

GWS 570 Resistance and Reclamation in Memoir
Elective for the Gender & Women's Studies Certificate
and for the M.A. in Social Responsibility & Sustainable Communities

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Summer 2018 (online)

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11am-2pm, and other times by appointment

Course Description: GWS 570 Resistance and Reclamation in Memoir examines contemporary memoirs by Black women writers that take as their subject identity construction in the context of family and society. These memoirs challenge us to reconsider the ways in which we understand resistance efforts, as well as efforts at social justice. Critical analysis will address such topics as memory, perspective, treatment of others, the power of story, and memoir as both a form of resistance, and as a naming/reclaiming of oneself.

Students will read, discuss, and analyze contemporary memoirs by Black women writers and thinkers. Among the enduring concerns for this study of memoir are:

- Memory and perspective
- Treatment of others living and not
- Power of story to inform and transform
- Memoir as a form of resistance/reclaiming

Required Texts

Chambers, Veronica. *Mama's Girl* (1995)

Gay, Roxane. *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* (2017)

hooks, bell. *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* (1996)

Jordan, June. *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood* (2000)

Walker, Rebecca. *Black, White & Jewish: Autobiography of a Shifting Self* (2001)

Grading Requirements

Participation 500 (100 x 5 memoirs)

Critical Reflection 300

Reaction Summaries 200 (40 x 5 memoirs)

Requirements

Note: on occasion it becomes necessary to revise the syllabus, and I reserve the right to do so. However, I will not do that to anyone's disadvantage (if possible).

Participation: Regular **daily** participation on Discussion Board about readings: Your first responsibility is to address themes and issues that arise in the primary text for that week. **Supportive articles should be used to enhance discussion of the primary text.** To encourage for meaningful exchange, please plan on posting daily for each reading selection. You cannot do well if you "get your Discussion Board over with." It is Important that we go beyond stating a position and then moving on feeling satisfied, and instead enter into the spirit of conversation, by engaging in meaningful exchange with other members in the class. Finally, discussion *must* reflect understanding of the readings and cannot rely on first-person

experience, although how we relate to the material *is* relevant; it can't simply *replace* critical reflection/questioning of the readings, though it can *augment* and *deepen* it.

As you can see from the reading schedule, you have four days (sometimes including the weekend) to read and discuss the material. You may not have much to say on the first day, but by the third and fourth, you will have neared the end and finished the reading and therefore be able to share your reflections and questions. You'll need to address the general topic: the writer's story, and your own interpretation of any and all modes of resistance and or recovery present in the memoir.

Critical Reflection: Due at the "midpoint" or at the end. Critical reflections allow you to address a concern related to memoir, justice, race, class, and gender, by focusing on one to two memoirs with additional support from 1-2 critical sources. You will submit one 6-8 pg. critical reflection for a grade, either at midterm or at the semester's end.

Reaction Summaries: Due to the fast pace of the course and the challenge that participating fully in Db presents us, these "reaction summaries" are a way for you to demonstrate you've read the assigned memoirs. You will submit these privately to me by 24 hours after we conclude a memoir (i.e., the first day of the next memoir on the syllabus). I see a number of ways you can do this:

1. Take solid reading notes. Email a copy of your notes.
2. Like a journal entry, you react as you read. If the book is divided into three parts, your "reaction summary" would be in three parts. Here you are permitted to rant and rave as you react to the material—like a journal entry. Discussion Board is much more dignified, by comparison—
3. Reaction summaries can be done BEFORE class starts, helping you save precious time during our fast-paced class. (Just don't email before they're due.)

Note: Db for 5 books/5 reaction summaries

University Policies

Plagiarism

Do not, do not copy from the internet (or anywhere else) and then paste it into a post or paper as if it were your own writing. All students are expected to follow the WKU Student Code of Conduct, completing homework and papers independently unless instructions specify otherwise. I electronically check all assignments for plagiarism. All sources of information are to be appropriately cited to avoid any gray areas. Anyone turning in plagiarized work or cheating on exams will receive an F for the assignment(s), perhaps for the course, and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. For further information, see the Student Handbook.

ADA Notice

Students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services, Room A200, Downing University Center. The OFSDS telephone number is (270) 745-5004 V/TDD. Please do not request accommodations directly from the instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

Campus Resources

If you are experiencing any type of physical, emotional or psychological distress, there are university resources to help you.

- Counseling Center: 270-745-3159
(<http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Support/StuAffairs/COUNS/index.htm>)
- The Office of Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/University ADA Services:
270-745-5121 (<http://www.wku.edu/Dept/Support/Legal/EOO/>)
- WKU Writing Center (<http://www.wku.edu/pcal/writing-center>)

Class Schedule

Note: There are five memoirs that you will read for the course: Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood*, Chambers's *Mama's Girl*, Walker's *Black, White, & Jewish*, Gay's *Hunger*, and hooks' *Bone Black*. Any additional readings will be available as pdfs via Blackboard (See Course Docs).

Week I July 9-13, 2018:

Read Jordan's *Soldier: A Poet's Childhood* – "And as far as I could see, sacrifice was not a good idea"
Daily discussion board.

Reminder: submit reaction summaries.

Week II July 16-20, 2018

Read hooks's *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* – "she was always there high in the shelf, covered in dust, waiting"

Daily discussion board.

Reminder: submit reaction summaries

Week III July 23-27, 2018

Read Chambers's *Mama's Girl* – "Until I was ten, three things were true..."

Daily discussion board.

Reminder: submit reaction summaries.

Optional: Reflection essay due by 11:59pm on Friday, July 27, 2018

Week IV July 30- August 3, 2018

Read Walker's *Black, White and Jewish* – "Beneath the mask, behind the cool, unperturbed exterior there is rage."

Daily discussion board.

Reminder: submit reaction summaries.

Week V August 6-9, 2018

Read Gay's *Hunger* – "Air travel is another kind of hell."

Daily discussion board.

Reminder: submit reaction summaries.

Due: Reflection essay, due on Thursday, August 9, 2018 at 11:59pm