

WS 540 Women of Color Writing Culture

University Hall 66

Professor Wanzo

Office: University Hall 113C

Office Hours: Mondays 1:00-3:00

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Course Description:

Life stories are not only entertaining narratives. Autobiographies and memoirs can serve as ideological touchstones for larger political projects or messages. Quite often, they have been used as evidence—of religious conversion or the wrongs done to an individual who is representative of a larger population. Life stories are clearly important politically—why else would politicians focus so often on their origins, that of their families, and their successes? The stories they tell about their lives are typically designed to demonstrate both their exceptionalism and representativeness. Thus a politician might suggest that she rose to success with few advantages, demonstrating her atypical character, but despite her exceptionalism she also serves as an ideal representative of the nation.

The life stories of women of color very self-consciously negotiate this relationship between the exceptional and representative, but through their cross-cultural experiences they often challenge the idea of nationalism. In this course we'll read the life stories of women of color and see how these stories speak to larger political projects and social issues. Students will complete the following objectives in this course:

- Be exposed to a variety of different life stories written by women of color
- Learn about the life narrative as a particular literary art form
- Learn tools for conducting literary analyses

Required Texts

Faith Adiele *Meeting Faith: The Forest Journals of a Black Buddhist Nun*

Meena Alexander *Fault Lines*

Marie Arana *American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood*

Mary Crow Dog *Lakota Woman*

Doris Pilkington *Rabbit Proof Fence*

Marjane Satrapi *Persepolis*

Ayaan Hirsi Ali *Infidel*

Readings posted on Carmen

Course Requirements

Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Class Participation	30%
Paper	30%

Writing For the Course:

Exams:

You will complete two Take Home essay exams, in which you will be tested on your ability to synthesize the material from the readings into essays that discuss form and content. While the final exam will be cumulative, it will not be longer than the Mid-Term. For each exam you will have a choice of four questions and will answer two. All essays in the course are evaluated on a point system: Grammar: 20; Thesis: 20; Structure: 20; Knowledge of Material: 20; Originality of Thought: 20.

Final Essays:

You have two final paper options:

1.) Choose a memoir by a woman of color not read in class (you must inform me of your choice two weeks before the paper is due) and analyze the text through one or two of the themes we have explored in class. Some research will be required in order to provide appropriate cultural context for understanding the text.

2.) Write an essay about a moment of your life that speaks to some larger cultural issue. This is also a research paper, and you will be required to have four facts (and citations) per page. The goal here is to do more than recount an incident from your memory. The narrative should teach the reader something new about history, culture, and/or ideology.

Both essays should be 7-8 pages, double spaced, 12-inch font (Times New Roman) with 1 inch margins. You can use either MLA or Chicago as a citation method.

Class Participation:

This is a small seminar, therefore class participation is ESSENTIAL to the success of the class. I require you to post a brief, substantive question or response on CARMEN (<https://carmen.osu.edu/>) about the readings. You will only write 1-3 sentences/questions for each class. Each question should refer to a place in the text. Cite the page number so that we can go to that point in the text in class. You must post **by 8:30 a.m. on the day of class**. I will read these responses/questions prior to every class and use them as prompts for class discussion. Your attendance grade is tied to these responses—but someone who posts but does not attend class will not receive a grade for the day. If you have technological difficulties you can bring the question to class in writing and give it to me at the beginning of class.

You can miss two classes without penalty. Students with **excused** absences (doctor's note, death in the family) can write a **2 page** response to make up the work. A missed response/absence is a 0 for that day. If for some reason you have technological difficulties posting one day, bring your question to class. There will be 17-18 participation grades of 100, 80, or 0. The difference between an 80 and 100 is the substance of the question—typically students only receive an 80 if they ask a general question that does not refer to a moment in the text. In past classes, students have easily earned 100 points for posting.

As opposed to asking students to do presentations in this class I will occasionally require students to do extra assignments for class. For example, when we read *Persepolis*, I want you to bring in an image (or for those of you who are creative, create one), that represents your life. Completing these assignments are also important for your participation grades.

