

PHIL 4050.006//RELS 4000.006/5000.006//WGST 4050.006/5050.006
FRENCH FEMINISMS
Wed., 6:40-9:15
MACY 110

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Office Hours: Wed., 2:30-3:15, and by appointment, Macy 202A

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is “woman”? What is the place of “the feminine” in philosophy, religion and culture? What happens when we re-examine our most basic philosophical and religious ideas in light of female bodily specificity? Is there a feminine way of writing, of thinking, of being embodied, of being religious, of being in the world? What is the significance of women’s maternal capacity? Why, and in what ways, have “woman” and “the feminine” been imagined, circumscribed, excluded and included in the religious, political and literary discourses and practices of the West? What are the means for changing the conditions under which women live and the terms by which the feminine is evaluated?

These questions inform and inspire the work of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Monique Wittig. Their work has, in turn, informed and inspired feminist theory and practice since its advent in the late twentieth century. It poses a radical challenge to the most basic categories and presuppositions of Western thought. In this course, we will examine, closely and carefully, a range of representative work from these writers, paying special attention to their vision of politics, their conception of religion and their understanding of the relation between the two.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Cixous, Hélène and Catherine Clément. *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian C. Gill. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985.

Wittig, Monique. *Les Guérièlles*. Trans. David LeVay. Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 2007.

Joy, Morny, Kathleen O’Grady, and Judith L. Poxon, eds. *Religion in French Feminist Thought: Critical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Additional readings will be made available on electronic reserve.

Please bring all relevant readings to class.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

To succeed in this course, you must be proactive. This includes both doing the work outlined in the syllabus and taking initiative if problems arise. If you do not understand the material or my expectations, if life is impinging on you in some way, or if my teaching style is not working for you, please let me know. I will do what I can to help, but I am completely unable to remedy the situation if I do not know there is a problem.

I want every student to succeed in this class. In selecting readings, crafting assignments, and setting a schedule, I have tried to create a framework that will help you do your best work. In presenting material, articulating expectations, and responding to assignments, I strive to be as clear as I can. I will not, however, hunt you down, or pester you, to make sure you are doing the required work.

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

You are expected to (1) attend, and be on time for, all class meetings; (2) read carefully all assigned readings prior to the class session for which they are assigned; (3) participate actively and productively in class discussions; (4) be familiar with the syllabus; (5) take responsibility for fulfilling all course requirements; and (6) check your NinerMail account regularly for communications from the instructor.

You are ***NOT*** expected to agree with the views espoused by the instructor, the course materials or other students; you are expected to manage any disagreement respectfully and productively.

CLASS PREPARATION

Because this course focuses on close, critical analysis of difficult texts, you will need to devote sufficient time to preparing for class both to contribute to class discussion and to do well on assignments. You must read carefully prior to class taking note of the ideas and questions you want to bring to our collective conversation. At a minimum, you must be able to articulate the author's main points, summarize the evidence marshaled to support those points, characterize the chief rhetorical strategies employed and identify any notable short-comings in the analysis. You should also make sure that you have mastered any unfamiliar vocabulary and have investigated the relevant historical, cultural and intellectual background.

You should come to class having identified a few passages that struck you as particularly interesting, troubling, puzzling or generative. You should be prepared to discuss your reasons for selecting these passages and to guide your classmates through a consideration of the passage in relation both to the readings as a whole and the themes and questions of the course. ***All members of the class—students and instructor alike—are responsible for understanding, explaining, analyzing and teaching the material under discussion.***

We will not have time to discuss fully all of the assigned reading during class time. Our collective consideration should give you practice at engaging these texts, enhancing your ability to explore them more carefully and thoughtfully on your own. Our class meetings are an opportunity to deepen your understanding of, ask questions of, and develop ideas about the readings, as well as enhance your strategies and skills for analyzing them. Your written work provides further opportunities to demonstrate, develop and deepen this engagement.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend, and be on time for, all class meetings. ***Every absence after one, for whatever reason, will result in a five-point deduction from your final grade. Every two instances of arriving late or leaving early will count as one absence.*** If you are absent, you are responsible for getting any announcements, lecture notes, handouts or assignments.

