“BE PREPARED TO ENTER THE CONVERSATION, AND BE PREPARED TO BE CHANGED BY IT.” (Cornel West)

A “critical conversation” is a conversation about ideas. Since ideas are not simple “yes” or “no” propositions, a critical conversation is sophisticated and thoughtful rather than one-sided and simplistic. It’s not about finding the right answer, but rather about closely analyzing all of the evidence at hand and discovering something meaningful—something that adds to your deeper understanding of the evidence. In this way, careful analysis is itself a critical conversation between the texts and you; by communicating what you discover clearly and cogently, you add to the broader conversation.

Our conversations this semester will be about the development and deployment of certain ideas about women and female subjectivity as seen in our literary history. This literary tradition often portrays women as victims or marginal figures, whose only real “power” resides on the islands of classical witches and in the attics of Romantic madwomen. During our semester we will use our readings to challenge traditional dichotomies that cast gender as an essential attribute rather than a cultural construction – culture/nature, reason/emotion, mind/body, public/private -- and interrogate the very categories of “women” and “culture” themselves. Together we will explore a more diversified range of intellectual and experiential possibilities and find in the margins of our literature those places where they reside. Topics will include courtship, reproductive power, literacy and voice, consent and bodily autonomy; we may also connect our readings to current issues/problems in 21st century culture.

**A number of these texts depict acts of rape or violence against women. I believe that such depictions play a valuable role in representing the sometimes problematic and complicated historical relationship between women and culture. If, however, you find yourself struggling with this content at any point during the semester, please see me so that we can discuss ways of working with the material.**
**Course Objectives:** FYW is designed to teach you to read critically and write analytically, while fostering a love of literature. To this end, written work and class discussions will focus on the following interpretive and expository strategies:

**analyzing the thematic structure of literary works through close reading**

**translating critical reading into elegant and persuasive expository writing**

**conducting interdisciplinary research to ground literary works in historical contexts**

**documenting sources and incorporating scholarship in original analytical arguments**

**developing a sense of literary history**

**gaining confidence in speaking as well as writing skills in a small seminar setting**

**Required Texts.**

"All students deserve to be able to access course texts. The high costs of textbooks and other course materials prohibit access and perpetuate inequity, and Barnard librarians are partnering with students, faculty, and staff to increase access. By the first day of advance registration for each term, you should be able to view on CourseWorks information provided by your faculty about required texts (including ISBN or author, title, publisher and copyright date) and their prices. Once you have selected your classes, here are some cost-free methods for accessing course texts, recommended by the Barnard Library: find out if your faculty has placed the texts on reserve at Barnard Library or another Columbia library, and look for course texts using CLIO (library catalog), Borrow Direct (request books from partner libraries), Interlibrary Loan (request book chapters from any library), and NYPL. Students with financial need or insecurity can check items out from the FLIP lending libraries in the Barnard Library and Butler Library and can consult with the Dean of Studies and the Financial Aid Office about additional affordable alternatives for getting access to course texts. Talk with your librarian and visit the Barnard Library Textbook Affordability guide (library.barnard.edu/textbook-affordability) for more details."

The two required books are available at Book Culture, 536 W 112th Street (Broadway and Amsterdam), 2nd floor (listed under Women and Culture Faculty.) Should you buy your books elsewhere (or secondhand,) please get the same edition; we’re reading works in translation, and the translations should be the same.

de France, Marie. *The Lais of Marie de France* (Baker)
Foley, Helene, ed. The Homeric Hymn to Demeter (Princeton UP)

The balance of the required readings will be found in a “Course Reader” available at Village Copier, Amsterdam Avenue and 118th Street (listed under First Year Writing: Women and Culture.) You may also be able to purchase a used Course Reader from
earlier semesters of Fall Women and Culture; and I may have a few to loan on a first-come first-served basis.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Writing: FYW is a writing intensive class. You will frequently start class with a short informal ‘focused free write’ based on the assigned reading for the day. Additionally, during the term you will write two short formal papers (4-6 pages) one longer research paper (6-8 pages) and a “final reflections” paper due at the end of the term, according to the schedule on the syllabus; with the exception of the final paper, in this class you will have the privilege to revise each of these essays. The first draft of all such essays will be ‘ungraded’ though I will comment on it extensively to assist you in your revising process. You will receive a handout for each paper well in advance of the due date that explains the assignment and offers sample paper topics. Papers are due at the beginning of class, and late papers will be penalized. If you are struggling to meet a deadline, speak to me well in advance of the due date; extensions can occasionally be arranged with less severe penalties.

