

Spring 2003 08/031:169 Changing Concepts of Women: The Art of Aging

Time: MW 4:00-5:15

Place: 442 EPB

Instructor: Professor Teresa Mangum

Office: 357 EPB

Hours: MW 3-4, Th 2:45-3:45
or by appointment

Phone: 5-0323

Email: teresa-mangum@uiowa.edu **Web Address:** <http://twist.lib.uiowa.edu/aging/>

Pass Word: memory

Required Texts

Literature:

Martin Kohn, Carol Donley, and Delese Wear, eds. *Literature and Aging: An Anthology*. Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1992.

Fannie Flagg. *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café*. McGraw-Hill, 1987.

May Sarton. *As We Are Now*. W.W. Norton, 1973.

Paule Marshall, *Praisesong for the Widow*. NAL-Dutton, 1983.

Velma Wallis. *Two Old Women*, Harper Perennial, 1994.

Bruce Sterling. *Holy Fire*. Bantam Books, 1996.

Alan Bennett. *The Clothes They Stood Up In and Lady in the Van*. Random House, 1989.

Films:

Jon Avnet, director. *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991) 130 minutes (recommended)

Keiko Ibi, director. *The Personals: Improvisations on Romance in the Golden Years*, 1999.

Deborah Hoffman, director. *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*, 1995.

Course Requirements:

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
3 to 5 page essay	20%	Mar 5
10 commentaries, including paper proposals	10%	weekly
Panel presentations and your own 1-2 page summary	20%	see syllabus
5-8 research essay	30%	May 2
Final examination	20%	

Syllabus

<i>Week 1</i>	
Jan 22	INTRODUCTION
<i>Week 2</i>	

Jan 27	<p>Essays: Teresa Mangum, "Teaching the Patient Impatience: Art, Aging, and the Medical Consumer." <i>The Lancet: Supplement, Literature and Ageing</i> 354 (November 1999): 25-28.</p> <p>Kathleen Woodward, "Youthfulness as Masquerade." <i>Discourse</i> 11.1 (Fall/Winter) 1988-89): 119-42.</p> <p>Poems: Randall Jarrell, "Next Day," 7-8 Lucille Clifton, "Miss Rosie," 43</p>
Jan 29	<p>**Groups meet to prepare poems for Feb 3 class*</p> <p>For Feb 3:</p> <p>Poems: Amy Lowell, "A Lady," 44 May Swenson, "How to Be Old," 46 Anne Sexton, "Old," 47 W.S. Merwin, "Grandmother and Grandson," 240-42 Alice Walker, "Medicine," 88 Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Bean Eaters, 90</p> <p>Essay: Kathleen Woodward, "Decrepitude, The Mirror Stage, and The Literary Imagination." <i>Kenyon Review</i> 5 (1983): 43-66.</p>
<i>Week 3</i>	
Feb 3	<p>Discussion of poems led by groups: Amy Lowell, "A Lady," 44 May Swenson, "How to Be Old," 46 Anne Sexton, "Old," 47 W.S. Merwin, "Grandmother and Grandson," 240-42 Alice Walker, "Medicine," 88 Gwendolyn Brooks, "The Bean Eaters, 90 and Essay: Kathleen Woodward, "Decrepitude, The Mirror Stage, and The Literary Imagination." <i>Kenyon Review</i> 5 (1983): 43-66.</p>
Feb 5	<p>TRANSITION: MOVING THROUGH MENOPAUSE</p> <p>Essays: Emily Martin, "The Woman in the Menopausal Body." <i>Reinterpreting Menopause: Cultural and Philosophical Issues</i>. Eds. Paul Komesaroff, Philipa Rothfield, and Jeanne Daley. London: Routledge, 1997, 239-54. Roe Sybylla, "Situating Menopause within the Stratgies of Power." <i>Reinterpreting Menopause: Cultural and Philosophical Issues</i>. Eds. Paul Komesaroff, Philipa Rothfield, and Jeanne Daley. London: Routledge, 1997, 200-21.</p>

