**Eng. 285 – Images of Women in Film and Literature**

***Bad Girls***

Fall 2017 Prof. Gwen Bergner T/Th 2:30-3:45

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Bad girls—who are they and what do they do? This course will explore gender roles and the politics of representation by way of the category “bad girls.” It seems that women who refuse the feminine norm have long populated literature and cultural representation in types such as the femme fatale, shrew, siren, or Lolita. However, these types often represent a cultural (masculine?) fantasy of the outlaw woman—one that is actually in keeping with many conventional notions of women as sexual seductress or dominating woman. These types often reinforce conventional gender norms by making an example of the women who rebel (they die; they’re killed; they lose their boyfriends and their reputations).

We’ll look at some famous examples of these conventional types of female outlaws. Then we’ll focus on representations of unapologetic bad girls as written by women in film, literature, and popular culture. These characters that buck the norms of gender will help us examine issues of gender identification, the meanings of femininity, and the possibilities for changing the rules of the game. We will try to figure out what makes a woman “bad” and why. How does the exception to the rules of femininity reveal how the norm is shaped and sustained? And what are the possibilities for refuting the model, subverting it, manipulating it, and changing it altogether?



Books

Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* Films

Kate Chopin, *The Awakening Gilda*

Roxane Gay, *Bad Feminist Thelma and Louise*

Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy*

Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You*

**Course Text Availability**

* Books are available at local bookstores unless otherwise noted.
* Films will be watched in class or streamed through library eReserves.
* Other required readings, assignment guidelines, and contextual documents are on eCampus.
* You are required to bring books and eCampus readings to class.

Note: The bookstores will return to distributors all unsold books, so buy books before midterms if you want to get them locally. Alternately, you can borrow them from a library or purchase them online. Please be sure to get them before they are due for class discussion.

**English Program Goals**—This course is designed to help students achieve the following goals:

Upon completing a B.A. in English, a student should be able to:

* Interpret texts within diverse literary, cultural, and historical contexts.
  + Identify genre conventions and analyze their effects.
  + Identify and analyze effects of complexity or ambiguity.
  + Locate texts in social / economic / political / literary history.
  + Connect texts to other literary or cultural texts.
* Demonstrate a general knowledge of the social & structural aspects of the English language.
* Demonstrate a range of contextually effective writing strategies.

**Learning Outcomes**—By the end of the course, a student should be able to:

* Define major terms of analysis related to historical gender norms.
* Articulate how gender norms have impacted the conventions of women’s writing.
* Analyze intersections of race, class, and gender in examples of women’s literature.
* Identify conventions of representing gender in classic/mainstream Hollywood cinema.
* Construct unified, coherent, and supported written paragraphs of textual analysis that:
  + Apply gender terms and concepts.
  + Analyze texts closely and critically.
  + Demonstrate mastery of the mechanics of quotation and citation.
  + Synthesize and cite primary and secondary sources to support textual analysis.

**Course Work Points**

Discussion Questions (10 @ 2 pts. ea.) 20

Analytic Paragraphs (6 paragraphs @ 10 pts. each) 60

Gender Terms & Concepts Test 20

Final Project Mini-Essay and Slam Performance 40

**Total 140**

Grade Scale\*

A 126-140 pts. B 112-125 pts. C 98-124 pts. D 84-97 pts. F <84 pts.

*\*You must complete all assignments and attend class regularly for a passing grade.*

Participation

In classes of this small size, learning comes primarily from the quality of discussion rather than from lectures. This means that students bear a responsibility to themselves and each other to attend class and participate meaningfully in discussion and in-class work. We will be analyzing course readings closely and referring to specific passages in detail, so you must **bring the texts for discussion to each class** either in hard copy (print them) or electronic format (yes: laptops and tablets; **no: cell phones**). One point is deducted from your course total if you do not bring assigned texts to class on a given day. No texting, Web surfing, or FBing in class, please.

Gender Analysis Terms & Concepts Test

This open-book, short-answer, take-home test covers the readings and discussion from the first weeks of class; it will establish terms and concepts that we’ll use throughout the course.

Discussion Questions (DQ)

On ten (10) occasions over the course of the semester, you will submit two (2) questions on the reading for that day. If you are absent on a DQ due date, you must submit a full analytic paragraph on the reading you missed the next day that you are in class. Each assignment is worth two points of your final grade. I read these assignments carefully and use them to shape class discussion, but they are not graded. You get full credit for each assignment you complete on time and according to guidelines (including bringing the reading[s] to class).

Analytic Paragraphs

Over the course of the semester, you will write six (6) analytic paragraphs, one on each of the primary texts. Each paragraph is about one page, double-spaced, and incorporates quotations from the primary and a secondary text using proper citation style. These assignments strengthen paragraph structure and close textual analysis (see learning outcomes above).

Grading Criteria for Analytic Paragraphs:

* A complete paragraph that engages with a difficult, original, or complex question.
* A clear thesis, which is suitably complex and provides a blueprint for the paragraph.
* Smooth and grammatical integration of primary and secondary sources.
* Evidence from your primary text (quotation and paraphrase) to support your interpretation.
* Consistent use of parenthetical page citation for quotations and proper punctuation of titles.
* Use of terms and concepts from a secondary source to advance your analysis.
* Paragraph unity and coherence.
* A polished paragraph free of grammatical and surface errors.

Final Project: Prose Poem/Essay and Slam

Each student will choose one essay from Roxane Gay’s book of essays *Bad Feminist*, write a spoken word prose poem or essay that engages with Gay’s ideas and riffs on her/his own critical and personal relationship to the essay’s topic. Each student will “perform” her/his essay for the class (5-7 min.) and submit a written version, as well. Students will also write and submit a reflection that explains how the prose poem/essay achieves the assignment’s goals.

