

Syllabus

Title of the Course:	Feminist and Cross-Cultural Readings of Women's Arts and Literature	Course Breakdown:	30 hours online class, 150 hours independent studying
Name of the Instructor:	Dr. Iman Al-Ghafari	Weekly class time:	Thursdays 16:00 – 18:00 CEST
Language:	English		
Hosted by:	University of Potsdam	Certificate issued by:	University of Potsdam (3 & 6 ECTS)
min. number of participants:	15	max. number of participants:	30

Description of the course

How do women's arts and literature convey new meanings of body, identity, morality, and sexuality? This culturally diverse course provides an insight into feminist, lesbian, and queer theories and a comprehensive analysis of the achievements of female artists and writers from various races and cultures. Women's poems, songs, films, interviews, photographs, memoirs, documentaries, short stories, and fine arts will be analyzed from a feminist, lesbian, and cross-cultural perspective that exposes the dynamics of power relations in different cultures. Diverse disciplines, such as the visual, literary, and performing arts, are employed to enable the participants to explore the concept of the gaze both as readers and as viewers and to recognize the limitations of modernist and post-modernist modes of looking, writing, and doing in intercultural contexts.

The course is divided into fifteen lectures that integrate many themes and engage with various theoretical and cultural debates about the female body, pleasure, desire, girlhood, womanhood, motherhood, housework, nudity, femininity, sexuality, beauty, home, exile, gender norms, and lesbian love. It encompasses a wide selection of works by African, American, Arab, English, French, Indian, Irish, Mexican, Swedish, Portuguese, and Turkish female poets, writers, and artists. References are made to Audre Lorde's 'erotic as power,' Adrienne Rich's 'lesbian continuum,' Julia Kristeva's 'semiotics,' Hélène Cixous' 'écriture féminine,' Luce Irigaray's 'female jouissance,' Judith Butler's 'gender performativity,' and Rosi Braidotti's 'nomadic subject.' The interdisciplinary approach of the course will enable participants to break down the barriers between disciplines and cultures and to gain a broad understanding of female creativity and the resistance against patriarchal hegemony.

Learning Aims

To provide a general understanding about:

- Feminist arts and literature in various cultural contexts.
- The dynamics of power relations in discourses.
- Reader-response theory.
- Semiotics.
- Feminist philosophy, positionality, intersectionality, queer theory, and identity politics.
- The struggle against patriarchy in various socio-political structures.
- How gender roles are perceived in various cultures.
- How female authors write about their bodies and their experiences.
- How female artists challenge the patriarchal gaze in their journey of self-expression.
- The limitations of modernist and postmodernist praxis within the feminist philosophy.
- The complicated position of the female artists and writers in various cultures.
- The multiplicity of feminist voices and their ways of self-expression.

Upon the successful completion of the course students will be able to:

- Acquire a broad, interdisciplinary, and cross-cultural understanding of women's arts and literature.
- Comprehend what it means to be a female poet, writer, artist, singer, actress and photographer in male-dominated cultures.
- Relate feminist theories to women's literary and artistic achievements.
- Apply some key concepts in the feminist philosophy to rereading many texts.
- Recognize some of the limitations of modernist and post-modernist discourses.
- Analyze women's works from feminist and cross-cultural perspectives.
- Relate feminist theories and gender concepts to women's achievements in different cultures.
- Understand the obstacles that prevent female writers and artists from having enough recognition within patriarchal systems.
- Acknowledge the practical and theoretical relationships between women's arts and literature and feminist philosophy.
- Cross the borders of cultures by reinterpreting the creative expressions of women from new perspectives.
- Compare and contrast the experiences of women in different cultures.
- Provide their own well-informed answers to the following questions:
- How do women's arts and literature challenge patriarchal concepts?

- What are the key feminist issues that continue to be debated worldwide?
- How do feminist theories develop in different cultures and literatures?
- To what extent can queer theory empower feminist and lesbian writers?

Course requirements

Participants must have oral and written proficiency in English. They also need to have their own computers that allow them to study online.

Participants need to have a good idea of research methodologies. They need to have strong writing skills and critical thinking that enable them to submit a well-organized paper related to the topic of the course. In other words, participants are free to choose any topic they are interested in, as long as it is related to the main themes of the course. They need to explain why they choose certain texts and in what way the selected texts can be analyzed from a feminist, queer, or gender-sensitive perspective.

Course components include:

- Lectures
- PowerPoint Presentations.
- Readings selected articles and quotations from different books.
- Interpreting photos, drawings, fine arts, and songs.
- Online articles and videos.
- Analyzing interviews and journalistic articles.
- Assignments, presentations, and discussions.
- The course is taught through active learning, i.e., listening to the presentations and participating in small group work, reading, writing, and class discussion.

The final grade for the course will be based on the following:

- **Assignment 1 (10%):** Participation in analyzing the selected texts during the course.
- **Assignment 2 (10%):** A five-minute PowerPoint presentation on a feminist text that is relevant to the topic of the course and that the participant finds interesting and worthy of discussion.
- ***Assignment 3 (80%):** A final essay on a topic that the participant will find or pick from the extensive list of topics in the syllable (5000-7000 words).

