2014

205-04/08 Literature and the Moral Imagination: Gender and Violence

Carol Winkelmann
winkelmannc@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/english_syllabi_fall_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/english_syllabi_fall_2014/60

This Restricted-Access Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the English Syllabi 2014 at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Syllabi Fall 2014 by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.
English 205 is a core curriculum course within the Ethics/Religion and Society Rubric. In this section, we will read, talk, and write about the ways in which most females and many males in our culture and across the globe are disproportionately affected by gender discrimination and violence. Some particular topics will be theories of gender violence, sex trafficking, pornography, child abuse, self-inflicted violence, and the layering of discrimination and violence due to race, class, age, religion, body type, gender identity, and sexual orientation. These demographic intersections are significant to the degree, the experience, of discrimination and violence.

Our emphasis will be on the ways in which male-perpetrated violence affects women and girl children while understanding, however, that most male violence actually targets other males. The violence extends, in part, from gender stereotypes that negatively affect both females and males. There are also female-perpetrators and much physical violence/neglect of children extends from mothers and other female caretakers. Finally, there is the complicity issue. All sexes engage in silent complicity or even active participation in the cultural causes and perpetuation of gendered violence though they may not be striking physical blows. Such nuances are foundational to our course, but our emphasis will be the staggering amount of violence directed at females and girl children.

Discrimination and violence happens both on the individual level and on the structural level; that is, violence extends from interpersonal and institutional relations. We’ll focus on the language practices that make this possible—including word choices, metaphors, stereotypes, generic attributes, the formation of discourses through ideology and intertextuality, and the appearance of patterns of oppression or domination across multiple institutions or contexts. We’ll consider the meaning of identity and subjectivity, the absence of language (that is, the formation of absent referents), the invisibility of some kinds of experience, and the erasure of others.

Finally, we’ll investigate the possibilities of resistance, reclaimed agency, and social change. Our aim (as an E/RS course) will be to learn about gendered violence in order to take action for positive social change on both individual and structural levels.

Learning Objectives

In this section, students will be expected to gain introductory competency in 5 learning objectives. Engaged students will demonstrate the ability:

- To recognize and analyze themes about gendered violence in texts & other cultural artifacts;
- To identify and discuss language genres, techniques, and rhetorical strategies;
- To compose clear, critical, and well-organized essays about course materials;
- To integrate perspectives from theology, philosophy, or other disciplines into textual analyses; and
- To examine religious/ethical and moral issues in their societal contexts.

Reading

Our course is reading intensive. In addition to a multitude of readings on Canvas, our course material will include:


My suggestion is to read these three works as soon as you are able. Do not wait for them to spring up on the schedule and catch you by surprise. There is not a lot of time between the assignment of a reading in one course module (or unit), the dates to complete assignments related to it, and the beginning of a new module with its own readings.

**Informed Regular Participation**

To receive a better than average grade (i.e., average = “C”) in participation, you must contribute daily to large group discussion. To be clear: Your participation grade will be based on contributions to large class discussions. Only students who speak regularly, and in an informed way, in large group discussions will receive better than an average grade for participation. If you are usually silent in class, you cannot receive a “superior” grade for participation. Please challenge yourself to contribute daily. If it helps you to be called upon to speak in class, please let me know by email. I will make a point to open space for you to speak.

Please know, however, that there are a variety of types of assignments that draw on the different strengths of different students. If you are unusually quiet in class conversations, you will have the opportunity to succeed in a different genre.

Informed contribution means that you try to integrate reading material and discussions into conversation or writing. Personal experience has a very large place in our discourse, but the collective experience derived from our common readings and our previous discussions is especially important.

Finally, you should be respectful of others in word and action whether they agree with you about particular issues. There’s plenty of space for different points of view! In the intense conversations of our course, the one constant is the need for respect or politeness for others.

**Grades**

Your final grade will be based on these items:

- Participation: 20%
- Quizzes (9): 25%
- Assignments (3): 30%
- Team Project (1): 10%
- Final Project: 15%

The evaluation of your contributions are based on these criteria: thoughtfulness, thoroughness, clarity, evidence, and originality. The scale is 12 (A+), 11 (A), 10 (A-), 9 (B+) and so forth. An example calculation is available in the “Grades” folder on Canvas. I would be happy to help you out if you cannot calculate weighted averages.

The assignment grading criteria also are posted in the “Grades” folder on Canvas. The English department final course grading criteria are also posted. These schemes are complementary.

Please take advantage of the opportunity to talk about your performance. The appropriate context for this is in my office or in a pre-arranged setting. It is my policy not to discuss grades or performance in front of other class members. I am available for consultation via email, phone calls, Skype, and office appointments (either during office hours or other arranged times.)