The exception to this policy is absences necessitated by religious observance. You may miss two classes for religious observance, but you must provide me with written notice (which includes e-mail correspondence) of the class(es) you will be missing for this reason no later than **Friday, January 20.**

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION

I will communicate with you as a class and as individuals using your NinerMail (University e-mail) account. You are responsible for checking this account regularly and responding promptly to any e-mail requests.

CLASS DECORUM

(1) Be on time for class. If you must arrive late or leave early, please do so as unobtrusively as possible. (2) Cell phones must be turned off prior to class. If your cell phone rings, or I observe you text-messaging during class, I will ask you to leave class and it will be counted as an absence. (3) Computers may be used during class only to take notes or read electronic-reserve readings. If I observe you using your computer for any other purpose, it will result in a full-letter deduction in your grade for the course ***and will jeopardize use of computers during class for all students in the course.***

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Consistent with the University's commitment to inclusivity, I pledge to do my best to run the class in a manner that is respectful of difference, including but not limited to, physical and mental ability, age, socio-economic status, body size religious identity, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality and veteran status. You are expected to be respectful of these differences in your conduct in class and on campus.

As a sign of this respect, you should write in a way that recognizes diversity. In other words, you should strive, at the very least, to use gender-inclusive language and also to be mindful of metaphors that may have problematic racial, ethnic, class, sexual or (dis)ability connotations.

ACCOMMODATION OF DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that qualifies you for accommodations, please provide a letter from Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. For more information regarding accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (www.ds.uncc.edu).

SCHEDULE

1.11 Introduction

1.18 Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) (excerpts) (electronic reserve)

1.25 *Powers of Horror*, vii-89

2.1 *Powers of Horror*, 90-132

2.8 Julia Kristeva, "Motherhood according to Giovanni Bellini," in *Desire in Language*, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez, 237-70 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) (electronic reserve)

Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," in *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, 234-63 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) (electronic reserve)

Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, 71-94, 106-38 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) (electronic reserve)

2.15 Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 5-35 (electronic reserve)

Julia Kristeva, *This Incredible Need to Believe*, trans. Beverly Bie Brahic, 77-98 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) (electronic reserve)

Reineke, "Our Vital Necessity," in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

Jantzen, "Death, then, How Could I Yield to It?" in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

*****Analytic Paper due by 9AM, February 16.**

2.22 *Speculum*, 11-129

2.29 *Speculum*, 243-364

3.7 **SPRING BREAK (No class)**

3.14 “Any Theory of the Subject” and “*La Mystérique*,” in *Speculum*

Luce Irigaray, “Belief Itself” and “Divine Women,” in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, 23-72 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993) (electronic reserve)

3.21 Luce Irigaray, “This Sex Which is Not One” and “When Our Lips Speak Together,” in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter, 23-33, 205-18 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) (electronic reserve)

Luce Irigaray, *To Be Two*, trans. Monique M. Rhodes and Marco F. Cocito-Monoc, 54-61, 85-93 (New York: Routledge, 2001) (electronic reserve)

Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček, 97-136 (New York: Continuum, 2002) (electronic reserve)

3.28 Armour, “Divining Difference,” in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

Poxon, “Corporeality and Divinity,” in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

Elizabeth Grosz, “Irigaray and the Divine,” in *Transfigurations: Theology and the French Feminisms*, ed. C.W. Maggie Kim, Susan M. St. Ville, and Susan M. Simonaitis, 199-214 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publications, 1993) (electronic reserve)

Naomi Schor, “This Essentialism Which is Not One,” in *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford, 57-78 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) (electronic reserve)

Whitford, “Irigaray, Utopia and the Death Drive,” in *Engaging with Irigaray: Feminist Philosophy and Modern European Thought*, ed. Carolyn Burke, Naomi Schor, and Margaret Whitford, 379-400 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) (electronic reserve)

*****Analytic Paper due by 9AM, March 29.**

4.4 *Newly Born Woman*

- 4.11** Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 875-93 (electronic reserve)
Hélène Cixous, "Castration or Decapitation?" trans. Annette Kuhn, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 36-55 (electronic reserve)
Hélène Cixous, "Promised Belief," in *Feminism, Sexuality and the Return of Religion*, ed. Linda Martín Alcoff and John D. Caputo, 130-59 (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011) (electronic reserve)
Hollywood, "Mysticism, Death and Desire," in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*
Renshaw, "The Theology of Hélène Cixous," in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