The participants are free to select the topics that they prefer to focus on as long as they are related to the main themes of the course. Each week, a participant will be given the chance to present their chosen topic that will be briefly discussed during the lecture.

***Assignment 3 (final essay) is only for the participants who would like to receive 6 ECTS.**

Organization of the course

- The reading materials appear in different editions. It is up to the participants to search for the editions that they plan to focus on in their research.
- The course provides the participants with the chance to have a better understanding of feminist theories and the ways in which they can be put into practice in arts and literature.
- This course is intended to familiarize the participants with many feminist theorists, poets, artists, and filmmakers in an insightful and interesting manner that enhances their creative and analytical skills.
- The final papers need to expose critical and creative thinking and analytical skills. Plagiarism should be avoided at all costs.
- The deadline for the submission of the final papers is **August 20, 2023**.

Outline of the Course Schedule

Week 1	Introduction
Week 2	An Overview of Feminist Philosophy, Positionality, Intersectionality, and Sexual Politics
Week 3	The Dynamics of Power Relations and Violence against Women
Week 4	Mothering and Mother-Daughter relationships in Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Contexts
Week 5	New Feminist ways of Re-reading Literary Discourses and Seeing Cinematic Productions
Week 6	Consciousness-Raising: Sexuality, Morality, religion, and the State in Women's Memoirs
Week 7	Girlhood, Womanhood, Heterosexuality and Housework in Cross-Cultural Contexts
Week 8	French Feminism, Écriture féminine and Writing the Female Body
Week 9	Rereading Language in Women's Songs
Week 10	Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Female Nudity in Women's Fine Arts.
Week 11	Queering Bodies and Identities: Critiques of Queer and Gender Politics

Week 12	Feminist and Lesbian Critiques of “Beauty Practices” and “Transfemininity”
Week 13	Is it Possible to Transcend Patriarchal Fairy Tales and Archetypal Mythology?
Week 14	Re-reading Feminist and Lesbian Poetry and Photography from a Cross-Cultural Perspective.
Week 15	The Nomadic Gaze and Border Theory

Syllabus / Reading List

Week 1: The topic of the first week here. Example: Fundamentals of oil, gas, and mining: industry considerations and policy implications

- Introducing myself to the participants and exchanging views with them about their motivation behind joining the course and their reasons for joining it.
- Discussing the syllabus with the participants and reviewing it with them.
- Presenting a brief introduction about the waves of feminism and the development of women’s ways of self-expression.
- Dividing the assignments among the participants. Each week, a student is expected to present a brief PowerPoint Presentation about any feminist text.

Reading and analyzing selected extracts from Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex, 1953:

- Part IV: The Formative Years.
- Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique. 1963. (Chapter Two).

Week 2: An Overview of Feminist Philosophy, Positionality, Intersectionality, and Sexual Politics

Reading and analyzing selected chapters or extracts from:

- Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.”
- Bell hooks, Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, 1984. (Chapter One 15 pages).

Optional Readings to be discussed during the lecture:

- Interviews with Kate Millett about Sexual Politics, 1968.
- Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, 1973. Chapter 7: "The Bonds of Freedom" pp. 132-155 (23 pages)
- Reflections on Deborah Kampmeier's film "Virgin."
- Sylvia Plath's "Daddy."

Week 3: The Dynamics of Power Relations and Violence against Women

Reading materials:

- Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others." No. 20 (Winter, 1991-1992), pp. 5-32 (28 pages). Published By: University of Minnesota Press. (Available online)
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1988. (Available online).

Reflections on:

- Lucille Clifton, "homage to my hips." (1987).
- Rosem Morton, "A Photographer Charts A Journey Through The Fallout Of Her Rape: The Picture Show: NPR"

Week 4: Mothering and Mother-Daughter relationships in Interdisciplinary Cross-Cultural Contexts

Reflections on:

- Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, 1978.
- Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," 1980.
- Adrienne Rich, "Of Woman Born." (Introduction).
- Carol Ann Duffy, "The Way My Mother Speaks".
- Kamala Das, "My Mother at Sixty-Six." (Indian).
- Louise Glück, "Brown Circle."
- Mona Hatoum, "Measures of Distance." 1988. (Palestinian).
- Chantal Anne Akerman, "No Home Movie." (Belgian).

Week 5: New Feminist ways of Re-reading Literary Discourses and Seeing Cinematic Productions

Course materials:

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 1972.
- Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", written in 1973 and published in 1975.

Reflections on some chapters and scenes in the films:

- Ismat Chughtai, "Lihaaf/The Quilt," 1942. (Urdu short story & film).
- Patricia Highsmith, *The Price of Salt/ Carol*, 1952. (Novel & film).

Week 6: Consciousness-Raising: Sexuality, Morality, religion, and the State in Women's Memoirs

Reading materials:

- Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*, 1989.
- Chapter 5: Consciousness - Raising, pp 83-106

A selected chapter from one of the following memoirs:

- Halide Edib Adıvar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib*. (Turkish).
- Nawal El Saadawi, *Memoirs of a woman doctor*. (Egyptian).

