

English 3300-003

“She's beautiful and she's laughing”: Monstrous Women in SF Literature and Film



Instructor: Dr. Barclay
Course Information: M/W 4:00 p.m. - 5:20 p.m.
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Course Description: The Medusa figure, the cyborg, the nomadic subject are complex images in feminist theory. Some figures represent the ways in which women have been othered over the centuries, and others represent how that otherness is a form of power. Many do both. This course will explore how women are depicted as monstrous, who defines what *monstrous* is, how it may be complexly positive and/or negative, and how these cultural representations intersect with feminist theory. We will look at an array of images, including visual images, representations in film and literature, music, and games.

Required Readings:

Patchwork Girl (Jackson)
Geek Love (Dunn)
Carmen Dog (Emshwiller)
Feminist Literary Theory and Criticism (Gilbert and Gubar)
E-Reserves Readings
Selection of movies

You will need an online movie subscription service like Netflix

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following:

- To engage the literature with current political and social issues and vice versa
- To write with clarity to communicate effectively within the academic community
- To understand and engage with different issues and evolutions of feminist theory
- To respond critically to course material, using synthesis and analysis
- To explain or describe the meanings of literary texts
- To apply different and appropriate critical frameworks to the analysis of texts
- To adapt writing for different styles or forms, including informal reflections, analytical essays, research essays, etc.
- To evaluate and respond to the aesthetics and philosophies of a text

- To explain culture's influence on literature, as well as literature's impact on culture

Course Requirements:

- Response Essays (25%): You will write response essays for most of the texts we read or watch. In these, you will pose a question and explore possible answers or explain why it is an important line of inquiry. These two-page essays will require thinking critically about the text itself, the historical moment in which it is written, and/or the text's relationship to other texts in class. These are formal essays that will require substantial support from the reading, should be grammatically and structurally correct, and in MLA format. **I will not accept any essays in this class that are not MLA formatted.** While these essays are grounded academically, they should also push the limits. **Summaries and sheer reiterations of class discussions will not earn passing grades.** The purpose of these essays is not only to show familiarity with the reading, but also to begin exploring questions and ideas in a way that both initiates and is drawn from class discussion. This is the place to test out ideas and share them with the class. Writing these will be good preparation for the course exams.
- Discussion Question(s) (10%): Each student will lead a class discussion by posing 1-3 questions on the assigned reading for the day (see the sign-up spaces on the syllabus schedule below). Students will pose the questions and guide the class for 10-15 minutes. Questions should be pertinent to the context of the course, to the reading material, and will ideally push at the boundaries of how we engage with the text.
- Exams (15%): You will have two exams that will be largely in essay and/or short-answer form and based on the readings and films up to the exam date. **You should take detailed class notes and keep up with response essays in order to be prepared for this exam.** You will be required to utilize all that has been covered in class, in your readings, and in-group discussions in a deeper, more complex way.
- Participation (5%): Your preparation for class and involvement in class discussion will earn points each day. Come with the assignment read (or watched), and be ready to engage with the text in class.
- Visual/Audio Project (15%): For this project, you will make an assertion or pose a question about the course topic through the use of music and visuals. You may choose to a) compile a "mix tape" of songs that reflect the course materials and include an appropriate cover piece for the "album"; or, you may b) create a visual (film, slideshow, etc.) with a musical background. You will present these projects in class. Remember that you will need some sort of coherence to the project, so think of a unifying theme – an

assertion or question. These projects will be graded on how well they engage with the course discourse, how creative they are, and how well executed they are.

- Research Essay (30%): In the final research essay (12-15 pages), you will make an assertion of about images of women in science fiction using a text or film from the course. You also have the option of using the theories we have discussed to make an assertion about a science fiction-based “text” from outside of class (i.e., current television or film representations of female monsters, female monsters and gaming, etc.). You will need to apply feminist theory (any number of theories we have studied in class or others) to make your argument. You will turn in a prospectus for approval before the essay is due. You will present your research to the class at the end of the semester.

Note: Please be advised that it is your responsibility to retain all of your assignments until after you have received your final grade. You cannot formally challenge a final grade if you do not have evidence of your work.

Late Work Policy: I will not accept late work beyond a week later, and it will lose a half-letter grade for each calendar day it is late. If you must miss class on a day a response essay is due, you can email it to me as an attachment.