<i>Week 4</i>	
Feb 10	PANEL 1: Cultural Conceptions of Menopause Novel: Fannie Flagg, <i>Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Café</i> , pp. 1-69
Feb 12	<i>Fried Green Tomatoes</i> (complete the novel)
<i>Week 5</i>	
Feb 17	<i>Fried Green Tomatoes</i>
Feb 19	TRANSITION: SURVIVING ON ONE'S OWN Film: Keiko Ibi, director, <i>The Personals: Improvisations on Romance in the Golden Years</i> (SHOWN in class) Essays: Sandra Lee Bartky, "Unplanned Obsolescence: Some Reflections on Aging." In <i>Mother Time: Women, Aging, and Ethics</i> . Edited by Margaret Walker. New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999: 61-74. Stephen Katz, "New Sex for Old: Lifestyle, Consumerism, and the Ethics of Aging Well." Forthcoming in <i>Journal of Aging Studies</i> , Spring 2003. Special issued edited by Teresa Mangum.
<i>Week 6</i>	
Feb 24	Poems: May Sarton, "On a Winter Night," 45 Michael Blumenthal, "The Pleasures of Old Age," 87 Philip Booth, "Fallback," 146-47 Short story: Saul Bellow, "Leaving the Yellow House," 388-414
Feb 26	**Groups meet to prepare to lead Mar 3 class and to discuss paper proposals** Short stories for Mar 3: Peter Taylor, "What Do You Hear from 'Em?," 355-67 Bernard Malamud, "In Retirement," 109-116 Toni Cade Bambara, "Maggie of the Green Bottles," 213-18 Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path," 9-15 Due: 1 page paper proposal posted on the web for responses from me and peer and editors (counts also as a commentary)
<i>Week 7</i>	
Mar 3	Discussion of stories led by groups: Peter Taylor, "What Do You Hear from 'Em?," 355-67 Bernard Malamud, "In Retirement," 109-116 Toni Cade Bambara, "Maggie of the Green Bottles," 213-18 Eudora Welty, "A Worn Path," 9-15

Mar 5	<p>PANEL 2: Widowhood and Living Alone</p> <p>Novel: Paule Marshall, <i>Praisesong for the Widow</i></p> <p>Due: Paper One 3-5 page Comparison of language, images, and actions used to characterize features of aging in two short pieces (short stories or poems)</p>
<i>Week 8</i>	
Mar 10	<i>Praisesong for the Widow</i>
Mar 12	<i>Praisesong for the Widow</i>
Mar 17-21	SPRING BREAK
<i>Week 9</i>	
Mar 24	Novel: May Sarton, <i>As We Are Now</i>
Mar 26	<i>As We Are Now</i>
<i>Week 10</i>	
Mar 31	<p>AGING AND ALTERNATIVE REALITIES</p> <p>PANEL 3: Alzheimer's and Dementia</p> <p>Creative Nonfiction (later a play): Alan Bennett, <i>The Lady in the Van</i></p>
Apr 2	<i>The Lady in the Van</i>
<i>Week 11</i>	
Apr 7	<p>Essay: Anne Davis Basting, "Looking Back from Loss: Views of the Self in Alzheimer's Disease." Forthcoming in <i>Journal of Aging Studies</i>, Spring 2003.</p> <p>Study the TIMESLIPS project on the web at www.timeslips.org Attend Basting's lecture on Monday, 3:30 in Gerber Lounge Arrive prepared to ask questions based on her essay!</p>
Apr 9	<p>Stories: Sue Miller, "Appropriate Affect," 271-80 Eudora Welty, "A Visit of Charity," 331-35 Alice Munro, "Spelling," 281-92</p> <p>Poems: Ted Kooser, "The Very Old," 308 Howard Nemerov, "Near the Old People's Home," 309 Lucille Clifton, "Miss Rosie," 43</p>
<i>Week 12</i>	

Apr 14	Film: Deborah Hoffman, <i>Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter</i> (1995) shown in class Due: One-page proposal for your research paper (please post on web for suggestions from me and your peer editors)
Apr 16	Discussion of <i>Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter</i> PANEL 4: Rejuvenation Therapies Novel: Bruce Sterling, <i>Holy Fire</i> , pp. 1-80
<i>Week 13</i>	
Apr 21	<i>Holy Fire</i> Due: Annotated working bibliography of five sources for your research paper (please post on web)
Apr 23	<i>Holy Fire</i>
<i>Week 14</i>	
Apr 28	FINDING ONE'S WAY IN OLD AGE: MYTHS OF SURVIVAL Folktale: Velma Wallace, <i>Two Old Women</i>
Apr 30	<i>Two Old Women</i> ***Research Papers due by Friday at 5:00 in my mailbox in 310 EPB (Be sure to put your paper UNDER my name)**
<i>Week 15</i>	
May 5	Reports on research projects
May 7	Reports on research projects
EXAM	