Papers should be double-spaced and neatly typed, with one-inch margins. Please title your paper and number your pages (though no title pages,) Grammar and spelling count! Always put your name on your papers (preferably each page) and keep one copy for yourself. Staple your pages together – no paper clips! Back up your work as you write. Plan ahead; do not come to class late because of a printer problem.

Discussion Leaders: Once during the semester, each of you (in groups of three) will lead a class discussion on days marked with an *. This experience will be part of your class participation grade. You will sign up for your discussion leaders next Tuesday, so in preparation please look at your semester schedule and see what day(s) would work best for you and also think about what text(s) interest you. You may not get your first (or second or even third) choice – so be prepared to be flexible. Once the schedule is set, you will receive a detailed handout explaining how to prepare to lead the discussion.

Grammar/Mechanics: To assist you with writing mechanics I recommend you bookmark the free service Purdue OWL (Online Writing lab) and consult it often. While I will not be overtly teaching grammar we will look at exercises that will illustrate how artful grammar and “rhetoric” will enhance your writing and argument. You will also be assigned a grammar packet at the start of the term for which you are responsible. You will have the opportunity to address individual structural/mechanical questions in conference.

Attendance and Classroom Community: As the class is modeled on the format of a seminar, it requires both your faithful presence as well as your fervent, wholehearted participation. Each one of you is expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss
the day’s assignment. **Always bring the appropriate texts to class as well as any handouts/reading questions. You may read on a tablet but not on a smartphone, which is forbidden at the seminar table.** (Please don’t ever take out your phone in class, even if you feel you have some ‘down time.’) Laptops are discouraged – they can set up barriers that are counterproductive to building the intellectual rapport and intimacy we will strive for together – however, if you have a pressing reason for using one please speak to me privately. Participate! Discussion is at the heart of our literary exploration, so it’s critical that you come to every class and that you come prepared to discuss the readings. If you haven’t done your homework, it will show! If you are shy, speak to me about finding ways to participate. Attendance and participation affect grades (see Attendance, below.)

**Conferences:** You must schedule in advance a minimum of four conferences with me — one of which should be devoted to the research paper — but I encourage you to meet with me as often as you wish. I will have open “student hours” on Tuesdays (see p. 1 syllabus) but am happy to make other arrangements for students who cannot meet at that time. For scheduled one-on-one conferences to workshop your paper drafts I will add an occasional MW or F morning of extra sign-up slots (see syllabus.) By the end of Week #2, I will have met with each of you in an informal “getting to know you” conference.

**Writing Fellows:** You are invited to work with a Barnard Writing Fellow while writing your essays. Writing fellows will give you another set of eyes and provide a sensitive read to assist your revising processes.

**Email:** Through email we can exchange information not covered in class (brainstorming paper topics, confirming conference times, etc.) Email is the best way to reach me; however, please be aware that while I check email several times a day, I am often not on-line at night (from 9 pm until 9 am). **DO NOT** email me in the middle of the night and expect a response first thing in the morning.

**Handouts/Organization:** This is a handout-intensive class, where I will regularly be distributing reading questions as well as collateral materials to enhance the interdisciplinary, cultural part of “Women and Culture.” While I will endeavor to upload some of these items to our Canvas site, please have a binder or sturdy folder system in place to keep track of these important materials.