*****Analytic Paper due by 9AM, April 12.**

- 4.18** Monique Wittig, "The Category of Sex," "One is Not Born a Woman," "The Straight Mind," and "The Point of View," in *The Straight Mind*, 1-32, 59-67 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992) (electronic reserve)
Ostravsky, "Religion in the Fiction of Monique Wittig," in *Religion in French Feminist Thought*

*****Paper proposal due by 9AM, April 19.**

- 4.25** *Les Guérièlles*

*****Analytic Paper due by 9AM, April 26.**

*****Book Review due by 9AM, Wednesday, May 2 (graduate students).**

*****Final Paper due by 9AM, Tuesday, May 8.**

FINAL MEETING: 8-10:30PM, Wednesday, May 9.

Be prepared to discuss your final paper with the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

You must submit all assignments by e-mail (kbrintna@uncc.edu). If I am unable to open your attachment, I will notify you. If you do not submit a readable version within 24 hours, I will grade the assignment at my discretion. All assignments must be double-spaced, in a 12-point font, with one-inch margins and no extra spaces between paragraphs. ***No late papers will be accepted.***

Analysis Papers

Undergraduates must submit **two (2)**, and graduate students must submit **three (3)**, 4-6 page analysis papers over the course of the semester. ***These papers are due by 9AM on February 16, March 29, April 12, and April 26, respectively.*** These papers may focus on a single reading, trace a specific theme across readings by one author, or make connections between different authors across the course. You must, however, select a topic that will allow you to give close, careful attention to the texts under consideration. These papers must do more than summarize the readings; they must develop an argument, raise a question, generate an idea or explain an insight in relation to the course materials. These papers may explain the value of an author's idea(s), express disagreement with an author's idea(s), or defend an author's approach against criticism. These papers may also rely on course material to discuss an experience, address a phenomenon or interpret a text from outside the course. For the analysis papers, you are not expected to consult materials outside of the course.

Final Paper

Undergraduates must write a final paper of 12-15 pages; graduate students must write a final paper of 15-20 pages. ***Proposals for the final paper are due by 9AM on April 19. Final papers are due by 9AM on Tuesday, May 8.*** The final paper must frame an argument relevant to the course's themes and questions. You should not attempt to discuss all of the authors and readings considered in class; you should instead identify a specific idea, question or theme that is interesting to you and then identify the one—possibly two—authors with whom you can best develop your ideas. For the final paper, you are expected to consult materials beyond those considered in the course. ***Undergraduates may not write their final paper solely on a figure who has been the subject of an analysis paper.***

Book Review

Graduate students must submit a 3-4 page book review. ***These reviews are due by 9AM on Wednesday, May 2.*** The book must be by an author considered in the course, but which is not an assigned text for the course. Students should consult a major journal in their field (e.g., the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* or *Signs*) for questions about format, content and style.

As you prepare assignments, please be mindful other class members will need access to the same library material. Please be in conversation with your colleagues about what materials you have and what materials you need. Please also be responsible and generous in your use of these materials.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Undergraduates

Analysis papers:	50% (25% each)
Final paper:	50%

Graduate Students

Analysis papers:	30% (10% each)
Book Review:	10%
Final paper:	60%

GRADING

In grading your assignments, I will use the following criteria:

- (1) Is the work satisfactory as an *expository* exercise? Does it summarize accurately the material under consideration? Does it give attention to the most relevant and important ideas? Does it characterize fairly and engage sympathetically ideas with which it disagrees? Does it consider a sufficient range of sources?
- (2) Is the work satisfactory as an *analytical* exercise? Does it have a clear thesis or central claim(s)? Is it expressed and organized in a persuasive manner? Does it evince intellectual engagement beyond summation and exposition? Does it engage questions, themes and ideas relevant to the course? Does it extend consideration of course materials beyond class discussion?
- (3) Is the work satisfactory as a *writing* exercise? Is it free of grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors? Does it provide accurate and adequate citations? Does it demonstrate attention to rhetorical stylization?

Ideally, your work should open up some new dimension of—i.e., teach me something about—the material. At a minimum, it must summarize the materials accurately, clearly and completely and present an analysis (evaluation, critique, application, extension) that engages the course's themes and questions.