08:169/131:169 Changing Concepts of Women

Course Description and Requirements

Though we tend to think of aging in terms of changes in the body, this course is based on the premise that the way we experience aging in ourselves and others depends upon culture as well as biology. In other words, our perceptions of the aging process are greatly influenced by social, religious, and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and values as well as by institutions such as HMOs, hospitals, dialysis centers, rest homes, retirement community, senior centers, and programs like the British University for the Third Age or the American Elder Hostel. As women know better than anyone, aging is never a neutral, universal experience. Attitudes toward aging vary widely when one's age-identity is considered in light of other markers this society views as important constituents of identity, which can range from the fundamental to the seemingly trivial: gender, ethnicity, sexual preference, economic status, region, kinds of illnesses, degree of frailty, mental acuity, or even the practical but also symbolic ability to drive a car.

In this class, we turn to fiction, short stories, poems, theoretical essays, and film in search of a richer understanding of the varied and sometimes contradictory meanings ascribed to later life. We'll be investigating how stereotypes, which can be positive as well as negative, are produced. More importantly, we'll consider the fears, mysteries, and hopes from which stereotypes spring. Our larger task, then, will be to create our own collaborative analysis as we ask what kind of "cultural work" these stereotypes perform.

We will approach that objective in several ways. First, we will be reading and seeing texts that actively challenge conventional attitudes toward older women. Second, you will be developing your skills as a cultural critic by responding to our reading in class discussion, in weekly commentaries, and in carefully argued essays. Third, each of you will participate in a research group so that you can pursue particular interests you develop. I encourage the research groups to be as inventive and tenacious as possible. You'll find helpful material in Reserve Room course materials, in discussions on our course web site as well resources our librarian Helen Ryan has accumulated for us on the web page, and in comparing ideas with your group members. These groups will share their ideas first through a collaborative presentation and then through individual reports on your findings in the form of a research paper and informal individual reports to the class during the last week of the semester.

Course Requirements

Assignment	Percentage	Due Date
3 to 5 page essay	20%	
10 commentaries, including paper proposals	10%	weekly
Panel presentations and your own 1-2 page summary	20%	see syllabus
5-8 research essay	30%	
Final examination	20%	
Attendance	5 pts deducted from final grade for each absence after 3	

Informal Commentaries:

Each week, I'll announce several questions that we will take up in class discussion. To prepare for class, you will write a one-page response to one of these questions. You should note passages from your reading (with page numbers) to clarify what specific details in the text support your opinion. Not only do these commentaries enrich class discussion, but they help to hone your skills of analysis, explanation, clarity, and coherence. Because class depends upon timely responses to these questions, I accept NO LATE COMMENTARIES. Over the course of the semester, I'll assign 15, and you're only required to do 10. Fewer than 8 merits an automatic zero for this portion of the grade. Most students find commentaries a comfortable, thoughtful way to approach materials and to feel prepared for class. Two of the commentaries will be one-page proposals for your first and second paper.

Panel Presentations:

The class will be divided into groups. Each group will need to meet outside class:

- ◆ to assign each other research tasks
- ◆ to plan how to present the group's conclusions in an informative, creative, CONCISE fashion
- ◆ to prepare a bibliography for the class
- ◆ to prepare an outline of your findings for the class
- ◆ to prepare whatever visual aids you wish to use—slides, film clips, etc.

You can learn about your topic by using traditional research materials in the library and by using web resources (you'll find great links on our web page), but also by watching television shows, previewing movies, examining advertisements in different types of magazines, by conducting interviews—be creative! For information about literary topics, try the Modern Language Association Bibliography or MLAB. It is one of the indexes on the Library's Gateway to the Internet. You'll also find it, along with other index links on our webpage resource section. Note that several of these sites like Ebscohost include some on-line copies of articles.

