

Stages and Transitions in Women's Lives

WNST 890-350 and 890-550

Syllabus—Spring 1999

Wednesdays, 6:15-8:45 p.m.; Winthur Hall 1012

Dr. Devoney Looser

Office: Salisbury Hall 306

Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Wednesdays, 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., and by appointment

Phone: 472-5117 (office) or 472-1042 (department)

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Textbook Rental

Women, Feminism and Aging (Browne)

As We Are Now (Sarton) [NOTE: Retrieve from Languages and Literatures Section]

Bookstore

The New Ourselves, Growing Older (Doress-Worters and Siegal)

The Awakening (Chopin; Dover Thrift Edition)

(Additional Readings on Reserve and on Web)

COURSE GOALS:

- To examine identity issues that women may face in their adult lives.
- To investigate the double standard of aging in our society.
- To understand the concerns of older and elderly women in the United States.
- To appreciate the challenges facing--and the achievements of--mid-life and older women.

WNST 350 counts toward the Women's Studies major (33 credits), minor (21 credits), and certificate (15 credits).

GRADING FACTORS:

I will be grading you in several areas: 1) three exams, 2) a creative project and presentation (group or individual); and 3) attendance, participation, and responses.

1) Exams (Threat 75 points each)

Each exam (Feb. 24th, Apr. 7th, May 12th) will include an objective section and an essay section. The objective section will be based on vocabulary found in our readings, trends and data, and explanations of concepts. The essay questions will be based on our discussion questions. In your answers, you should refer specifically to the material you read in the course to illustrate your points. The essay questions will allow you to employ extended analysis of the reading material, including your own opinions and interpretations.

2) Attendance, Participation, and Responses (100 points)

Attendance, participation in class, and written response to the readings are crucial to your success in this course. Participation does not mean simply coming to class. It means being an active part of discussion (both speaking and listening). It means asking questions when they

arise in class, via e-mail, or in my office hours. If you are taking part in these activities, it will show me that you are preparing and thinking about the material.

Written responses to the assignments (in the form of notes, questions, and comments on the readings and the discussion questions) will be collected weekly. I will mark your response excellent, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. Multiple unsatisfactory responses will lower your participation grade, because it demonstrates that you were not adequately prepared for class.

We will have approximately 15 class sessions over the course of the semester. When you participate in discussion--with questions or statements of fact or opinion--at least once per class session, you will be considered an A-level participator (an average of 6 points per class). If you participate in discussion on occasion (for instance, once every two or three classes) and do an excellent job in your small group work, you will earn a B-level participation grade (an average of 5 points per class). If you attend class and are an active listener, you will receive a C-level participation grade (approximately 4 points per class).

I do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences. If you are hospitalized or become seriously ill, have someone contact me or the Office of Student Life as soon as possible to work out an alternative schedule for completing the ongoing work of the course.

3) Creative Project (75 points)

You will be asked to present, during class, the results of an individual or group project on an issue related to the course. This project can be activist, creative, informative, or entertaining. I encourage you to take risks--to do something new to you. Your grade will be determined primarily by how you conceive of the project and make sense of the results. In other words, you need not define yourself as an artist to choose an artistic project or an actor to choose a dramatic one. I consider your ideas, effort, and assessment more important than your execution.

Here are some possibilities for projects for individuals or small groups:

- Perform a community service project related to the goals of the course, perhaps volunteering at an elder care facility or starting your own community service group, such as a campus student parent organization.
- Create an "aging journal," or an "aging scrapbook," observing or reflecting on your own or someone else's experiences as they relate to the readings. You could do this project in written form or on videotape or audiotape.
- Interview or shadow one or more women whom you respect and write a report on your reflections about how their age, gender, race, class, and/or sexuality shapes their lives at home, at work, or both.
- Study the content of television shows, magazine advertisements, shopping center displays, or some other medium, drawing conclusions about issues of age, gender, race, class, and/or sexuality as they intersect.
- Organize an on-campus event (in the union, in a dormitory) on a course-related topic about which you think others should know more.
- Conduct a campus survey about a course-related issue you think is of importance and report the results to the Royal Purple (You may need Human Subjects Clearance for this project. See me if you are interested in more information).
- Come up with a new product (or a proposal for a product) of your own design to facilitate learning about women and aging or to create a better world for older women to live in. For

instance, what would a middle-aged or elderly Barbie look like? What might you invent to make your own life or the lives of other women easier as they age?

- Rewrite the lyrics of some famous songs or poems to make them more inclusive of aging women.
- Design a 'zine or a web page that reflects your interests in course-related issues. Be sure to explain how what you chose to do arose from the content of the course.
- Write a standard research paper (with works cited) of at least 10 pages on a course-related topic.