**Attendance:** Barring extreme circumstances, you are expected to attend every class. Check with me if you’re not sure that your circumstances are truly extreme. If you know that you’ll be absent ahead of time, please inform me. If you do have to miss a class, it’s your responsibility to hand in the assignment that was due that day (on time,) get class notes from a classmate, and do whatever work is required for the next class.
Academic Honesty: One of the pleasures and responsibilities of writing is learning how to learn from others and to give them credit for what you have learned. Plagiarism is theft and a betrayal of the uniqueness of your mind. It is also a violation of college policy and is, in some cases, a criminal offense. It and other forms of cheating will not be tolerated. In my experience, most plagiarism comes from insecurity and stress. Please come talk to me if you are feeling overwhelmed, and we’ll work together. If you aren’t sure about what constitutes plagiarism, ask me. Believe me, it’s much better to ask for help than to hand in plagiarized work, receive a zero, and get referred to the Dean’s office. Please read the paragraph on avoiding plagiarism in Purdue OWL and Barnard’s Honor Code, established over one hundred years ago in 1912:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Grading: Late papers will be marked down half a grade point for every class meeting past the due date. Your grade in the course will be determined as follows:
- Essays: 60%
- Research Paper: 25%
- Class participation/discussion leading/attendance/preparation: 15%

I give consideration as well to your improvement over the semester.

SYLLABUS

I. THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

| Tues  | 9/4 | Greetings and salutations  
Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck” |
| Thur  | 9/6 | Hymn to Demeter – pp 2-26 and “Commentary”(pp. 28-64)  
(assign Essay #1) |
| Tues  | 9/11 | Hymn to Demeter  
Nancy Chodorow, “Family Structure and Feminine Personality”  
(Foley ed. pp. 243-265) |
| Thur  | 9/13 | Hymn to Demeter |
**ESSAY #1 DUE IN CLASS: first (ungraded) version**

Thur 9/20 Kabra Nagast (reader); Lorde, “Uses of the Erotic” (handout)

Tues 9/25 Adichie, “We Should All be Feminists” (handout); group work

**ESSAY #1 DUE IN CLASS: final (graded) version**

Thur 10/4 Ahmed, “Killing Joy: Feminism and the History of Happiness” (handout); group work

* Tues 10/9 Sei Sonegan, selections from The Pillow Book (course reader) (assign Essay #2)

**ESSAY #2 DUE IN CLASS: first (ungraded) version**

*Thurs 10/18 “The Changed Skin” (reader); “Bisclavret” (Lais); “Beauty And the Beast” (reader) (pass out research paper topic assignment)

**RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC DUE 3 PM BY EMAIL – PLEASE SCAN AND ATTACH**

MON 10/22

** OPTIONAL PAPER CONFERENCES FOR ESSAY #2 **

Tues 10/23 LIBRARY RESEARCH INFO SESSION (pass out Research Paper formal assignment)

WED 10/24
III. VOICE


**ESSAY #2 DUE IN CLASS: final (graded) version**

Tues 10/30  Lens Exercise/Research Paper exercises/TBA
(pass out annotated bibliography/prospectus handout and “They Say/I Say” handouts)

Thurs 11/1  Research Paper workshop: “They Say/I Say”

TUES 11/6– ELECTION DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS

WED 11/7 -- **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY/PROSPECTUS DUE ON MY OFFICE DOOR AT 9 AM**

*Thurs 11/8  Poetry unit: Andalusian Arabic poetry (handout)
(pass out research paper thesis statement /outline assignment)

Tues 11/13  Poetry, cont’d; Elizabethan poetry (handout)
**Research paper outline/thesis statement due in class**

TUES 11/13  Mandatory conference to talk through outline –
WED 11/14 (am)  Please bring extra copy to the meeting

Thur 11/15  RESEARCH PAPER PEER REVIEW WORKSHOP

**RESEARCH ESSAY DUE IN CLASS (first ungraded version) – BRING TWO COPIES TO CLASS**

Tues 11/20  Elizabethan poetry, cont’d; Kim Hall, “These Bastard Signs of Fair: Literary Whiteness in Shakespeare’s Sonnets” (handout)

THURS 11/22  – NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Tue 11/27  Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, selected poetry (reader)

WED 11/28  RESEARCH PAPER CONFERENCES

*Thur 11/29  Sor Juana
(assign final paper)
Tues  12/4  “The Husband Stitch,” (handout) – group work
**RESEARCH ESSAY DUE IN CLASS – final (graded) version**

Thur  12/6  Finalities and Farewells
**FINAL REFLECTION PAPER (1-2 Pages) DUE IN CLASS**