As you prepare for your report, think like a good teacher. You need to be an encyclopedia of information, a great performer, and a magnificent organizer. Use this as an opportunity to hone skills you'll soon need when you're out there interviewing. You want to present your ideas clearly and effectively. No hemming, hawing, or what's-nexting.

Consider signing up for a panel that focuses on a topic you might like to study further as a research paper topic. That way, you'll have a good start for your final project, a research paper that explores a theme our literary and theoretical readings has raised for us this semester.

First Essay:

For your first essay, I'll ask you to focus on one stereotype or recurring image of older women. In your essay, you'll argue for the multiple meanings and uses of that image. In other words, you'll be asking what "cultural work" that image performs. You can refine your topic and approach after you read my suggestions on your paper proposal (due Sep. 9).

I will be looking for a well-developed argument in which you clearly set out a topic and then take a position on the topic in your opening paragraph. Then you will persuade me, your reader, of your point of view by addressing one aspect of the topic in each paragraph that follows, and by using brief quotations and references to characters,

setting, conflicts, and interesting uses of language in the text on which you're basing your argument. Each example should be followed by your careful explanation of how that example illuminates your argument. Remember that an unexpected or controversial thesis always produces a more interesting essay than a re-hashing of the obvious. We'll discuss strategies for moving from superficial, obvious first impressions to thoughtful challenging analysis throughout the semester.

Papers should include:

- ◆ your name in the top right-hand corner of each page
- ◆ page numbers on each page
- ◆ double-spaced, dark type
- ◆ a clever title
- ◆ properly introduced quotations indicated by quotation marks for short quotations and by being set-off as a block for long quotations
- ◆ citations giving the source and page number of each quotation or paraphrase
- ◆ a bibliography if you also use secondary sources

NOTE: ALWAYS keep a copy of your essay on disk or paper in case of loss.

Research Essay:

Early in the semester I will ask you to choose a topic that you would like to explore through independent research and as part of your group work. You can generate ideas by taking a look at the sources in the Reserve Room, by reading newspapers (the New York Times is a great resource) and magazines, and just by listening to news, television, friends, relatives, etc. Also, browse through relevant journals such as Research on Aging or The Gerontologist for ideas.

Proposal:

Your proposal, due Nov. 3, will have two parts this time:

- ◆ a one-page overview of your topic, approach, the literary and film texts you'll use, and your tentative conclusions
- ◆ a one-page bibliography of secondary sources you have consulted with a sentence describing the relevance of each. You should list at least 10 **useful** sources.

Essay:

Your final essay allows you to explore one of the issues related to women and aging that you have found particularly engaging or troublesome. I assume most of you will end up writing about two or three of the books or films we've studied. You are also welcome to include other sources as long as you clear them with me beforehand. Your goal will be to decide how to use what you have learned in the course of your research to

write a rich, insightful study of the issues raised in our primary texts (the fiction, poetry, and film we've studied). What you **DO NOT** want to do is to write a book report **OR** a summary of historical information. Neither will be acceptable. What you **DO** want to do is to create an illuminating, thoughtful study of the representation of aging in a culturally significant text. Think of yourself as a teacher—teaching your reader ways of seeing how representations work in a text. What language, details, and images are used to create a particular view of aging? What does that perspective say about at least one important aspect of this culture's feelings about aging? Does the text you're discussing seem to participate in a view of aging you see reflected across the culture or does it seem unique or resistant? Does it collaborate with or question conventional views of aging? How? To what end? Remember to focus closely on language and images and to consider how they work to encourage feelings and judgments and even to sidestep issues connected to aging.

I strongly encourage you to show me and your classmates rough drafts along the way. The most successful writing occurs in an imagined and actual community of readers and bridges the gap between an individual's world view and that of her or his readers.

Plagiarism

Please remember that whenever you use material from a source--from an encyclopedia to an article to a book to a tv show to a website--that you must provide full and appropriate documentation, including where possible the author, title, location, publisher, date, and page numbers. Failure to cite sources constitutes stealing someone else's ideas, which is plagiarism. Similarly, offering a copy, even a modified copy, of someone else's writing as your own constitutes plagiarism. It is essential that you avoid any form of plagiarism since, under university rules of conduct, plagiarism will be penalized by automatic failure and even, potentially, by dismissal from the University. If you are in doubt about whether your use of a source might be perceived as plagiarism, ask BEFORE you turn in an assignment.