Week 7: Girlhood, Womanhood, Heterosexuality and Housework in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Reading materials:

- Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," 1980

Choose one of the following texts to read or to compare:

- Silvia Federici, "Wages Against Housework" 1975.
- Ellin Wägner, "One Hand Only." (Swedish).
- Maria Edgeworth, "The Purple Jar." (Irish).
- Jamaica Kincaid, "Girl" (Antiguan-American).

- Eunice de Souza, "Sweet Sixteen." (Indian).
- Charlotte Anna Perkins Gilman, "The Housewife." (American).
- Anne Sexton, "Housewife."
- ADA LIMÓN, "Wife."
- Judy Brady, "I Want a Wife," 1971.
- Alice Guy: "The Consequences of Feminism," 1906. (French filmmaker).

Week 8: French Feminism, Écriture féminine and Writing the Female Body

Reading materials:

- Luce Irigaray, This Sex Which Is Not One, 1977.
- Helene Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," 1976.
- Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," 1984.

Choose one of the following to read:

- Adrienne Rich, "The Floating Poem."
- Audre Lorde, "Recreation."
- Helena Almeida, Portuguese artist. "How Helena Almeida's Body Became Her Artwork."

Week 9: Rereading Language in Women's Songs

Reading materials:

- Julia Kristeva, "The Bounded Text." Desire in Language: Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art. Blackwell, Oxford, 1980, pp. 36–63.

Choose three of the following songs to focus on:

- The Slits
- Not a typical girl: Viv Albertine interview
- No Doubt - Just A Girl
- Nina Simone, "Four Women." (Song)
- Nina Simone: "To Be Free." (Interview).
- Helen Reddy, "I am Woman." (Song).
- Vivir Quitana, "Canción sin miedo/ Song without Fear." (Mexico)



Week 10: Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Female Nudity in Women's Fine Arts

Reading materials:

- Ponterotto, Diane (2016). "Resisting the Male Gaze: Feminist Responses to the "Normalization" of the Female Body in Western Culture," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 17: Iss. 1, Article 10.

Choose Three of the following to discuss:

- Cecile Walton, "Romance," 1920. (Scottish).
- Harmonia Rosales, "The Creation of God." 2017. (Afro-Cuban American).
- Alice Neel, "Self-Portrait," 1984. (American).
- Frida Kahlo, "Henry Ford Hospital 1932." (Mexican).
- Why are there so few female artists?

Week 11: Queering Bodies and Identities: Critiques of Queer and Gender Politics

Reading materials:

- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990. (Any chapter you prefer).
- Nikki Sullivan, *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory: Queer a Question of Being or a Question of Doing*, Chapter 3 (pp. 37-57).

Optional Readings:

- – Lesbian Not Queer – – Get The L Out UK
- o Identity Politics and Elite Capture - Boston Review
- o Analyzing "gender performativity" in Celine Sciamma's film "TOMBOY."



Week 12: Feminist and Lesbian Critiques of “Beauty Practices” and “Transfemininity”

Reading materials:

- Sheila Jeffreys, “Queer theory and violence against women,” 1999.
- Jeffreys, *Beauty and Misogyny: Harmful Cultural Practices in the West*, 2005. (Chapter 1: THE `GRIP OF CULTURE ON THE BODY'* Beauty practices as women's agency or women's subordination).

Optional readings:

- Marge Piercy, "Barbie Doll."
- Foot Binding and the Standard of Beauty – open ended social studies

Week 13: Is it Possible to Transcend Patriarchal Fairy Tales and Archetypal Mythology?

Reading materials:

- Alicia Ostriker, “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking.” *Signs*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Autumn, 1982), pp. 68-90.
- Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House.” (1984).

Choose two of the following poems to discuss;

- Anne Sexton, “Consorting with Angels.”
- Anne Sexton, “Cinderella.”
- Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus.”

Week 14: Re-reading Feminist and Lesbian Poetry and Photography from a Cross-Cultural Perspective

Reading materials:

- Maya Angelou, “Still I Rise,” 1978.
- Audre Lorde, “Sisters in Arms,” 1997.
- Adrienne Rich. *Twenty-One Love Poems* [(The Floating Poem, Unnumbered)].
- Pat Parker, “My Lover is a Woman.”
- JEB (Joan E. Biren), *EYE TO EYE: PORTRAITS OF LESBIANS*, 1979.
- 'We wanted people to see that we exist': the photographer who recorded lesbian life in the 70s | Photography | The Guardian



Week 15: The Nomadic Gaze and Border Theory

Reading materials:

- Rosi Braidotti, "Writing as a Nomadic Subject." *Comparative Critical Studies* 11.2–3 (2014): 163–184 Edinburgh University Press DOI: 10.3366/ccs.2014.0122
- Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 1987. (Select one chapter to read).

Select Three out of the following to discuss:

- Lydia Mendoza, a Mexican-American guitarist and singer.
- Frida Kahlo's 'The Two Fridas': Great Art Explained.

Reading Extracts from

- Warsan Shire, *Bless the Daughter Raised By a Voice in Her Head*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2022.
- "Home" pp. 8-9
- Eavan Boland, "Mother Ireland."