

I M.A. SEMESTER – I

WOMEN'S WRITINGS (Major Elective I)

TOTAL HOURS: 5 [75 Hours]

COURSE CODE: 205504

CREDITS: 3

Translations

Adrienne Rich

You show me the poems of some woman
my age, or younger
translated from your language

Certain words occur: *enemy, oven, sorrow*
enough to let me know
she's a woman of my time

obsessed

with Love, our subject:
we've trained it like ivy to our walls
baked it like bread in our ovens
worn it like lead on our ankles
watched it through binoculars as if
it were a helicopter
bringing food to our famine
or the satellite
of a hostile power

I begin to see that woman
doing things: stirring rice
ironing a skirt
typing a manuscript till dawn

trying to make a call
from a phonebook

the phone rings unanswered
in a man's bedroom
she hears him telling someone else
never mind. she'll get tired—
hears him telling her story to her sister

who becomes her enemy
and will in her own time
light her own way to sorrow

ignorant of the fact this way of grief
is shared, unnecessary
and political

Jessie Mitchell's Mother

BY GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Into her mother's bedroom to wash the ballooning body.
"My mother is jelly-hearted and she has a brain of jelly:
Sweet, quiver-soft, irrelevant. Not essential.
Only a habit would cry if she should die.
A pleasant sort of fool without the least iron. . . .
Are you better, mother, do you think it will come today?"
The stretched yellow rag that was Jessie Mitchell's mother
Reviewed her. Young, and so thin, and so straight.
So straight! as if nothing could ever bend her.
But poor men would bend her, and doing things with poor men,
Being much in bed, and babies would bend her over,
And the rest of things in life that were for poor women,
Coming to them grinning and pretty with intent to bend and to kill.
Comparisons shattered her heart, ate at her bulwarks:
The shabby and the bright: she, almost hating her daughter,
Crept into an old sly refuge: "Jessie's black
And her way will be black, and jerkier even than mine.
Mine, in fact, because I was lovely, had flowers
Tucked in the jerks, flowers were here and there. . . ."
She revived for the moment settled and dried-up triumphs,
Forced perfume into old petals, pulled up the droop,
Refueled
Triumphant long-exhaled breaths.
Her exquisite yellow youth . . .

Combing

BY GLADYS CARDIFF

Bending, I bow my head
and lay my hands upon

her hair, combing, and think
how women do this for
each other. My daughter's hair
curls against the comb,
wet and fragrant— orange
parings. Her face, downcast,
is quiet for one so young.

I take her place. Beneath
my mother's hands I feel
the braids drawn up tight
as piano wires and singing,
vinegar-rinsed. Sitting
before the oven I hear
the orange coils tick
the early hour before school.

She combed her grandmother
Mathilda's hair using
a comb made out of bone.
Mathilda rocked her oak wood
chair, her face downcast,
intent on tearing rags
in strips to braid a cotton
rug from bits of orange
and brown. A simple act
Preparing hair. Something
women do for each other,
plaiting the generations.

Poem: Dignity

BY [AUTHOR](#) ON [SEPTEMBER 21, 2015](#) • ([LEAVE A COMMENT](#))

By: Mohammad Jashim Uddin

Cloud, dark cloud everywhere
As light is off and oil is up.
But throwing hands and legs

They have been shouting now and then,
“Have we lost our dignity?”
Oh! Nowhere is it found. Why?
Though fishermen threw nets
To the ash and found burnt coal.

Bravo! Bravo! Carry on
Until you are being oiled much.
You are mine and mine is yours.
This is extra marital course, isn't this?

Let's die as you are hated
As you yourself spoiled your dignity.

“Woman’s Work” by Julia Alvarez

Who says a woman's work isn't high art?
She'd challenge as she scrubbed the bathroom tiles.
Keep house as if the address were your heart.

We'd clean the whole upstairs before we'd start
downstairs, I'd sigh, hearing my friends outside. 5
Doing her woman's work was a hard art.

to practice when the summer sun would bar
the floor I swept till she was satisfied.
She kept me prisoner in her housebound heart.

She's shine the tines of forks, the wheels of carts, 10
cut lacy lattices for all her pies.
Her woman's work was nothing less than art.

And I, her masterpiece since I was smart,
was primed, praised, polished, scolded and advised
to keep a house much better than my heart. 15

I did not want to be her counterpart!
I struck out...but became my mother's child:
a woman working at home on her art,
housekeeping paper as if it were her heart.

When You Pass Me on the Street: a Poem About Disability

Rachel Cantrell

When you pass me on the street, you always try to turn away and avoid my
searching eyes

When I attempt to speak to you, you merely give me blank stares and
overly frustrated sighs

When I opt to sit at the table next to yours, you rise and move to another
one much farther away

When I dare to ask you a question, you do not even try to understand me
and hear what I have to say

If, by chance, you do somehow glance my way, your eyes are so often filled with disgust and fear

And you simply do not care to see the pain that you cause while, from my eye, escapes an unseen tear

Sometimes, I feel as if nobody can actually see me for the person I am; perhaps, I'm truly invisible

Why must you choose to either totally ignore me or judge me with eyes so piteous and miserable?

Why do you view me with such a glacial heart and not see the real person who is living inside?

You cannot see the way in which you treat me makes me want to find a dark place to hide

Why is it that you look upon me as being so different than yourself and as such a mysterious alien?

Is it possible for you not to judge me and see that I'm just like you, a common Homo sapien?

Am I so grotesque to you that you cannot stand, for an instant, to simply smile and look at my face?

Are you really that uncomfortable to see me outside of my proper position and accepted place?

All you notice about me is how my words are so unintelligible and how my movements are so erratic

You see me through your biased lens of intolerance and assume that my head is full of senseless static

My bent and twisted frame blinds you to the fact that I have genuine feelings and a sensitive heart

It is impossible for you to see that your cold and condescending stares are tearing my self-esteem apart

I just wish that you would only slow down and take the time to get to know me as a human being

You might be surprised to discover the extent to which the experience could be liberating and freeing

Just stop whatever it is you happen to be so busy doing and chat with me for a little while

Perhaps, you would be pleasantly surprised to find that I might even bring to your face a smile

And perhaps, I can make your long-held prejudices and preconceived notions come to an end

And maybe, you might discover that I can be a kindred spirit and possibly even a lifelong friend.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS :

- Sarah Gamble, ed.. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. USA: Routledge, 2001.
- Miriam Schnier. *The Vintage Book of Feminism: The Essential Writings of Contemporary Women's movement*. Vintage, 1995.

BOOKS FOR REFERENCE :

1. Annapoorani S. and V. Bharathi Harishankar, Eds. "Shifting Perceptions An Anthology of Women's Writing". Chennai: mainspring Publishers, 2016.
2. Lalithambika Antherjanam. *Cast Me Out If You Will Stories and Memoir*. Calcutta: Mandira Sen for Stree, 1998.
3. Sarah Gamble, Ed.. *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism*. Routledge, 2001.

4. Claramma Jose. *Feminisms An Introduction*. Chennai: Self Published, 2005.
5. Yasmin Hameed and Asif Aslam Farrukhi, Eds..*Pakistani Women Writers*. New Delhi: Ajantha Books, 2002.
6. Virginia Woolf. *A Room of One's Own*. Surjeet Publication, Reprint 2015.

JOURNALS:

- 1 . Indian Journal of Gender Studies. Sage Journals.
- 2 . Feminist Theory. Sage journals
- 3 . International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies.

E-RESOURCES:

1. www.unwomen.org
2. www.genderwatch.org
3. www.gendercawater
4. ncw.nic.in
5. www.progressivewomensleadership.com