

**VOICES FROM THE GAPS: WRITING AND ART BY WOMEN OF COLOR
WOMEN IN REVOLUTION
ENGL 3351W, SEC. 01
T TH 5:30-7:20, LIND 320**

Instructor: Madhurima Chakraborty

**Office Hours: TWTh 4-5 pm
(and by appointment)**

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RELATED WEB SITES:

E-Reserve: <http://eres.lib.umn.edu/eres/coursepage.aspx?cid=1101>

Uthink Blog: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/chak0036/3351f07/>

Voices from the Gaps: <http://voices.cl.umn.edu>

Class Web Site: <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~chak0036/>

TEXTS REQUIRED:

Available at Coffman Bookstore:

Cliff, Michelle. No Telephone to Heaven. New York: Plume, 1996.

Gladman, Renee. The Activist. San Francisco: Krupskaya, 2003.

Head, Bessie. The Cardinals: With Meditations and Short Stories. Oxford: Heinemann, 1995.

Satrapi, Marjane. Persepolis. New York: Pantheon, 2003.

Readings from Electronic Reserve:

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Voices from the Gaps (VG) is a web-based project that recognizes the work of a transnational community of women artists and writers of color. To that end, this class is associated with the award-winning Web site (<http://voices.cl.umn.edu>) of the same name maintained by the English department here at the University of Minnesota. Part of the class's intention, in fact, is to get work produced by students published on the Web site, thus satisfying dual purposes of continuously enriching the content of the site while simultaneously showcasing the students' academic achievements. For this reason, the content of VG courses changes from semester to semester.

The Fall 2007 section of EngL 3351 concentrates on the idea of Women in Revolution. In an attempt to better understand the direct and indirect roles women have played in armed resistances across the world, this course will examine the overlapping of gender and violence and the subsequent literary representation of such an overlap. We will also look at related themes of race, politics, place etc. The primary texts we read will include works by Bessie Head, Marijane Satrapi, Michelle Cliff, Renee Gladman, Mahasweta Devi, and Zoe Wicomb, among others. We will also read theoretical works and political essays by the likes of Fanon, Mernessi, Spivak, etc in an attempt to better inform our understanding of women in literatures of revolution.

Course work will include the usual array of individually generated essays and in-class work. However, a significant portion of a student's grade will be based on a single, fully developed page on an author that will be produced in collaboration with a small group of other students.

CLASS POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

Promptness and attendance are imperative in a discussion/workshop class. It should go without saying that you should arrive to class on time and well prepared. Tardiness, like sporadic absences, disrupts the class. Don't enter the class more than fifteen minutes after it has begun. Three instances of tardiness counts as one absence. You are only allowed **two absences** without your grade being affected. The **third** absence will start hurting your grade, and according to the rules of CLA, missing more than **two full weeks of class** you may fail the course. If you miss class, you are responsible for getting any assignments and making up any work. Keep in mind that a lot of group workshops and in class work cannot be made up.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Unless it is specifically connected to assigned collaborative work, all work should be individual. Evidence of collusion (working with someone not connected to the class or assignment), plagiarism (use of someone else's published or unpublished words or design without acknowledgement) or multiple submissions (submitting the same paper in different courses) will lead to the university's procedures for dealing with academic dishonesty. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the university's Honor Code.

HARASSMENT

Every student in this class is expected to participate in a responsible and mature manner that enhances education. Any conduct that disrupts the learning process may lead to disciplinary action. For full review of the University's policy on sexual harassment, see:

<http://advisingtools.class.umn.edu/crimson/dependancies/multimedia/cgep081806.pdf>

CONFERENCES

I have scheduled mandatory conferences half-way through the summer for us to talk about your progress in class, etc. Apart from this mandatory meeting, I encourage you to see me during my office hours throughout the semester, especially when you have questions about an assignment, need help with a particular writing problem, want extra feedback on a draft, or have questions about my comments on your work. Of course, we can also correspond via e-mail.

ASSIGNMENTS

CRITIQUE OF NO TELEPHONE TO HEAVEN: 15%

Having viewed and thought about the entries under "critique" on the VG site, you will write a **3-4 page** paper on Michelle Cliff's No Telephone to Heaven fit for submission to the website. At the end of the semester, you may formally submit your essay to VG by turning in a revised draft to me.

