criticism**

**January 14:** • Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*; Chapters 1 and 2.

**January 16:** • Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, Chapters 2 through 6.

**January 21:** • Elaine Showalter, from *A Literature of Their Own*: “Virginia Woolf and the Flight Into Androgyny”*
January 21:  
• Toril Moi, from *Sexual/Textual Politics*: “Introduction: Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”

January 23:  
• Moi, “Feminist, Female, Feminine”*  
• Mary Ellmann, *Thinking About Women*, Chapters 1-3.

January 28:  
• Ellmann, *Thinking About Women*, Chapters 4-5.  
• Moi, from *STP*: Chapters 1&2: “Two Feminist Classics” and “‘Images of Women’ Criticism”

January 30:  
• Gilbert and Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*: 1.1 “The Queen’s Looking Glass” (pp.3-44)

February 4:  
• Gilbert and Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*: 1.2-3 “Infection in the Sentence” and “The Parables of the Cave” (pp.45-104).  
• Moi, from *STP*: Chapter 3: “Women Writing and Writing About Women”

February 6:  
• Myra Jehlen, “Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism”*  
• Moi, from *STP*: Chapter 4: “Theoretical Reflections”

II. French Feminist Literary Criticism

February 11:  
• Moi, from *STP*: Chapter 5: “From Simone de Beauvoir to Jacques Lacan”  
• Elizabeth Grosz, from *Sexual Subversions*, Chapter 1: “Modern French Philosophy”

February 13:  
• Moi, from *STP*: Chapter 8: “Marginality and subversion: Julia Kristeva”  
• Grosz, from *SS*: Chapter 2: “Julia Kristeva and the Speaking Subject”

February 18:  
• Grosz, from *SS*: Chapter 3: “Julia Kristeva: Abjection, motherhood and love”  
• Julia Kristeva, “Stabat Mater”*  

February 20:  
• Kristeva, “Revolution in Poetic Language”*

February 25:  
CLASS DISCUSSION: KRISTEVA

February 27:  
• Moi, from *STP*, Chapter 7: “Patriarchal reflections: Luce Irigaray’s looking-glass”  
• Grosz, from *SS*: Chapter 4: “Luce Irigaray and sexual difference”

March 4:  
• Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which Is Not One”*; “Women On the Market”*

March 6:  
• Grosz, from *SS*: Chapter 5: “Luce Irigaray and the ethics of alterity”  
• Irigaray, “An Ethics of Sexual Difference”*; “Divine Women”*
| March 18 | • CLASS DISCUSSION: IRIGARAY |
| March 20 | • Moi, from *STP*: Chapter 6: “Hélène Cixous: an imaginary utopia”  
• Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of the Medusa”* |
| March 25 | • Cixous, “Preface”; “La – The (Feminine)”; “The Book of Promethea” |
| March 27 | CLASS DISCUSSION; FRENCH FEMINIST THEORY SUMMARY |

### III. Practicing Theory

| April 1 | • Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*. Chs. 1-15 |
| April 3 | • Kate Chopin, *The Awakening*. Chs.16-end |

**Drama:** *Eumenides* (Aeschylus); *Antigone*, (Sophocles); *Medea* (Euripides)

| April 8 | Student-led discussion  
Becky Conlon  
Clio Tilton |
| April 10 | Student-led discussion  
Dana Brown  
Ken McGraw |

**Poetry:** *Ariel* Sylvia Plath

| April 15 | Student-led discussion  
Amanda Baus  
Monica Ionescu |
| April 17 | Student-led discussion  
Rene Barber  
Greta Dishong |

**Novel:** *Lolita* Vladimir Nabokov

| April 22 | Student-led discussion  
Paul Neel  
Kristin Clark |
| April 24 | Student-led discussion  
Jim Savinell  
Shawn Flowers |