Ideally, your writing should be ***absolutely free*** of spelling, grammar, stylistic and citation mistakes. Your reader cannot engage your ideas if she or he is distracted by problems in your writing. ***If I find myself spending too much time copy-editing your work, I will deduct a letter grade, return it without comment and give you 24 hours to submit a revised version. If I find spelling errors that could have been caught by spell-check, I will give the paper a U and return it without comment.***

Religious Studies students must follow Turabian's *Manual of Style*, 7th ed., for questions of grammar, style and citation form. Women's and Gender Studies students may use Turabian or the *MLA Manual of Style*, 7th ed., but they must rely on the same style manual for all assignments.

Two additional style rules that will apply to assignments for this course:

- (1) Do not use “you” in formal writing.
Incorrect: “This passage in Irigaray makes you aware of your body.”
Correct: “This passage in Irigaray makes the reader aware of her body.”
(Note that this version forces the writer to think about the identity of the reader: would male-identified readers have the same bodily experience as female-identified readers?)
- (2) Do not use contractions in formal writing.

Your writing should privilege depth over breadth. It is better to address a small point, and do it well, than to try something grand, and do it superficially. There is no expectation, in this class or the world, that you be exhaustive. Instead, you should frame a question well, engage texts attentively, represent others’ ideas accurately, explain your own thinking clearly, and write in an engaging, rhetorically sensitive manner.

You should consider issues beyond proofreading and clarity of expression. You should also think about rhetoric, form and style. You should be attentive to how you organize an essay, how you begin and end a paper, how you express yourself (from word choice to examples to quotations to metaphors), and how you vary the length and complexity of sentences and paragraphs. While I do not expect you to imitate the style(s) of authors from this course in any specific way, you should take cues from their attention to form and begin experimenting with different strategies in your own writing.

Remember, you will not be in the room when I am reading your work: what you put on the page must be a clear, complete and precise statement of your ideas.

Finally, you should familiarize yourself with and conform your conduct to the University’s Code of Student Academic Integrity. Plagiarism on any assignment will result in a failing grade for the course.

NOTE ON GRADES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

The range of grades used in graduate courses at UNC Charlotte is A (commendable), B (satisfactory), C (marginal), and U (unsatisfactory). Most A-level undergraduate work is B-level graduate work. At the graduate level, a B indicates you must refine and develop your skills to succeed in the academy. A C indicates serious deficiencies in the skills essential to success; it is the equivalent of a D or F in undergraduate study.

One final grade of C automatically generates a written warning from the Dean of the Graduate School and may prevent you from pursuing further graduate work. A second C is sufficient grounds for permanent dismissal from the graduate program. The receipt of a single U in any graduate course while at UNC Charlotte results in immediate academic suspension, which effectively ends your graduate career at this institution.

GRADE DESCRIPTIONS

Grades are not a judgment on you as a person or an evaluation of your *overall* capacity to perform academic work. They are a way of communicating how one particular assignment reflects analytical skills and writing ability with respect to a specific set of materials and questions.

- A** Exceptional work. Evinces exhaustive preparation and thoughtful engagement in every aspect of the assignment. Careful, accurate, complete, sympathetic interpretation of material and presentation of ideas. General observations supported by specific, concrete detail. Contains a strong, clear thesis. Contributes something interesting, unique or creative beyond class discussion. Clear, well-organized writing free of grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors.
- B** Strong work. Attentive to the most significant details of the material under consideration. Conversant with the courses themes and questions. Expresses an obvious main point. Presents a reasonable interpretation supported by sufficient evidence. Clear, well-organized writing free of serious grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors.
- C** Acceptable work with some problems. May fail to attend to important features of the material under discussion. May fail to address the course's themes and questions. May have an unclear or unsupported thesis. Analysis may be too general or superficial. Writing may be unclear, disorganized or have numerous grammatical, spelling and stylistic errors.
- D** Work with serious problems. Analysis is very general, gets significant details wrong, or ignores details that are inconsistent with the paper's main point. Discussion fails to engage the readings or the course's themes. Significant problems with clarity or organization. Significant issues with grammar, spelling or style. Repetition of errors noted in prior papers.
- F** Unacceptable work.

If you come to class, participate in discussion, demonstrate a commitment to doing well on your assignments and improve over the course of the semester, I will take that into consideration when translating your individual assignment grades into a course grade.