BOOK REVIEWS: 15%

Once you have picked an author on whom you will compose your final project, each member of your group will write a **3-4 page individual** review of a second text by the author. In the case of novelists that we are reading, this second text has been ordered for you and is available at Coffman. For authors whose short stories or excerpted works we will be reading, I have alternative works picked out for you. We will read and analyze sample book reviews in order to better understand the form.

[Note: the due dates for book reviews are staggered according to when in the semester we will be reading that particular author. Make sure you keep track of the due date specific to you.]

PRESENTATION: 15%

For part of the time during the weeks we're reading the author your group has picked, your group will be responsible for presenting information, critiques, and leading class discussion. Your presentation is therefore divided into different activities:

- **Formal Presentation:** This presentation will cover a) biographic information including themes, ideas that seem to be important to the author and b) analysis of the second text that the class is not reading. This presentation should be seen as a helping and being helped by the other assignments (author page, book review) that you will have to do.
- **Blog work 1:** Immediately after your presentation, submit an abridged version of the author's biography on the blog. Two days after your presentation, the class should have posted discussion questions on our blog as comments to this biography. Consult and use these questions for your panel.
- **Panel:** Having researched the "context" of the text we're reading for class, your group will form a panel that will a) provide some literary and socio-political insight into the novel. (It is important to remember here that we DO NOT think of a literary work as merely reflecting a socio-political situation, nor should we think of such a situation as being merely the "background" of a text.) b) Having seriously considered the **discussion questions** that were submitted as comments on the blog from the weekend before, generate discussion questions of your own to lead the class into an engaging, thoughtful conversation about the text.
- **Blog work 2:** By two days after your panel, your group should have posted three of what you feel were the most interesting ideas or "**prompts**" that were raised during class discussion. Answers to these (posted as comments) will be 250-300 word "responses essays."

RESPONSE "PAPERS": 10%

During the weeks that other groups are presenting on their authors, you will be responsible for the following work (over keeping up with reading and participating in class discussions):

Blog work 1: Two days after a group has presented, come up with a single discussion question and post it as a comment to the brief biography of the author that should already be up. Structure your questions in such a way that the resultant discussion is interesting and engaging.

Blog work 2: After the group has posted their prompts (two days after their panel), you will comment on any one of these in 250-300 words.

AUTHOR PAGES (IN GROUPS): 40%

This is the final project for your class, and you cannot pass the course if the VG board does not accept your submission. The author pages contain the following sections:

- **Biography & Criticism:** Working in small groups, you will, by the end of the semester, research, write, revise and submit a publishable author entry for the VG website (both electronic version and hard copy), which will include audiovisual materials, biographical and bibliographical information, critical analysis, and online links to related web sites. You will also submit brief biographical statements on each group member, for posting on the Contributors section of the VG website.
- **Literature Review:** This contains your analysis of critical work that has been done on your author. It should reflect on various responses and critical approaches to your author's work both in scholarly and popular sources. During the first week of class, locate in the Wilson library and check out books of criticism you will use. Make haste: the books you need might soon be checked out by other students. Some authors have not yet attracted the attention of literary scholars, so you will be the one. Write a critical analysis of your author's works: locate the texts within the genre and tradition, highlight main themes, describe the way the author deals with the issues set forth as focal points of the narrative etc.

- Bibliography and Related Links:

The Bibliography has to include the following: **ALL works, including articles and films if any, by the author**; entries contain titles and dates of the first publication, **works about the author**, as many as you can find, (complete bibliographical information for each entry – author, title, publisher, publication date), **works by the author translated into other languages**, if there are any (title in the language of the translation, with the English title in parenthesis, translator’s name, publisher, date). To complete this section, use the university libraries catalog, WorldCat and RefWorks, all accessible through the University libraries website.

The Related Links section must list links to online sources, with a brief comment on the website/page you are providing a link for: evaluation of the source (scholarly, educational, governmental, business, commercial, partisan etc.), contents, relevance to your project and whatever other comments you might want to add.

CLASS PARTICIPATION, IN CLASS QUIZZES, ETC: 5%

GRADE DESCRIPTION

A: For superior work with a forceful and compelling thesis, clearly and imaginatively written, devoid of grammatical and stylistic errors, thoughtfully organized, insightful, and creative.

