

LT345 “Intersectional Feminisms and/in Contemporary Literature”

Instructor: Kathy-Ann Tan, Email: k.tan@berlin.bard.edu

Class times: Fridays, 9am – 12:15pm (online)

Zoom link (same every week):

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85882790783?](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85882790783?pwd=ZzJwMjdTMndtejJYUkZUcGMyaUp4QT09)

[pwd=ZzJwMjdTMndtejJYUkZUcGMyaUp4QT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85882790783?pwd=ZzJwMjdTMndtejJYUkZUcGMyaUp4QT09)

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course centers the writings of Black and brown feminists that speak to the importance of differentiating between the lived experiences – and hence social realities – of women of color and white (and white-passing) women. In the first half of the course, we will discuss the works of Audre Lorde, bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldúa whose writings and collaborative literary projects (such as the Combahee River Collective and the Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press) continue to be highly influential on the work of writers and artists today who seek to engage in a practice of intersectional and transformative justice. In the second half of the course, we will turn to contemporary works of poetry, essayistic writing and narrative fiction that develop, queer and expand on the practice of intersectional feminism(s) in the literary realm.

Course Texts:

bell hooks. *Feminism is for everybody: passionate politics* (2000) * literary essays

Audre Lorde. *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* (2007) *literary essays

Gloria Anzaldúa. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. * literary semi-autobiography

Sara Ahmed. *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) *literary essays

Kimberly Crenshaw’s Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”. (1993) essay

Angela Davis. *Women, Race and Class* (1981) * literary essays

Danez Smith. *Don’t Call Us Dead: Poems* (2017) * poetry

++Warsan Shire. *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* (2022)* poetry

++Ocean Vuong. *Time Is a Mother* (2022).* poetry

++Nafissa Thompson-Spires. *Heads of the Colored People* (2018) *short fiction

++Brit Bennett. *The Mothers* (2016) *novel

++ The last four texts are to be purchased. The rest of the reading material will be made available electronically.

Requirements

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

Assignments

This course has two essay assignments: one mid-semester and one end of semester essay (**5000 – 7000 words in total**). It also has informal assignments, including giving presentations on readings and writing reading responses and/or discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings. Since this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class is a required and graded element of the course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Assessment and Grade Breakdown:

Class Participation: 30%
Mid-term essay: 30%
Final Essay: 40%

Essay Deadlines

Mid-term essay: Friday, 27 October 2023, 12 noon CET

Final essay: for graduating students: Wednesday, 13 December 2023, 5pm CET
for all other students: Friday, 22 December 2023, 12 noon CET

All essays are to be submitted electronically via email: (k.tan@berlin.bard.edu).

Course Schedule

Week 1 – September 8. Introduction to Intersectional Feminism.

Reading: Kimberly Crenshaw's essay "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color".

Topic(s) for Discussion: What is intersectional feminism and why is it important?

Week 2 – September 15. The “beginnings” of Intersectional Feminism (Black radical feminism) in the USA

Reading: Documentary excerpt on the Combahee River Collective and excerpt from Audre Lorde's *Your Silence Will Not Protect You* (2007)

Topic(s) for Discussion: Early organizing of Black lesbian feminists, identity politics in the 1970s and 1980s in the US.

Week 3 – September 22. Intersectional Feminism in the 1980s – “challenging white feminism; or, not your écriture feminine”

Reading: Excerpt from Gloria Anzaldúa. (1987) *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*

Topic(s) for Discussion: writing as a woman of color. being queer. language & discourse.

Week 4 – September 29. The Feminist Killjoy

Reading: Excerpt from Sara Ahmed. *Living a Feminist Life* (2017)

Topic(s) for Discussion: the idea of the feminist killjoy, challenging institutions and patriarchy

Week 5 – October 6. Intersectional Feminism and Abolition

Reading: Excerpt from Angela Davis. *Women, Race and Class* (1981)

Topic(s) for Discussion: Intertwined histories of the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements in the US.

Week 6 – October 13. Intersectional Feminism in the 2000s

Reading: Excerpt from bell hooks. *Feminism is for everybody: passionate politics* (2000), and "The Oppositional Gaze".

Topic(s) for Discussion: Feminism as rooted in everyday lived experience, "decolonizing" white feminism

Week 7 – October 20. Intersectional Feminism in Poetry, Part 1

Reading: Warsan Shire. *Bless the Daughter Raised by a Voice in Her Head* (2022)

Topic(s) for Discussion: migration, Black womanhood, trauma, healing and resilience

Week 8 – October 27. No class (Fall Break)

Mid Term essays due: Friday, 27 October 2023, 12 noon CET

Week 9 – November 3. Intersectional Feminism in Poetry, Part 2

Reading: Danez Smith. *Don't Call Us Dead: Poems* (2017)

Topic(s) for Discussion: Racism, homophobia and police brutality in the US.

Week 10 - November 10. Intersectional Feminism in Poetry, Part 3

Reading: Ocean Vuong. *Time Is a Mother* (2022) and excerpt from video interview with Ocean Vuong, "On Vulnerability as Power".

Topic(s) for Discussion: being a queer migrant, forced migration, cultural 'heritage', identity, loss, the meaning of family.

Week 11 – November 17. Intersectional Feminism in Fiction.

Reading: Brit Bennett. *The Mothers* (2016), first half of the book.

Topic(s) for Discussion: history of the great migration, cultural belonging and identity.

Week 12 – November 24. Intersectional Feminism in Fiction.

Reading: Brit Bennett. *The Mothers* (2016), second half of the book.

Topic(s) for Discussion: community, inheritance, family and lineage.

Week 13 – December 1. Guest talk by Nnenna Onuoha on her work as a Ghanaian Nigerian filmmaker, artist, writer and researcher based in Berlin who engages with the intricacies of narratives of cultural memory and forgetting, archives and display, histories of colonialism and present-day realities of diaspora as well as practices of care
www.nnennaonuoha.com

Week 14 – December 8. Intersectional Feminism in Short Fiction

Reading: Nafissa Thompson-Spires. *Heads of the Colored People* (2018), first half. Topic(s) for Discussion: the #metoo movement, systemic racism, police

Week 15 – December 15. Intersectional Feminism in Short Fiction

Reading: Nafissa Thompson-Spires. *Heads of the Colored People* (2018), second half. Topic(s) for Discussion: "double consciousness" (WEB Du Bois), citizenship and belonging, trauma and healing

Final essays due: for graduating students: Wednesday, 13 December 2023, 5pm CET

For all other students: Friday, 22 December 2023, 12 noon CET

Week 16 – No Class (Completion week)