

# The Other Side of the Story

In this course we are going to discuss samples and extracts from well-known women writers across the centuries and see how these women have experienced the culture and society around them.

We will discuss one author per week. Every student will present a writer and one of her novels. We will then compare the presented novel with the text sample in your reader. To prepare for the class, please read the corresponding sample. In order so be able to slip into these women's minds it is necessary that you read the text samples carefully and make up your mind about them before we discuss them in class. (Use a pencil and highlighter to mark any interesting passages and keep a regular reading diary.)

Reading takes time – therefore we will not have any written papers or homework except for the 10-minute entries into your reading diaries and the presentation handouts. Please take the reading assignments and response writing very seriously; they are essential to the success of our course. Use a ruled notebook for your reading diary. Only handwritten diaries will be accepted.

Look at the following assessment criteria and ask yourself what grade you want to earn. It is your own responsibility to show me how well you have reached the individual goals listed below.

<p><b>Regular class participation:</b>  <u>Coming to class prepared, having read the assigned texts,</u>          Active participation in discussions and during presentations,          Effort and work-attitude,          Time-management,          Team-spirit</p>	/40	
<p><b>Reading skills and critical questioning of the sample texts:</b>  <u>Regular reading diary</u> (of sample texts and one novel)          Understanding beyond the plot level (themes, values, attitudes)          Finding relevant information/problem solving capacity</p>	/30	
<p><b>Presentation: <sup>1</sup></b>  <u>Good knowledge of the book you present,</u>          Choice of typical and characteristic text samples,          Presenting the relevant features and themes,          Pointing out links to other works discussed in the course,          Clear definitions of values and attitudes challenged in this work.          Arousing your peers' interest and eliciting their reactions and questions,          Speaking freely and fluently,          Language and vocabulary  <u>Well-structured, complete handout.</u></p>	/30	
<p><b>Other feedback:</b></p>	Total:	

<sup>1</sup> Note that presentation dates cannot be postponed at short notice. This would interfere with the course setup and your peers would not be prepared to discuss your author. If you are absent or cannot do your presentation on the assigned day I will present the author and book myself. **You have to write a well-structured paper** answering the questions usually covered in the presentation. Hand in this paper together with the required presentation handouts within a week of your return to school.

## **Presentation:**

### **Present a woman writer of your choice.**

The main goals of your presentation are to inform your peers about a well-known woman writer and how she (and her main characters) experienced being a woman in the society and culture of her time.

Your audience is interested in the following questions. Choose and answer the ones that are relevant for the author and work you are going to present.

- Who is the author? What is her general background? What are her values, attitudes and beliefs?
- Which attitudes or values were generally accepted in the society and culture of the time?
- What are the main character's wishes, hopes and dreams? Do any of them come true?
- What are the main character's limitations?
- What is the book about (plot)?
- What are the underlying themes and the message of the book?
- Which of the standard values and beliefs of the time or culture does the book challenge? Which taboos does it break? How was the book received when it was first published?
- Have any of these new beliefs entered mainstream thinking?
- What is your personal opinion concerning these values and beliefs?

#### **Your handout must include:**

- Sample text (a few pages)
- Plot summary (can be copied if you quote the source properly)
- Brief comparison of the main values, attitudes or moral standards of the author and the society around her. (Can be done in a table.)
- and/or: a brief comparison of the main character's wishes and hopes and her limitations.
- Personal comment

## Timetable: The other side of the story

Session/ Date	Topics	Homework:
1	What does it mean to be a woman? Stereotypes of men and women <b>Carolyn Chute</b> , "Tall Woman Love" Choosing a novel	Read "The Legacy" and the extracts from <i>A Room of one's own</i> , and write a response.  Get a copy of your chosen novel and start reading it. Keep a reading diary and mark interesting passages.
2	Women poets through the centuries	
3	<b>Virginia Woolf</b> : discussion of text samples	Read "The Story of an Hour" and "A Pair of Silk Stockings" and mark interesting passages and write a response for each story.
4	<b>Kate Chopin</b> : "The Story of an Hour" and "A Pair of Silk Stockings" Presentation of <i>The Awakening</i>	Read + respond to "Sweat",
5	<b>Zora Neale Hurston</b> : "Sweat" Presentation of <i>Their Eyes were Watching God</i>	Read and respond to: "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self"
6	<b>Alice Walker</b> : "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self" Presentation of <i>The Color Purple</i>	"Magdalena Looking"
7	<i>The Color Purple</i> : Film	
8	<b>Amy Tan</b> : "Two Kinds" Presentation of <i>The Kitchen God's Wife</i> and/or <i>The Joy Luck Club</i> .	"Two Kinds"
9	<i>The Joy Luck Club</i> : Film	
10	<b>Susan Vreeland</b> : "Magdalena Looking" (from <i>Girl In Hyacinth Blue</i> ) Presentation of: <i>The Passion of Artemisia</i>	<i>Fear of Flying</i> , (chapter 1)
11	<b>Tracy Chevalier</b> : <i>The Girl with a Pearl Earring</i> (presentation and/or film)	
12	<b>Erika Jong</b> : <i>Fear of Flying</i> Discussion of chapter 1 and presentation of the novel.	<i>Downtown</i> (extracts)
13	<b>Anne Rivers Siddons</b> : <i>Downtown</i> Discussion of extract and presentation of novel	"Marrying Absurd"
14	<b>Joan Didion</b> : "Marrying Absurd" Presentation of <i>Play it as it Lays</i>	"Lady Lazarus"
15	<b>Sylvia Plath</b> : "Lady Lazarus" and other poems Presentation of <i>The Bell Jar</i>	
16	<b>Barbara Kingsolver</b> : "The Muscle Mystique" Presentation of <i>Bean Trees</i> and/or <i>Animal Dreams</i> and/or <i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>	"The Muscle Mystique"
17	<b>Caryl Churchill</b> : <i>Top Girls</i> (watching a play)	
18	<i>Top Girls</i> continued	
19	Course roundup and Matura preparation	
20	Course roundup and Matura preparation	

# Course Reader: The Other Side of the Story

## I. Poetry Sampler

- Anne Bradstreet (1612 - 1672)
- Amy Lowell (1874 - 1925)
- Emily Dickinson (1830 - 1886)
  
- Dorothy Parker (1893 - 1967)
- Sylvia Plath (1932 - 1963)
- Nikki Giovanni (1943 --)
- Rita Dove (1952 --)
- Gwendolyn Brooks (1917 -- 2000)
- Ruth Behar (contemp.)

## II. Short Prose Samples

Carolyn Chute,	"Tall Woman Love"
Virginia Woolf,	"The Legacy"
	<i>A Room of one's own</i> (extract)
Kate Chopin,	"The Story of an Hour"
	"A Pair of Silk Stockings"
Zora Neale Hurston,	"Sweat"
Alice Walker,	"The Abortion"
Amy Tan,	"Two Kinds"
Susan Vreeland	"Magdalena Looking"
Erika Jong,	<i>Fear of Flying</i> (chapter 1)
Anne Rivers Siddons,	<i>Downtown</i> (extract)
Joan Didion,	"Marrying Absurd"
Sylvia Plath,	<i>The Bell Jar</i> (extract)
	"Lady Lazarus"
Barbara Kingsolver	"The Muscle Mystique"

## III. Recommended novels for presentations

Kate Chopin,	<i>The Awakening</i>
Zora Neale Hurston,	<i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>
Alice Walker,	<i>The Color Purple</i>
Amy Tan,	<i>The Kitchen God's Wife</i>
Susan Vreeland	<i>The Passion of Artemisia</i>
Tracy Chevalier	<i>Girl With A Pearl Earring</i>
Erika Jong,	<i>Fear of Flying</i>
Anne Rivers Siddons,	<i>Downtown</i>
Sylvia Plath,	<i>The Bell Jar</i>
Joan Didion,	<i>Play it as it Lays</i>
Barbara Kingsolver,	<i>The Bean Trees</i>
	<i>Animal Dreams</i>
	<i>The Poisonwood Bible</i>