

Engl. 009-328: *Critical Writing Seminar: Good Girls, Bad Girls*

Fall 2006

University of Pennsylvania

Tuesday/Thursday 3-4:15

Graduate Education 114

Blackboard: <http://courseweb.library.upenn.edu>

Instructor: Aliko Caloyeras

E-mail: aliki [at] english.upenn.edu

Office: Fisher Bennett Hall 226

Office Hours: T/Th 4:15-5 & *by appt.*

Blackboard Chat: Wed 9-10 & *by appt.*

Course Description:

Who doesn't love a good girl gone bad? Ever since Eve took a bite of that "intellectual food" to "feed at once both body and mind" (Milton), authors have been obsessed with women's transgressions, desire for knowledge, and the link between the two. In this course we will examine heroic female figures in texts by both male and female authors in order to think through issues of (self)representation. We will consider and learn to write critically about a variety of textual forms including essays, fiction, poetry, film, television, and blogs. In the first half of the semester, we will focus on issues of female authorship and authority in literary texts by women writers such as Emily Dickinson, Mary Shelley, Virginia Woolf and H.D.; and in the second half of the semester, we will turn our attention to representations of women in film, television, and new media. Course requirements include weekly contributions to a group blog, participation in workshops and peer-editing activities, as well as writing and revising several short critical exercises and one longer essay (3-4 pp.).

Required Texts:

(Available at Penn Book Center, 130 South 34th Street)

Maimon, E.P., J.H. Peritz and Kathleen Blake Yancey, *A Writer's Resource: Handbook for Writing and Research*, Rev. 2nd Ed.

Ross, Valerie, ed., *The Practice of Writing*

Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818)

Additional required and recommended texts will be available on our Blackboard course site. Note that you will be required to bring printed copies of the online assigned readings to class on the days we are scheduled to discuss them.

Evaluation:

If you complete the assignments as indicated and on time, have no more than two absences, and participate as detailed below and in the "Contract B" grading handout, you will receive a B in this course. All participants in the course will collaboratively determine the criteria for receiving an A in the course.

- **Participation**

- **Attendance.** Since class discussion and peer feedback on your writing is an integral part of this class, your attendance is mandatory. No more than two absences will be excused. Documented medical conditions and the observance of

religious holidays are legitimate excuses for an absence. Please inform me if you will miss class.

- **Class Discussions and Peer Review.** Good writing involves being aware of audience and participating in its cultural context and community. In this class, discussion will serve as an extension of the peer review process and will provide you with another forum to try out ideas and strategies for your essays.
- **Timely completion of class assignments.** Assignments are due electronically on Blackboard **before class** on their due date. Since this class is first and foremost a writing workshop and much of our class time will be spent sharing our writing, late essays are only allowed in cases of emergency; please make every effort to inform me before class if you need such an emergency extension.
- **Blog.** This course demands not only that you write but that you reflect on writing; your blog entries gives you another space to write about writing, to experiment with different techniques, and to record your writing progress, frustrations and goals. Occasionally I'll suggest a specific topic or question that you should consider; however, for the most part you'll have free reign when it comes to what you write on the class blog. But do be aware that it is a public space. As a general guideline, write at least twice a week and a minimum of 250 words per week total.
- **Conferences.** You are required to meet with me twice during the semester to discuss your writing. I will schedule conferences with each of you individually. Meetings will last 15-20 minutes.

- **Final Portfolio**

You will write in preparation for every class and during every class, but the goal is not to produce perfect, finished pieces every time. Instead, you will write a series of very short writing exercises (mini-essays) and one longer essay over several weeks toward the end of the semester, for which you will receive peer and/or instructor feedback. Rather than being graded on an essay while it is a work in progress, each essay will receive a “phantom grade”—the grade that it would receive if you changed nothing before submitting it as part of your final portfolio.

Most of us have been trained to concentrate on evaluation that comes primarily from an instructor, but this course emphasizes the social dimension of writing and the importance of peer feedback. By the end of the course you will feel more confident not only with your own writing, but also with your ability to engage constructively with peer and professional writing.

To pass the class you must submit all essays, exercises and revisions, but your portfolio grade will be determined primarily by writing designated by you as your best; three exercises/essays of your choice, one peer review of another student's work, and a portfolio letter in which you reflect on the semester's writing. This system is meant to reward progress over time and engagement with the writing process, as well as the success of your final product. Although my evaluation of your final portfolio will be based on your four selections, you earn your final grade based on the “Contract B” criteria outlined in this syllabus and the collaboratively determined criteria for an A, so

your participation and production throughout the semester must show that you take the composition and revision process seriously.

Format:

During the semester, all assignments should be submitted to me electronically before class on the due date as both a cut-and-paste and word attachment using Blackboard's Assignments section. You'll also need to bring paper copies of your essays to class on the days they are due for peer review.

