

CORE COURSE

PAPER 11: WOMEN'S WRITING SEMESTER 5

Course Statement

This paper focuses on writings by women, about women. Since women are always defined in relation to men in a structurally patriarchal society, women writing about their experiences and identities are almost always writing about their community, since they do not have the privilege to write about themselves as individuals inhabiting a certain position in society. This paper focuses on those stories, poems, plays, novels, autobiographies, and theoretical writings that most clearly articulate the struggle to define experiences, and challenge patriarchal constructs. The texts in this paper focus on gender and sexuality as related to women, their bodies, their desires, and their aspirations. However, women do not form a homogenous group and their oppressions and acts of resistance need to be understood in all their complexities. Therefore, the intersectionality of the position of womanhood with caste, class, race, disability, education, slavery, etc., need to be studied with attention to the socio-economic historical location.

Course Objectives

This course aims to

- help students understand the social construction of woman by patriarchy;
- examine feminism's concerns of equality with men;
- highlight the structural oppression of women;
- foreground resistance by women;
- discuss women's writing as an act of resistance and of grasping agency;
- facilitate an understanding of the body of woman and its lived experience; and
- help students engage with the heterogeneity of the oppression of women in different places, historically and socially.

Facilitating the Achievement of Course Learning Outcomes

Unit No.	Course Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activity	Assessment Tasks
1.	Understanding concepts	Interactive discussions in small groups in Tutorial classes	Reading material together in small groups, initiating discussion topics, participation in discussions

2.	Expressing concepts through writing	How to think critically and write with clarity	Writing essay length assignments
3.	Demonstrating conceptual and textual understanding in tests and exams	Discussing exam questions and answering techniques	Class tests

Course Contents

Unit 1

Novel

Alice Walker *The Color Purple*

Unit 2

Short Stories

- a) Charlotte Perkins Gilman 'The Yellow Wallpaper'
- b) Begum Rokeya 'Sultana's Dream', Tara Publishing Ltd, India, 2005.

Drama

Maria Irene Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends*.

Unit 3

Poetry

- a) Emily Dickinson, (i) 'I cannot live with you' (ii) 'I'm wife; I've finished that'
- b) Simin Behbahani, (i) 'It's Time to Mow the Flowers'.
- c) Sylvia Plath, (i) 'Lady Lazarus' (ii) Daddy
- d) Eunice De Souza, (i) 'Advice to Women', (ii) 'Bequest'

Unit 4

Autobiography

- a) Mary Wollstonecraft *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: Norton, 1988) chap.1, pp. 11–19; chap. 2, pp. 19–38.
- b) Pandita Ramabai 'A Testimony of our Inexhaustible Treasures', in *Pandita Ramabai Through Her Own Words: Selected Works*, tr. Meera Kosambi (New Delhi: OUP, 2000) pp. 295–324.

- c) Rassundari Debi Excerpts from *Amar Jiban* in Susie Tharu and K. Lalita, eds., *Women's Writing in India*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: OUP, 1989) pp. 192–202

Unit 5

Readings

- Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt, 1957) chaps. 1 and 6.
- Elaine Showalter, 'Introduction', in *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977).
- Simone de Beauvoir, 'Introduction', in *The Second Sex*.
- Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory', in *The Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Lennard J. Davis, 2nd edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 257-73.
- Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, 'Introduction', in *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*

Essential reading

Note: This is a literature-based course, and therefore, all these texts are to be considered essential reading.

Teaching Plan

Paper 11: Women's Writing

Week 1 – Introduction to Paper 11: Women's Writing

Week 2 – Unit 1 – Novel: Walker, *The Color Purple*

Week 3 – Walker (contd..)

Week 4 – Unit 2 -- Short Stories:

(a) Gilman, 'The Yellow Wallpaper'

(b) Begum Rokeya 'Sultana's Dream'

Week 5 – Unit 2 – Drama: Fornes, *Fefu and Her Friends*

Week 6 – Fornes (contd..)

Week 7 – Unit 3 – Poetry:

(a) Behbahani, 'It's Time to Mow the Flowers'

(b) Plath, (i) 'Lady Lazarus'

(c) De Souza, (i) 'Bequest'; (ii) 'Advice to Women'

(d) Dickinson, 'I cannot live without you'; (ii) 'I'm wife; I've finished with that'

Week 8 – Poetry (contd..)

Week 9 – Poetry (contd..)

Week 10 – Unit 4 – Autobiography:

- (a) Rassundari Debi, Excerpts from *Amar Jiban*
- (b) Pandita Ramabai, 'A Testimony of our Inexhaustible Treasures'
- (c) Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

Week 11 – Autobiography (contd..)

Week 12 – Unit 5 -- Prose Readings:

- (a) Showalter, 'Introduction', in *A Literature of Their Own*
- (b) de Beauvoir, 'Introduction', in *The Second Sex*
- (c) Irigaray, 'When the Goods Get Together'
- (d) Garland-Thomson, 'Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory'
- (e) Sangari and Vaid, 'Introduction', in *Recasting Women*

Week 13 – Prose Readings (contd..)

Week 14 – Concluding lectures; exam issues, etc.

Keywords

Women writers

Women poets

Women's confessional poetry Women novelists

Women playwrights Women's autobiography Women theorists

Feminist writers

Gender

Patriarchy