Policies and Procedures

Attendance and Participation:

I expect you to attend every class, but you can have two unexcused absences without penalty. In cases of illness, family emergency, or excused extracurricular events such as a team sport activity or job interview, we can make arrangements for you to receive your participation grade, or you can simply treat such absences as unexcused. Again, you can miss an entire week of class without it affecting your grade. Please note the requirements for the participation grade above. I AM NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY MATERIAL THAT YOU MISS IN CLASS. Students often email me after missing class and ask, “Did I miss anything?” OF COURSE you missed something. Make a friend in class and get the material. I will not give any lecture notes or produce any handouts that you are not in class to receive if you have an unexcused absence.

On Writing:

Learning how to write is a continuous exercise. As you work on your writing for this course, I encourage you to come to me for help. You are also fortunate to have a Writing Center at OSU that aids students of all skill levels. Please take advantage of the free tutoring if you feel the need. The OSU Writing Center is located in 475 Mendenhall Laboratory, on the south end of the oval. Their phone number is 688-4291, and their website is cstw.ohio-state.edu/writing_center/index.htm.

Plagiarism:

The following is my department’s expanded statement of The Ohio State University’s policy on plagiarism:

As defined by University Rule 3335-31-02, plagiarism is “the representation of another’s works or ideas as one’s own; it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas.” Plagiarism is one of the most serious offenses that can be committed in an academic community; as such, it is the obligation of this department and its instructors to report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. After the report is filed, a hearing takes place and if the student is found guilty, the possible punishment ranges from failing the class to suspension or expulsion from the university. Although the existence of the Internet makes it relatively easy to plagiarize, it also makes it even easier for instructors to find evidence of plagiarism. It is obvious to most teachers when a student turns in works that is not his or her own and plagiarism search engines make documenting the offense very simple. You should always cite your sources (I can help you with this if you are unfamiliar with proper styles of documentation). Always ask questions **before** you turn in an assignment if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism. Always see your TA or professor if you are

having difficulty with an assignment. To preserve the integrity of OSU as an institution of higher learning, to maintain your own integrity, and to avoid jeopardizing your future, **DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 33356-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office of Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

Schedule

Adaptation (Assimilation or Violence to the Body?)

March 24 Margaret Cho *I'm the One That I Want*

March 26 *Lakota Woman*
Chapters 1-6
“Autobiographical Subjects” Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson

March 31 *Lakota Woman* Conclusion

April 2 *Lakota Woman* (film)

April 7 *Rabbit Proof Fence*
“Autobiographical Acts” Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson

April 9 *Rabbit Proof Fence* (film)

Assimilation (Cultural Fusion or Cultural Confusion?)

- April 14 *American Chica* 1-7
 “Experience” Joan W. Scott
- April 16 *American Chica* Conclusion
 “Immigrant Autobiography” Sau-ling Cynthia Wong
- April 21 *Fault Lines* 1-110
- April 23 *Fault Lines* 111-203
(Take Home Mid-Term Distributed)
- April 28 *Fault Lines* Conclusion
 “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, and Resistance” Sidonie
 Smith
**Participation Exercise: (Student should choose one sentence from the
 book that they find particularly provocative, elegant, and/or
 beautiful)**
- Acculturation: (Meeting Self, Losing and Finding Faith)**
- April 30 **Mid-Term Due in my Office between 9:30 and 11:30**
- May 5 *Meeting Faith* 1-6
 “Autobiography, Ethnography, History”
- May 7 *Meeting Faith* 7-11
**Participation Exercise: (If you were to pull out a text that you would
 use as an epigraph for your memoir or to explain a moment in your
 life, what would it be?)**
- May 12 *Meeting Faith* Conclusion
- May 14 *Persepolis* 1-153
- May 16 **Papers Due by 4:00 in my mailbox in the AAAS office in 486
 University Hall**
- May 19 *Persepolis* Conclusion
**Participation Exercise: (Bring in an image that represents a moment
 of your life or you. For those of you who are creative, you can create
 and image. Following Satrapi, try to produce an image that speaks to
 not only who you are, but to something larger than yourself).**
- May 21 *Infidel* (TBA pending paperback release)
 Film *Submission*
 “Autobiography Manifestos” Sidonie Smith

May 26 (No Classes)

May 28 *Infidel* (TBA pending paperback release)
Course Evaluations

June 3 Tuesday Final Exams due in my office between 9:30 and 11:30