For your final portfolio, you should print out and submit a paper copy of three revised essays, one peer review and your portfolio letter. Follow MLA style guidelines. Please compile your portfolio neatly and in a simple flat folder. SAVE all drafts of each essay; you'll need to submit all prior drafts, paper-clipped under the final drafts of the essays you submit for portfolio.

Class Schedule:

Week 1

Thursday, September 7 Course introduction
In-class diagnostic

Week 2

Tuesday, September 12 *Propositions*
Gubar and Gilbert [Bb] and PW 85- 110 & 152-69
In-class free writing exercise

Thursday, September 14 **Exercise 1 Due: "Two Reasons"**
PW 41-59

Week 3

Tuesday, September 19 *Paragraphs*
Revision of Exercise 1 Due
Woolf [Bb] and PW 111-16

Thursday, September 21 **Exercise 2 Due: "Nestorian Order"**
PW 59-65

Week 4

Tuesday, September 26 *Sentences*
Revision of Exercise 2 Due
Woolf [Bb] and PW 137-43

Thursday, September 28 **Exercise 3 Due: "Concession"**
PW 73-80

Week 5

Narrative & Voice

Tuesday, October 3 *Revision of Exercise 3 Due*
Frankenstein, Preface and Vol. I, 1-68 and PW 269-89

Thursday, October 5 **Exercise 4 Due: Narrative Letter**

Week 6
Tuesday, October 10 *Summary & Description*
Exercise 5 Due: Description
Frankenstein, Vol. II, 69-123

Thursday, October 12 **Exercise 6 Due: Summary**
Frankenstein, Vol. III, 124-191

Week 7
Tuesday, October 17 *Transitions & Form*
Poetry: TBD [Bb]

Thursday, October 19 **Exercise 7 Due: Close Reading**

Week 8
Tuesday, October 24 *Observation*
Fall Break: NO CLASS

Thursday, October 26 *Revision of Exercise 7 Due*
Images of Joan of Arc

Week 9
Tuesday, October 31 *Contexts*
Film: Current film & film review TBD [Bb]

Thursday, November 2 **Exercise 8 Due: Review**
In-Class Writing Exercise

Week 10
Tuesday, November 7 *Analysis*
Exercise 9 Due: Analysis
Film: *The Passion of Joan of Arc*
H.D. "Joan of Arc" [Bb]
Corrigan & White "Writing about Film" [Bb]

Thursday, November 9 **Essay Proposal Due**

Week 11
Tuesday, November 14 *Unity & Coherence*
Essay Due
Buffy and companion piece TBD [Bb]

Thursday, November 16 PW 116-131

Week 12 *Introductions & Conclusions*

Tuesday, November 21	<i>Revision of Essay Due Veronica Mars</i>
Thursday, November 23	Thanksgiving: NO CLASS
Week 13	<i>Publication & Spaces of Writing</i>
Tuesday, November 28	Blogs TBD
Thursday, November 30	<i>Second Revision of Essays Due</i>
Week 14	
Tuesday, December 5	Exercise 6 Due: “Portfolio Letter”
Thursday, December 7	That’s a wrap. Final Portfolio
Friday, December 15	Final Portfolio Due

Contract B

You are guaranteed a B for your final course grade if you meet the following conditions:

1. Miss no more than 2 classes.
2. Arrive on time to class.
3. Submit no more than one late assignment.
4. Post your blog entries each week, and make sure that they convey your good-faith effort to think about in-class exercises and texts from class or outside sources.
5. Work cooperatively in groups. Share your writing, listen supportively to the writing of others, and give full and thoughtful responses to their writing.
6. Meet the following conditions for writing assignments:
 - Revision: when you are asked to revise, make it more than just a correcting or fixing. Your revision needs to reshape or extend or complicate or substantially clarify your ideas – or relate your ideas to new things. Revisions don't have to be better but they must be different – not just touched up but changed in some genuine way.
 - Mechanics, copy-editing: Your final drafts must be well copy-edited – that is, free from virtually all mistakes in spelling and grammar. It's fine to get help in copy-editing.
 - Effort: Your papers need to show solid effort, and some ambition.
 - Perplexity, Curiosity: You need to root your writing in a felt question or perplexity that really confuses, disturbs, fascinates you. This is a crucial skill to learn for success in college – how to find a question that interests you, even in a boring assignment – and it marks the distinction between average writing and interesting writing.
 - Thinking: Having found a perplexity, use your paper to do some figuring out. Make some intellectual gears turn, and make sure your paper moves, goes somewhere, demands some response from the reader.

I will talk to you if you are not meeting these conditions; if you do not adjust your behavior, your grade will fall below a B. Together, we will decide what constitutes an A level of participation, effort and achievement for this class.

(Adapted from Peter Elbow's *Everyone Can Write: Essays Towards a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing* (NY: Oxford, 2000).