B/B+: For quality work, substantive in argument and organization, with strong thesis and support, well organized and free from most technical errors, fairly well-polished and proofread.

C/C+: For competent work, fulfills the assignment adequately, has clear thesis and some support, sufficiently organized, free from most technical errors, somewhat polished and superficially proofread.

D/D+: For inadequate work, unfocused and confusing, awkwardly written, ineffective thesis, and unpolished.

F: For unacceptable work, weak or confusing thesis, half-complete, irrelevant material, and no sense of organization or structure.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

9/4 - **Introduction to the class, Viewing the VG Web site, Course Requirements**

9/6 - From Fanon, “Algeria Unveiled”

Reviewing Book Reviews

No Telephone the Heaven critique assigned.

Week 2

9/11 - Cliff, No Telephone To Heaven

Review of VG site on Cliff

9/13 - Cliff, “Clare Savage as a Crossroads Character”

Continued discussion on NTTH

Response on prompts due Saturday evening.

Week 3

9/18 - **Critique Due**

Head, The Cardinals

9/20 - **Head group Presentation**

Head group: Brief Biography should be up today

Class: Post discussion questions as comments by Saturday evening

Week 4

9/25 - **Bessie Head Panel**

From "Apartheid: A Graphic Guide" (Mixed Married Act)

Head group: Prompts due on class blog Thursday morning

9/27 - Wicomb, from David's Story

Wicomb group Presentation

Wicomb group: Brief Biography should be up today

Class: Post Wicomb discussion questions as comments by Saturday evening

Class: Post Head responses as comments by Saturday Evening

Week 5

10/2 - **Head group: Book Reviews due**

Zoe Wicomb Panel

Continued Discussion from David's Story

Wicomb, "To Hear A Variety of Discourses"

Wicomb group: Prompts due on class blog Thursday morning

10/4 - David's Story discussion continued

Class: Post Wicomb responses as comments by Saturday Evening

Week 6

10/9 - Long Night's Journey Into Day [film]

10/11 - **Wicomb group: Book Reviews Due**

Fanon, "Concerning Violence"

Film Discussion

Class: Post film responses as comments by Saturday Evening

Week 7

10/16 - Satrapi, Persepolis

McCloud, from Understanding Comics

10/18 - **Satrapi group Presentation**

Satrapi group: Brief Satrapi Biography should be up today

Class: Post Satrapi discussion questions as comments by Saturday evening

Week 8

10/23 - **Research Day**

10/25 - Mernissi, "Muslim Women and Fundamentalism: Introduction to the Revised Edition."

Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?"

Week 9

10/30 - **Marjane Satrapi Panel**

In-class group work on Author pages

Satrapi Group: Prompts due on class blog Thursday morning

11/1 - **Author pages drafts due for workshop (bring 3 copies)**

Workshop

Class: Responses to Satrapi due on class blog Saturday evening

Week 10

11/6 - **Satrapi group: Book Reviews Due**

Author Pages, first draft, Due

Devi group Presentation

Devi, "Statue"

Devi group: Brief Biography should be up today

Class: Post Devi discussion questions as comments by Wednesday evening

11/8 - **Mahasweta Devi Panel**
Devi group: Prompts due on class blog Saturday morning
Class: Responses to Devi prompts due on class blog Monday evening

Week 11

11/13 - Earth [film]
11/15 - **Devi group: Book Reviews Due**
Film Discussion

Week 12

Thanksgiving Holiday - No Class

Week 13

11/27 - Revisit Fanon, "Concerning Violence"
Gladman, The Activist
11/29 - **Gladman group Presentation**
Continued discussion on The Activist
Gladman group: Brief Biography should be up today
Class: Post Gladman discussion questions as comments by Saturday evening
Prepare Author Pages

Week 14

12/4 - **Author Pages, Draft 2, due for workshop (Bring 3 copies)**
Workshop
12/6 - **Renee Gladman's Visit**
Renee Gladman Panel
Gladman group: Prompts due on class blog Saturday morning
Class: Responses to Gladman prompts due on class blog Monday evening

Week 15

12/11 - **Final Author Pages Due**
Optional Revised Cliff Critiques Due

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!