Attendance/Late Policy: This is an interactive class in which attendance is vital. While reading the texts on your own will provide insights, the real learning comes through class discussion and lecture. Please be in class on time, ready for active participation. You are allowed three absences. Each absence over three will result in a one-point deduction of your final course percentage. The reasons for the absences do not matter, and you will not be able to make up quizzes, etc. For ANY absence, you (the student) are responsible for acquiring information about the notes and discussion you missed. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted absent. Manage your absences responsibly.

Formatting and Presentation: All assignments should be in MLA format. We will review this format in class, and you can also see a writing handbook for guidelines. In general, this means that assignments must be typed in 12-point font (Times New Roman for this class), double-spaced, with one inch margins all around. The first page should contain a heading and title. MLA parenthetical citations and works cited lists are also required when appropriate.

Dropping the Course: If, during the course of the semester, you choose to drop this class, it is your responsibility to fill out the appropriate documentation and pursue the procedure for dropping a course.

Classroom Etiquette: Students in this class are expected to show respect for their classmates, instructor, and guests. Disrespectful behavior is grounds for dismissal from class. This will mean an absence for the day and a required appointment with me before the next class meeting. Also, please remember to turn off cell phones during class.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22). You can get in trouble for plagiarism—even if you do not intend to cheat—by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the conventions of citation by which you indicate which ideas are not your own and how your reader can find those sources. Because I value originality and honesty, I find plagiarism especially offensive. Do not do it.

Student Success Programs: UTA offers a variety of student programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success, including learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admissions and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

Americans With Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112 -- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all

citizens. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

E-Reserves: Several of the readings are online and are accessible to you with the course password. To find the readings, go to the library's catalog, then the "Course Reserves" tab at the top. Select the appropriate "Instructor," "Department," and "Course" pull downs. You will sign in with your NetID and password.

Tentative Schedule

- Jan. 20 Introduction to the course and feminist theory
- Jan. 25 Read Russ' "The Image of Women in Science Fiction" (e-reserves) and Watch *Attack of the 50-foot Woman* (original version)
- "Unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable": The Ubiquitous Medusa Figure in Alien Form
- Jan. 27 Moore's "Shambleau" (e-reserves) and watch *Species*
- Feb. 1 Read FLTC Cixous' "The Laugh of the Medusa"; Response Essay Due

- Feb. 3 Visual/ Audio Project due; Presentations
- Feb. 8 Presentations
- "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess": The divinity of hybridity?
- Feb. 10 Read Moore's "No Woman Born" (e-reserves) _____
- Feb. 15 Watch *Surrogates* _____
- Feb. 17 Read FLTC Fuss' "Essentially Speaking" and FLTC Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"; Response Essay Due
F _____ H _____
- Feb. 22 Library Session
- Not Man = Not Human: Women as Animals
- Feb. 24 Read Emshwiller's *Carmen Dog* _____
- Mar. 1 Read Emshwiller's *Carmen Dog* _____
- Mar. 3 Watch *Cat People* and *Curse of the Cat People*
CP _____ CCP _____
- Mar. 8 Read FLTC de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" and FLTC Irigaray's "The Sex Which Is Not One"; Response Essay Due
dB _____ I _____
- Mar. 10 Midterm Exam
- Mar. 15 Spring Break
- Mar. 17 Spring Break

Freak Shows and Frankensteins: Bodies as Oddities and Creations

- Mar. 22 Read Dunn's *Geek Love* _____
- Mar. 24 Read Dunn's *Geek Love* _____
- Mar. 29 Read Dunn's *Geek Love* _____
- Mar. 31 Read FLTC Rubin's "The Traffic in Women" _____
- Apr. 5 Read Merrill's "That Only a Mother" (e-reserves) and FLTC Bordo's "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity"; Response Essay Due
M _____ B _____
- Apr. 7 Read Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (e-create laptop)
- Apr. 12 Read Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (e-create laptop) _____
- Apr. 14 Read hooks' FLTC "Postmodern Blackness" and Watch *Monsters vs. Aliens*
h _____ Mv.A _____
- Apr. 19 Read Braidotti's selections from *Nomadic Subjects* (e-reserves) and Alaimo and Hekman's selections from *Material Feminisms* (e-reserves); Response Essay Due
B _____ AH _____
- Apr. 21 Conferences and discuss final essay and presentation
- Apr. 26 Final Essay Due and Presentations
- Apr. 28 Presentations
- May 3 Presentations
- May 5 Presentations
- May _ Final Exam