**Other Class Policies**

You are responsible to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of each session. If you have not signed in, you may be counted as absent. If you register late for the course, you are responsible for the sessions you missed before you arrived in class; that is, they count as absences.

Your tardiness or habitually leaving class (e.g., for the restroom or to answer phone) will be noted and deducted from your participation grade. If you arrive after half the class is over, you may not sign the attendance book.

Do remember: Your final grade will be docked a whole letter grade if you miss more than three sessions; that is, more than a week of the course.
When we meet in the classroom, electronic devices should be turned off and put away. Please do not bring or use non-course related material to class, such as homework assignments or reading for other classes. If you use such items, it will be noted and your participation grade will be penalized.

Do not submit papers at my office door and do not submit papers via email. I will not grade papers sent via email unless we have had a prior arrangement. Assignments are to be submitted on Blackboard or by hard copy if requested. Once the due date/time has passed, Blackboard will not allow you to submit your work. I will not accept late papers without documentation (i.e., note from doctor, etc.).

**An Important Note Regarding Our Course**

This course falls under the rubric of the Ethics, Religion and Society core requirement. As such, the basic concern of the course is the representation of moral conflict and moral decision. Moral conflict and decision extend from difficult or provocative issues.

This course deals directly with distressing issues: We read and talk about femicide, child abuse, incest, rape, pornography, sex trafficking, and other unsettling subjects as they are represented in literature and the media. We will talk and write about male-privilege, militarism, and the effects of transnational corporate control of the global economy. We will consider a spectrum of kinds of opposition to the oppression—from linguistic interventions to actual violence. Foundational interests will be ethical ramifications and social change.

The theoretical and methodology approach of our course is critical and feminist. Such angles are challenging and provocative. They can confront our notions about very basic cultural concepts and categories. Sometimes our reading and writing will make us feel vulnerable—men and women alike. Hopefully, our engagement will shake us out of habitual or uncritical ways of thinking. Intellectual growth always involves dis-location. It is not always comfortable, fun, or easy.

Each participant will have her/his own perspective on the issues. This calls for courage, respect, and compassion on our parts as we shape a language of negotiation to discuss issues about which we may ultimately and honorably disagree.

Our goal will not be to persuade others to accept our points of view as their own; instead, our goal will be to persuade others to accept our points of view as worthy of consideration. In keeping with the view of Clifford Geertz, the renowned anthropologist, our first and foremost aim will be "the enlargement of the universe of discourse."

No one feels comfortable with all of the aforementioned topics; however, if you feel distressed or disturbed about the subject and methods of this course, it would be best for you to transfer to another section of ENGL 205. Perhaps it is not the right time in your life to consider the issues. But the community must be able to converse without worrying unduly or unreasonably about sensitivities, as genuine as they may be. To clarify the matter, our community will give due respect and attention to sensitivity; we cannot worry unduly about it. Please think about this carefully before you make your decision to stay.

Your decision to stay in this course indicates that you understand the challenging nature of the material and that you agree the topics are appropriate for your scholarly reflection at this time.
CLASS POLICIES

Please check or initial each policy, then sign and submit this agreement sheet. Policies are detailed on the syllabus and discussed during the first week of the course.

Absences

_____ I understand that a fourth absence will result in the drop of a letter grade from my final grade. Thus, for example, a final course grade of a “B+” will turn into a “C+”.

_____ I understand that if I missed the first session(s) due to late registration (or any other reason), the absence counts.

_____ I understand that I am responsible to sign in each session on the attendance sheet or I may be counted as absent.

_____ I understand that documentation to cover absences must be turned in by the last regular day of the course.

Participation

_____ I understand that the participation grade for this course is based largely on contributions to whole class conversations, not on peer group work or attendance.

_____ I understand that tardiness or habitually leaving class (e.g., for phone calls or restroom) will affect my participation grade negatively.

_____ I understand that using my cell phone or laptop during class will affect my participation grade negatively.

Paper Submissions

_____ I understand that late papers will not be accepted without “official” documentation (e.g. doctor’s note). I will not ask my professor to give me special treatment by exempting me from this policy.

_____ I understand that if I am absent for an extra-curricular event, including team sports, that my assignment must be submitted before the event or at the same time as the rest of the class.

_____ I understand that a late paper is one that is not turned in during class time of its due date.

_____ I understand that my work will not be accepted by email (unless I have a prior agreement with my professor) or under my professor’s door.

_____ I understand that if there is a team assignment(s) in this class, I must collaborate fully. If I do not participate in a manner equitable to others on my team, my individual grade will be penalized.

Print Name:

Sign Name:

Date: