

**Poets and Photographers:
Studies in Feminism, Poetry, and Visual Culture
Fall 2007**

English 390 (S Course)

Monday, Wednesday, Friday
11:20 a.m.-12:20 p.m.
16 Asbury Hall

Marnie McInnes
305 Harrison Hall
mmcinnnes@depauw.edu, x 4366
Office Hours: afternoons, 1-3 p.m.



I saw a high hill and on it a form shaped against hard air.

It could have been just a pole with some old cloth attached,
but as I came closer
I saw it was a human body

trying to stand against winds so terrible that the flesh was blowing off the bones.
And there was no pain.
The wind

was cleansing the bones.
They stood forth silver and necessary.
It was not my body, not a woman's body, it was the body of us all.
It walked out of the light.

~ Anne Carson, from "The Glass Essay"

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

In this course, we will explore how women poets and photographers of the 20th and 21st centuries have used words and images to express their relationship to the world. To make this topic manageable, and to spark comparisons between poems and photographs as modes of representation, we'll look at several poet-photographer pairs. Some of the pairs have common life experiences or common ways of seeing the world; other pairs fit together less closely, yet may help us identify key issues in women's experience. The first pair, Sharon Olds and Sally Mann, for example, use family members in their art in ways that some readers find exploitative and grotesque. H.D. and Audre Lorde call attention to the female body, sexuality, and body politics, themes of interest to a number of photographers. The two artists at the end of the semester, Cindy Sherman and Anne Carson, create narratives through nuanced portrait photography and long poems.

To help us think through issues raised by poems and photographs, we will read some provocative articles in Amelia Jones's collection, The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader. "Visual culture" is the name of a controversial, new, and not universally accepted academic discipline distinct from English and Art History – a discipline that deliberately blurs the boundaries between high art (painting, sculpture, "art photography") and popular culture (advertisements, movies, Facebook, soap operas). This breaking of boundaries can be helpful, freeing us from mincing distinctions between high and low, and pushing us to reconsider what is valuable and beautiful, and to whom. Visual culture asks us to consider the social and political contexts in which images are created. You will notice in the Reader how many different academic disciplines are represented: from studio art to economics and biology. You will also notice the wide variety of perspectives that coexist within the field of feminism.

In September, a week-long visit by writer and cultural critic bell hooks will allow us to explore feminist activism across generations and within different cultural groups. Questions about "difference" (between women and men, gay and straight culture, one ethnic group and another, etc.) will inform our readings and discussion directly at several points in the semester and indirectly throughout. We may attend other special campus events, art openings, and the like, as a supplement to our readings and discussions.

Keep an open mind, be patient with new ideas, and plunge in!

TEXTS

We'll use the following books for English 390, supplemented by readings posted on our Blackboard website. Please bring your copy of the relevant text to class; this is a firm requirement. Books are available at Fine Print on Washington Street and the DePauw Bookstore.

Amelia Jones, ed., The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader
Sharon Olds, The Gold Cell
Sally Mann, Immediate Family
bell hooks, Black Looks: Race and Representation
Audre Lorde, Sister, Outsider
Adrienne Rich, The Fact of a Doorframe
Anne Carson, Glass, Irony and God

EVALUATION

Final grades in English 390 will be based on the following work:

- 5-page paper (20%)
- Midterm (take-home & in-class) (25%)
- Multi-part final project: prospectus, annotated works cited, drafts, presentation (30%)
- Final exam (25%)

Speaking and Listening (S) certification will be based on:

- Preparation for and participation in class discussions.
- Two S assignments: leading class discussion and panel presentation.

Consistent, reliable, fully engaged participation in class discussion *may* raise your final grade by as much as a third of a letter, while less-than-thorough preparation and participation may lower the final grade by the same amount.

Note that you may contribute to class discussion in many ways: by asking questions, offering your reactions to readings, and (perhaps most important of all) by acknowledging ideas offered by classmates and drawing others into the discussion. Good discussion is not a competition to see who can come up with the cleverest point or speak the most eloquently. Instead, good discussion involves give and take; it depends on a willingness to be courteous, take risks, and pay attention.

More than a very few absences will lower your final grade and may jeopardize your S certification. If you find yourself unable to come to class because of illness or for any other reason, please try your best to let me know beforehand.

As you work on your papers for the class, I encourage you to take advantage of the excellent services offered by consultants in the Writing Center. As you work on oral presentations, make use of the Speaking and Listening Center. Both are in the ARC on the second floor of Harrison Hall.

ACADEMIC HONESTY & CITATION OF SOURCES

You are familiar with the most obvious types of academic dishonesty: cutting and pasting material from the web, borrowing someone else's paper, speech, or slide presentation, using ideas from a book without citing the source, bringing notes to an exam, and so forth. Be aware that less obvious forms of plagiarism sometimes cause trouble as well. If you submit a paper or lab report to one class, for example, you can't submit the same work to another class, unless you have explicit permission from both instructors. Borrowing paragraphs or even two- or three-word phrases from an encyclopedia or website also counts as plagiarism and will result in a charge of academic dishonesty (in this class or others) and a severe grade penalty.

Please pay attention to DePauw's Academic Integrity Policy included in the online Student Handbook. I expect you to understand the policy and to adhere to it scrupulously. If you have questions about whether you're paraphrasing and citing sources correctly, please come see me and we'll work through the answers together. Please use MLA documentation style for all of your papers in the course.

CALENDAR – FALL 2007
ENG 390: Poets and Photographers

~ Although we'll stick to the following schedule pretty closely, you should anticipate some changes and additions to assignments marked on the calendar.

~ Please print all of the readings posted on Blackboard at the start of the semester.

~ Bring your own copy of the relevant book or article to class – no exceptions!!

~ Before making end-of-semester travel plans, check the exam dates for all of your classes, and be sure not to leave early or return late from Fall Break or Thanksgiving.

Photos, Poems, and Feminism

August	22	Introduction (photographs)
	24	Introduction (poems)
August	27	Reading against the grain. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (44-53)
	29	Reading images. Adrienne Rich, "Vesuvius at Home" (BB)
	31	Reading gender. John Berger, from <u>Ways of Seeing</u> (37-39)

Inspiration / Exploitation: Sharon Olds and Sally Mann

September	3	Sharon Olds, <u>The Gold Cell</u> (23-44)
	5	(47-63)
	7	(67-91)
September	10	Sally Mann, <u>Immediate Family</u>
	12	articles on Mann and ethical issues.
	14	Paper # 1 (on a particular pair, 5 pages) due at start of class.

Race and Representation: bell hooks

September	17	bell hooks, "Introduction," "The Oppositional Gaze," "Madonna" Evening lecture by bell hooks.
	19	bell hooks, "Revolutionary Black Women," "Selling Hot Pussy"
	21	bell hooks, "Representations of Whiteness in the Black Imagination" Discuss conversations we've had with bell hooks this week. <i>Sign up today for leading class discussion during the next 3 weeks.</i> <i>Decide on meeting time and place for your group.</i>

Feminism and Visual Culture

S assignment # 1. Class discussion in this unit will be led by you, in groups of 3.

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| September | 24 | Difference. Sander Gilman, "Black Bodies, White Bodies" (136-50)
Lorraine O'Grady, "Olympia's Maid" (174-186) |
| | 16 | Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance" (205-16)
Pratibha Parmar, "Hateful Contraries" (287-93) |
| | 28 | Elizabeth Bishop, "In the Waiting Room" (BB)
Jo Spence, photos from "Remodeling Photo-History" (BB) |
| October | 1 | Body. Susan Bordo, "Never Just Pictures" (454-65)
Janet Wolff, "Reinstating Corporeality" (414-26) |
| | 3 | Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" (392-401) |
| | 5 | H.D., "Helen" "The Dancer," "The Master," "The Poet" (BB) |
| October | 8 | Calls to action. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind" (130-135) |
| | 10 | Audre Lorde, essays and speeches from <u>Sister, Outsider</u> ;
"Coal," and a few other poems. |
| | 12 | Midterm (take-home & in-class; includes an essay related to S assignment # 1). |

----- *Fall Break!* -----

Re-Imagining Womanhood: Hannah Höch and Adrienne Rich

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| October | 22 | Hannah Höch. Excerpts from Maud Lavin, <u>Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch</u> . (BB) |
| | 24 | Höch research (response paper) |
| | 26 | Topic due for final project (3 page discussion). |
| October | 29 | Adrienne Rich, poems from <u>The Fact of a Doorframe</u> .
"Aunt Jennifer's Tigers," "Living in Sin," "A Marriage in the Sixties,"
"Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" and a few more. |
| | 31 | "Planetarium," "Diving into the Wreck," (response paper) |
| November | 2 | "For Ethel Rosenberg," "Paula Becker to Clara Westhoff" |

Narrative Acts: Cindy Sherman and Anne Carson

November 5 **Prospectus due for final project (3 pages on thesis and argument).**
7 Cindy Sherman
9

November 12 Anne Carson, "The Glass Essay"
14 "The Gender of Sound"
16

November 19 **Annotated works cited & presentation bullet points due.**
*Sign up for a date for your panel presentation;
decide on dress rehearsal time and place.*

---- Thanksgiving -----

Oral Presentations / Final Projects

S assignment # 2. Short formal presentation on your final project as part of a panel.

November 26 Panel 1
28 Panel 2
30 Panel 3

December 3 Panel 4
5 **Final Project due.**

Thursday, December 13 **Final exam, 8:30-11:30 a.m.**