

ENGL/WOST 370 Women's Diaries
Spring 2006 Wednesday 6c 2:20-4:00
Dr. Theresa A. Dougal
Zinzendorf 301
Office Hours: MWF 9:15-10:15 & by appointment
Phone: office 1389; home 610-954-8413

Course Description and Objectives: Scholarly focus on women's diaries as a distinct genre of literature is rather recent, burgeoning, and intriguing. We will explore this topic from a variety of angles as we attempt to come to terms with a body of writing that is multidimensional in nature--that straddles the boundary between personal and public, both in terms of audience and subject matter. The primary texts we read will expose us to the lives and to the historical and cultural contexts of women living in a variety of times and places. Scholarly criticism will help us to consider questions regarding the intersection of gender and genre, gender relations, and the place of diary within literary studies as a whole. Finally, our own attempts at diary writing throughout the semester will give us first-hand insight into the purpose and rewards of a very popular form of writing.

Course Method and Class Participation: This course will follow the standard dictionary definition of "seminar," which calls it "a group of advanced students studying under a professor, with each doing original research and all exchanging results through reports and discussion." Most class sessions will consist of oral presentations followed by discussion. Through these mechanisms, and through formal presentations of your final papers, we will educate one another on the variety of ways in which each of our texts can be approached and appreciated.

Discussion--the articulation and sharing of our ideas--is one of the most important components of our seminar. Ideally, our ideas will flow freely. But to ensure that everyone is ready to participate, please come to each class with a least one specific idea, relevant to the day's assignment, for discussion. Your participation grade will reflect your regular, voluntary engagement in class discussion.

Evaluation: Oral presentation on assigned readings (10%), Personal diary (20%), Written critique of personal diary (20%), Final paper and presentation (25%, 10%), Class participation (15%).

Oral presentations: The content of your oral presentation will vary according to the material for which you are responsible--whether it be a number of diary excerpts, part of a single diary, or one or more secondary sources. In general, your presentation should provide us with a summary of the material. If you are working with a secondary source, you should explain its key points. If you are presenting a part of a single diary, you should address some of the questions I posit in the section below on "reading assignments." If you are presenting a number of excerpts from diaries, you should generalize about all of these excerpts, or explain why generalization is not possible, again using the questions I posit below. You may want to direct some close attention to one or more important passages in whichever text(s) you are presenting.

Your presentation should last approximately 10-15 minutes. It should conclude with a discussion question that will take us into the discussion for the day.

You should provide the class and me with a written synopsis or outline of your report.

Personal diary: This component of the course has two important purposes. First, by writing our own diaries simultaneously with reading other people's, we will gain insight into the various issues we will be discussing when we read diary as literature. Secondly, keeping a diary, even within the constraints of a course, should prove to be personally fulfilling. If you are already an inveterate diary writer, you will get credit for something that comes to and from you naturally. If you have always wanted to maintain a diary but have had trouble sticking to it, this course may provide you with the incentive you need to keep at it.

While diary-writing is, of course, a very individualized activity, for the purpose of this course your diary will follow some broad guidelines. First, you must make use of a blank notebook or journal suitable for diary-writing. Each week you are responsible for writing at least 5 entries--at least 5 single-sided pages. (I anticipate that many of you will write much more). Each one of these entries should be dated.

The reasoning behind these guidelines has relevance to each of you personally, and to the integrity of this college course. I will not read your diaries. To do so would compromise the authenticity of your work, since I might become your intended or unintended audience. I will, however, meet with you and page through your diary in order to confirm that you have actually maintained the diary, as required. Since this personal diary is worth 20% of your grade, it behooves me to have at least some control over its contents. In other words, if you fill the pages, you will get full credit. I do, however, hope and assume that you will do much more than fill the pages for a grade.

Written critique of personal diary: How often do you get to write a paper about your own writing? Here, you get to analyze your own diary, according to the criteria we will be imposing upon the other diaries that we read. Your paper, written in standard essay form, should fall within the length of 600-800 words (approximately 3 pages, typed, double-spaced, attached with a paper clip).

Final paper and presentation: You will be responsible for finding, reading, and analyzing one complete diary written by a woman of any time period or culture. Again, as in the critique of your personal diary, you will utilize the criteria we will be imposing upon the diaries that we read in class. You should also make use of the articles we have read for class, and perhaps the materials – some of which include bibliographies – that I have placed on reserve in Reeves. Other sources are available through interlibrary loan. This paper should fall within 800-1000 words (approx. 4-5 pages, typed, double-spaced, attached with a paper clip). Be sure to provide a full bibliography of your sources.

