

## ENGLISH 586

### **Women's Friendship and Women's Writing** **Spring 2017, Social and Behavioral Sciences N-102** **Tuesdays 4-6:50**

Professor: Celia Marshik  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4, Wednesdays 2:30-4, and by appointment  
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#### **Course Description**

In her 1929 book *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf examines the material and immaterial difficulties that women encountered when they attempted to write and publish creative work. After assessing the work of writers from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, Woolf turns her attention to twentieth-century female novelists, whom she credits with presenting rich accounts of relationships between women. In this course, we will assess Woolf's vision of literary history and change by reading novels that predate her essay as well as works that were published long after *Room*. We will consider whether and how women writers were limited in their choice of subject matter before the turn of the twentieth century, and we will assess whether more recent works justify Woolf's optimism at the end of *Room*. Throughout the semester, we will consider how representations of women's relationships have changed over the course of centuries and discuss whether (and what) a female literary tradition means.

#### **Required texts (available through the campus bookstore):**

Alcott, Louisa May	<i>An Old-Fashioned Girl</i>
Austen, Jane	<i>Emma</i>
Foster, Hannah	<i>The Coquette</i>
Hurston, Zora Neale	<i>Their Eye Were Watching God</i>
Larsen, Nella	<i>Passing</i>
Le Sueur, Meridel	<i>The Girl</i>
McCarthy, Mary	<i>The Group</i>
Morrison, Toni	<i>Sula</i>
Rhys, Jean	<i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i>
Townsend-Warner, Sylvia	<i>Summer Will Show</i>
Woolf, Virginia	<i>A Room of One's Own</i>

**Additional readings are available on-line through Blackboard**

## COURSE ORGANIZATION AND REQUIREMENTS:

**Attendance & Participation:** Most people learn best by engaging in discussion rather than passively listening to a lecture. Although I will provide occasional short lectures to supplement your reading, most of the class will be spent in seminar-style discussion, and each student will give presentations. This means that you need to be committed to regular attendance and engaged participation in class discussion. If you are a shy or reserved person, you should meet with me during the first few weeks of class. More than two absences will lower your participation grade; more than three will result in no credit for participation. Repeated occasions of excessive tardiness or leaving early will count toward absences.

**Blackboard (<http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>):** The Blackboard site for this class contains assigned readings as well as a discussion board, a place to post questions and comments that you would like to discuss in class. The class syllabus and all assignments will also be posted on Blackboard. In addition, the class site will contain links to material that provides context for the class readings.

**Writing Assignments:** You will write two papers during the semester. In the first (five-page) paper, due between Feb. 14 and March 7 (you choose the exact day), you will make an argument about one work. In the second (ten to fifteen--page) paper, due on May 9, you will write a research paper on a topic of your choice. I will provide you with detailed instructions for these papers in advance of the due dates. All papers must be typed (please use a standard 12 point font), double-spaced and stapled. I will grant you one extension (of a few days) for a paper, but this extension must be arranged in advance of the due date.

**Presentations:** Every student will give one fifteen-minute presentation and one shorter presentation. The fifteen-minute presentation will provide an overview of at least two articles on the novel or writer assigned for that date. In addition to summarizing the arguments of these pieces, you will either extend or criticize some aspect of the arguments—that is, you will present your own assertions about the book. Alternatively, you can choose to present a theoretical or methodological article and then to show how that theory/methodology illuminates the novel we're reading together. In either case, you should end the presentation with a question for the class. Let me know what you plan to do in advance of your presentation (and whether you will need a laptop), and if you are looking for ideas, I am happy to consult with you.

In addition to this presentation, you will give a brief overview of your final paper during our closing class meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Presentations will receive a collective grade based on preparation and content.

**Final Grade Calculation:**

15%	Class Participation	20%	First Paper
20%	Presentations	45%	Second Paper

**Academic Integrity:** Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

**DSS Assistance:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, 128 ECC Building (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following web site: <http://www.ehs.sunysb.edu> and search Fire Safety and Evacuation and Disabilities.

### Course Calendar

Readings are listed on the date we will discuss them. Items followed by an asterisk (\*) can be found on Blackboard. Items with two asterisks (\*\*) may be found through the library's e-journals. Scheduled readings are subject to change.

1/24 Introduction to the course and to each other

#### The early works

1/31 Sharon Marcus, "Friendship and the Play of the System"\*  
Carol Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs* 1.1 (1975): 1-29.\*\*  
Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5.4 (1980): 631-660.\*\*

2/7 *The Coquette*

**Reminder: First Paper due sometime between 2/14-3/7**

2/14 *Emma*

2/21 *An Old-Fashioned Girl*

2/28 *A Room of One's Own*

The Twentieth Century

3/7 *Passing*

3/14 **NO CLASS—SPRING RECESS**

3/21 *Summer Will Show*

3/28 *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

4/4 *The Girl*

4/11 *The Group*

4/18 *Wide Sargasso Sea*

4/25 *Sula*

5/2 Presentations on final papers

**Tuesday, May 2**

**Final Papers due in my office or department mailbox by 4pm**