We will brainstorm other possibilities in class. Regardless of what you produce, you will hand in **a written component** to accompany your project or paper (*20 points*). I will expect a brief (two pages typed and double spaced) summary from each individual or FROM EACH GROUP MEMBER, describing your individual and/or collective efforts, explaining the rationale behind the work, and outlining what you hope your project achieved. Each individual or group will also **present the project** to the class (*20 points*). We will be scheduling these presentations later in the course. In March, I will ask you to turn in a **handwritten proposal** of your project. *Late work will be penalized 10 points per business day until it is turned in or completed.*

Grading Scale (out of a possible 400 points)

361 to 400 points = A
319 to 360 points = B
281 to 320 points = C
241 to 280 points = D
240 and below = F

WNST 890-350/550: Stages and Transitions in Women's Lives Reading Assignment Schedule

Weds., January 20th: Introduction to the Course

Sontag, "The Double Standard of Aging" (Handout).

Weds., January 27th: Women, Feminism, and Aging

Browne, pp. 3-46.

OGO, pp. xi-xxvi and pp. 3-21.

"The Federal Response to the Demographic Revolution of the 21st Century," Jeannette C. Takamura, <http://www.aoa.gov/international/nyrem.html>

Weds., February 3rd: Relationships in Middle and Later Life

OGO, pp. 81-100 and pp. 133-150.

"Ten Women Describe Their Marriages," and "Women's Feelings About Divorce," from Shere Hite's Women in Love (Reserve and Handout)

"Marital Status and Living Arrangements," from the U.S. Census Bureau
<http://www.census.gov/prod/99pubs/p20-514.pdf>

Weds., February 10th: Our Looks and Our Lives

OGO, pp. 38-51.

"The Cult of the Fear of Age," from Naomi Wolf's The Beauty Myth (Reserve)

"The Beauty of Age," from Ellen Lambert's The Face of Love (Reserve)

Weds., February 17th: Our Looks and Our Lives, Part II

"Body work," in Essence by Judith Zimmer (Available through EBSCO Host)

"The Aging woman in Popular Film," from Sex Roles (Reserve)

"Redefining Beauty and Reclaiming Power," from Terry Apter's Secret Paths (Reserve)

Film: Death Becomes Her (film)

Weds., February 24th: Women and Families: Choices and Patterns and EXAM #1

OGO, pp. 101-117.

"Mothers and Daughters: Lovers and Strangers," from Shere Hite's The Hite Report on the Family (Reserve)

"Population and Family Characteristics," from The U.S. Forum on Family and Child Statistics. <http://www.childstats.gov/ac1998/poptxt.htm>

Weds., March 3rd: When "Happily Ever After" Isn't

Chopin, The Awakening, pp. 1-116 (Bookstore).

Mid-Term Course Evaluation

Weds., March 10th: Women's Health at Midlife and Later

OGO, pp. 118-132; pp. 221-248; and pp. 315-381.

"The Undescribed Experience," from Germaine Greer's The Change (Reserve)

"Half of Older Americans Report they Are Sexually Active," from the NCOA
<http://www.ncoa.org/news/archives/sexsurvey.htm>

Weds., March 17th: Women's Economic Status in Later Life

Browne, pp. 165-80.

OGO, pp. 151-203.

Weds., March 24th: SPRING BREAK--NO CLASS

Weds., March 31st: Strategies for Equality

Browne, pp. 123-64.

OGO, pp. 427-440.

Weds., April 7th: Caregiving and Long-Term Care and EXAM #2

Browne, pp. 181-211.

OGO, pp. 204-261.

“Mistreatment of the Elderly,” from the NCOA http://www.ncoa.org/publications/family%20care/mistreatment_of_the_elderly.htm

Weds., April 14th: Old Women, Depression, and Isolation

Sarton, As We Are Now, pp 1-134 (Textbook Rental)

Weds., April 21st: Dealing With Loss, Death, and Dying and PRESENTATIONS

OGO, pp. 415-426.

“Funeral Planning,” from the NCOA http://www.ncoa.org/publications/family%20care/funeral_planning.htm

“On Mortality,” from Carolyn Heilbrun’s The Last Gift of Time (Reserve)

Weds., April 28th: Empowerment and Older Women and PRESENTATIONS

Browne, pp. 212-228.

OGO, pp. 427-440.

Weds., May 5th: Women and Aging: Toward the 21st Century and PRESENTATIONS

Browne, pp. 264-81.

Review Session and Course Evaluation

Final Exam on Weds., May 12th, from 6-8 p.m.: EXAM #3