

Women's Writing in English

Programme in which it is offered: All UG Programmes

Course Category: Minor

Schedule of Offering: Semester II/ IV/ VI

Course Sub-category: Skill Development

Course Credit Structure: 3

Course Stream: Literature and Linguistics

Contact Hours per week: 3

Course Code: LL176

Lecture: 3; **Tutorial:** 0; **Practical:** 0

Instructor: Neethu S Kumar

Maximum Intake: 20

1. Introduction

"Every woman who appears wrestles with the forces that would have her disappear. She struggles with the forces that would tell her story for her, or write her out of the story, the genealogy, the rights of man, the rule of law. The ability to tell your own story, in words or images, is already a victory, already a revolt."

—Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me*

Women read. They write too.

They *may be* fairly obvious statements to you and me, but not to everyone, definitely not since always. In this time and era, it is difficult to imagine that women telling their own stories wasn't always the case. When did women begin to write and get published? Why and for whom did they write? What did they hope to achieve? What does the world, especially the women of today, owe to them and their voices?

This course is meant to be an exploration of writings by and about women. Through readings of examples from various genres, we will attempt to understand the realities and aspirations of women (and women writers) better. It is hoped that our reflections will result in a deeper comprehension of the world we inhabit and those we share it with.

2. Course Objectives

- i. To introduce learners to a selection of women's writing in English (from various Literatures, old and new)
- ii. To familiarise learners with major women writers of English Literature
- iii. To introduce learners to women's movements and feminist literary theories

- iv. To encourage learners to reflect on what it means to be a woman

3. Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, learners will be able to:

- i. Read and analyse a range of women's writing in English, from cross-cultural perspectives
- ii. Locate literary texts in the historical and ideological contexts of women's movements
- iii. Evaluate literary texts from the perspective of feminist literary theories

4. Pre-requisites

Since this course will be taught in English, students taking this course must be comfortable with reading, writing, listening, and speaking in English. They must be able to read and understand critical essays written in English, and to discuss and debate the ideas proposed therein. A reading habit, an interest in literature, and curiosity about women's voices are desirable, but not essential.

Apart from this, the course has no other prerequisites.

5. Readings

There is no single primary textbook for this course. However, a set of readings have been identified under each module of the course. Students will be required to access these reading materials from the library repository and assemble a set of readings for their personal use.

In addition, a number of books have been identified for subsidiary/supplementary reading (as listed below), which the students may look up to increase their own understanding of the subject, and to aid their participation in group discussions in class.

Recommended Reading:

1. Wollstonecraft, M. (1995). *Wollstonecraft: A Vindication of the Rights of Men and a Vindication of the Rights of Woman and Hints*. Cambridge University Press.
2. De Beauvoir, S. (2012). *The second sex*. Vintage.
3. Millett, K. (2016). *Sexual politics*. Columbia University Press.
4. Greer, G., & Inglis, A. (1971). *The female eunuch* (p. 301). London: Paladin.
5. Woolf, V. (2015). *A room of one's own and three guineas*. OUP Oxford.
6. Showalter, E. (1977). *A literature of their own: British women novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (p. 14). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

7. Gilbert, S. M., & Gubar, S. (1980). *The madwoman in the attic: The woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination*. Yale University Press.
8. Sangari, K., & Vaid, S. (Eds.). (1990). *Recasting women: Essays in Indian colonial history*. Rutgers University Press.
9. Tharu, S.J., and Lalitha, K., (Eds.). (1991). *Women Writing in India: 600 B.C. to the early twentieth century*. Feminist Press at CUNY.
10. Mills, E., and Cochrane, K., (Eds.). (2005). *Cupcakes and Kalashnikovs: 100 Years of the Best Journalism by Women*. Constable.

6. Module-wise topics

Module 1: Women and Writing (15 sessions)

- Why should one read women's writing in English?
- A brief historical overview of women's voices in English Literature
- A selection of women's writing on writing
- A glimpse into feminist theories

Readings

Virginia Woolf – *A Room of One's Own* (Chapter 3)

Joanna Russ – *What Can a Heroine Do or Why Women Can't Write*

Alice Walker – *In search of our mother's gardens*

Margaret Atwood - *On Being a 'Woman Writer': Paradoxes and Dilemmas*

George Eliot – *Silly Novels by Lady Novelists*

Module 2: A Selection of Women's Writing – Poetry and Short Stories, and Non-fiction (15 sessions)

- Poetry:
Emily Dickinson – *I'm "wife" – I've finished that*
Sylvia Plath - *Daddy*
Kamala Das – *An Introduction*
Maya Angelou – *Phenomenal Woman*
- Short Stories:
Charlotte Perkins Gilman - *The Yellow Wallpaper*
Mahasweta Devi – *Draupadi* (translated from Bengali)
Ismat Chughtai – *Lihaaf [The Quilt]* (translated from Urdu)
- Non-fiction:
Christina Lamb – *My Double Life: Kalashnikovs and Cupcakes*

Rose George – *They don't See it as Rape. They Just See it as Pleasure for Them*

Module 3: A Selection of Women's Writing – Novel and Drama (15 sessions)

- Novel:
Margaret Atwood - *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Drama:
Eve Ensler – *The Vagina Monologues*

7. Pedagogy

The teaching in this course will be mostly through lectures and classroom discussions. The instructor's role will be primarily to introduce concepts and generate questions of interest, but the discussion around these questions is expected to be mostly student-driven, with the instructor facilitating a conducive learning experience.

8. Evaluation Pattern

Analytical and critical ability, as well as the ability to express opinions clearly and concisely, are extremely important for this course, and hence group discussions, debates, and presentations constitute a crucial evaluation component here. Individual progress will be measured through pop quizzes, assignments, a term paper, and a mid-semester examination.

- Pop Quizzes - 5 [5%]
- Mid-semester Examination (20%)
- Group Discussion/ Debate/ Presentation - 5 (25%)
- Individual Written Assignments - 2 (20%)
- Final term paper (30%)