In your paper presentations, approximately 10-15 minutes long, you will summarize your paper for the class, in whatever way you find most effective. Feel free to describe your experience in finding and reading the diary you have chosen.

I encourage you to begin work on this paper well in advance, since locating and obtaining (possibly through interlibrary loan) a diary you will enjoy working with may take some time.

Required Texts:

- Culley, Margo. ed. *A Day at a Time: The Diary Literature of American Women from 1764 to the Present*. New York: Feminist Press at CUNY, 1985.
- De Jesus, Carolina Maria. *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*. New York: Signet Classic, 2003.
- Frank, Anne, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1995.
- Moffat, Mary Jane, and Charlotte Painter. *Revelations: Diaries of Women*. 1974. New York: Vintage, 1975.
- Kukil, Karen V. The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath. New York: Anchor Books, 2000.
- Rio, Linda M. and Rio, Tara M. *The Anorexia Diaries: A Mother and Daughter's Triumph Over Teenage Eating Disorders*. Rodale, 2003.

Blank journal

Secondary materials to be handed out in class.

Reading Assignments: When reading and preparing for class discussion, always consider the following questions:

- What do we learn about the main subject of this diary--the writer herself?
- Who is the audience for this diary? How do you know?
- What generalizations can we make about this woman's diary? --About its subject matter? About its form?
- What kinds of things does the writer persistently write about, and how?
- What are some of the "silences" of this diary? That is, what kinds of things does the writer not say?
- Does gender play a role in this diary? How? How does gender impact upon the subject matter and form?
- What do we learn about the historical and cultural context of this diary?
- How does this diary fit within our discussion of diary as "literature?"

Schedule of readings, discussions, presentations:

- Week 1 Wed. Jan. 18 Introductions
- Week 2 Wed. Jan. 25 Lowenstein, Sharyn. "A Brief History of Journal Keeping."
"Self-Therapy: Write Your Way to Better Health."
"Your diary, a force for change"
Hogan, Rebecca. "Diarists on Diaries."
Bunkers, Suzanne L. "Diaries: Public *and* Private Records of Women's
Lives."
Revelations: Foreword and Part 1
- Week 3 Wed. Feb. 1 Huff, Cynthia. "'That Profoundly Female, and Feminist Genre':The
Diary as Feminist Praxis."
Bunkers, Suzanne L. "'What Do Women Really Mean'? Thoughts
Women's Diaries and Lives."
Franklin, Penelope. Introduction to Private Pages: Diaries of American
Women 1830s-1970s
Revelations, Part 2
- Week 4 Wed. Feb. 8 Bunkers, Suzanne L. "Reading and Interpreting Unpublished
Diaries by Nineteenth-Century Women"
Temple, Judy Nolte, and Suzanne L. Bunkers. "Mothers, Daughters,
Diaries: Literacy, Relationships, and Cultural Context."
Revelations, Part 3
- Week 5 Wed. Feb. 15 ***A Day at a Time***
Preface & Introduction
Parts 1 & 2 ("In the Fatherland," "The Journey Out")
- Week 6 Wed. Feb. 22 ***A Day at a Time***, Part 3 ("Personal and Political")
Blodgett, Harriet. Introduction to *Centuries of Female Days:
Englishwomen's Private Diaries*.
Critique of personal diary due
- Week 7 Wed. March 1 Lynn Z. Bloom, "'I Write for Myself and Strangers;'" Private Diaries
and Public Documents."
A Midwife's Tale
- Spring Recess**
- Week 8 Wed. March 15 ***The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath***
Preface – p. 297
- Week 9 Wed. March 22 ***The Diary of Anne Frank: The Definitive Edition***
Ozick, Cynthia, "Who Owns Anne Frank?"

Excerpts from *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition*

Week 10 Wed. March 29 *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*

Week 11 Wed April 5 *The Anorexia Diaries*

Week 12 Wed. April 12 Paper Presentations
Final Paper Due
Online diaries (handouts)

Easter Recess

Week 13 Wed. April 19 Paper Presentations

Week 14 Wed. April 26 Paper Presentations