* *Additional guidelines will be provided for all graded course work.*
* *All due dates are noted on the syllabus below.*

**The Writing Studio** in Colson G02 is available for writing assistance. To make an appointment, drop in, call: 304.293.5788, or go online: <https://wvu.campus.eab.com/>.

Submission of Assignments

1. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified (in bold) on the syllabus.

2. Assignment guidelines specify whether to submit to eCampus and/or in hard copy (not email).

3. Upload word processed documents to eCampus; do not type them into eCampus directly.

4. Double space all written work, use 12-point font, number pages.

**Policies**

Attendance and Late Policy

Consistent class attendance helps students succeed academically and enriches our class dynamics. Therefore, attendance is required. You are granted **five** absences without penalty. Use these for school trips, illness, family emergencies, etc. You do not need to clear these absences with me. Each additional absence costs you two points from your total for the class. More than nine absences triggers an automaticF for the course. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for graded and ungraded assignments due in the next class and for finding out whether changes were made to the syllabus or schedule. If you have an emergency or serious health problem during the semester, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611). The Dean of Student Life will communicate with me and authorize arrangements for you.

At the beginning of each class we will discuss upcoming assignments, due dates, and questions on graded work. Therefore, it is important that you arrive on time. Everyone has an emergency now and then, so you get **three** late arrivals without penalty. Additional late arrivals count as half a class absence and cost you one point from your class total.

Late Work

No late assignments will be accepted unless you make prior arrangements with me.

Academic Integrity

The integrity of the classes offered by any academic institution solidifies the foundation of its mission and cannot be sacrificed to expediency, ignorance, or blatant fraud. Therefore, I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the

West Virginia University Academic Catalog at: http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification/#academicintegritytext.

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Inclusivity

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion.

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Accessibility Services (293-6700). If a Day of Special Concern conflicts with a test or assignment due date, please notify me in advance to make alternative arrangements.

For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>.

Sale or Distribution of Course Material

All course materials, including lectures, class notes, quizzes, exams, handouts, presentations, and other materials provided to students for this course are protected intellectual property. As such, the unauthorized purchase or sale of these materials may result in disciplinary sanctions under the Campus Student Code.

Sexual Misconduct and Resources

West Virginia University does not tolerate sexual misconduct, including harassment, stalking, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, or relationship violence [BOG Policy 44]. It is important for you to know that there are resources available if you or someone you know needs assistance. You may speak to a member of university administration, faculty, or staff, but keep in mind that they have an obligation to report the incident to the Title IX Coordinator. If you want to speak to someone who is permitted to keep your disclosure confidential, please seek assistance from the **Carruth Center**, **304-293-9355** or **304-293-4431** (24-hour hotline), and locally within the community at the **Rape and Domestic Violence Information Center** (RDVIC), **304-292-5100** or **304-292-4431** (24-hour hotline). For more information please consult WVU policies at <http://titleix.wvu.edu>.

**Syllabus** (subject to change, if necessary)—readings and assignments are due on the day listed.

**Week 1**

Th 8/17 Introduction

**Week 2**

T 8/22 Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood” (eC)

Th 8/24 Contextual Documents for *The Awakening* (eC)

**DQ #1**

**Week 3**

T 8/29 Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (through Ch. XII)

Th 8/31 Chopin (through Ch. XXV)

**DQ #2**

**Week 4**

T 9/5 Chopin (to end)

Th 9/7 **Par. #1 and Gender Terms and Concepts Test**

**Week 5**

T 9/12 Rita Mae Brown, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (Part I)

Th 9/14 Brown (Part II)

**DQ #3**

**Week 6**

T 9/19 Brown (Parts III and IV)

Th 9/21 Esther Saxey, “Lesbian Bastard Heroes and the Uses of Illegitimacy for

Modern Lesbian Fiction and Identity” (eC)

**DQ #4**

**Week 7**

T 9/26 **Par. #2**

Th 9/28 Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (“Poor Visitor,” “Mariah,” “The Tongue”)

**DQ #5**

**Week 8**

T 10/3 Kincaid (“Cold Heart,” “Lucy”)

Th 10/5 Jennifer Nichols, “’Poor Visitor’: Mobility as/of Voice in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy*”

**DQ #6**

**Week 9**

T 10/10 **Par. #3**

*Gilda* (110 min., watch in class)

Th 10/12 *Gilda* (cont., watch in class)

**Week 10**

T 10/17Mary Ann Doane, “*Gilda*: Epistemology as Striptease” (eC)

**DQ #7**

Th 10/19 **Par. #4**

**Week 11**

T 10/24 Celeste Ng, *Everything I Never Told You* (Ch. 1-4)

Th 10/26 Ng (Ch. 5-8)

**Week 12**

T 10/31 Ng (Ch. 9-12)

Listen to interview with Ng on National Public Radio (eC)

**DQ #8**

Th 11/2 **Par. #5**

**Week 13**

T 11/ 7 *Thelma & Louise* (130 min., stream from eReserves)

Joe Zentner, “Monument Valley: Filmmaking and Myth” (eC)

Reviews and articles on *Thelma & Louise* (eC)

**DQ #9**

Th 11/9 **Par. #6**

**Week 14**

T 11/14 Roxane Gay, Introduction and “Peculiar Benefits,” from *Bad Feminist*

**DQ #10**

Th 11/16 Final Project Workshop

**Thanksgiving Break!**

**Week 15**

T 11/28 Gay (pages TBA)

Spoken Essays

Th 11/30 Gay (pages TBA)

Spoken Essays

**Week 16**

T 12/5 Gay (pages TBA)

Spoken Essays

**Due: Final Project—Spoken Word + Reflection**