ENGLISH 345—Formal Experimentation with the Self

Sabrina Sadique | Spring 2019 | Concord Academy 3 credits | Open to grades 11 & 12

This course explores the etymologic and chiasmic correlations between "experiment" and "experience," art and artifice, through formal risks taken by primarily 20th-century female authors. How does a poetic act become an experience? How does testing a literary boundary risk one's being and become the soul's craft? How does art inform and reflect the self, and the self dare its transgressions in the shape of a transgressed genre? With select works (Dickinson, Woolf, de Beauvoir, Bishop, Moore, Stein, Levertov, Brooks, Sexton, Plath, Rich, Lorde, Lispector, Piercy, Gilman, Carson, Rankine, among others), the course probes how questions of epistemology become questions of ontology for women in the modern literary tradition.

Texts

All poems that we will parse within the arc of this course will be electronically shared on the course page for English 345 on Schoology. You are **required** to come to class *having closely read the text(s) assigned for that day* and *with hard copies of all readings*. **Check the Schoology site for updated homework assignments at 5pm the evening before class**. I will post readings for Monday by 5pm on the preceding Friday.

Evaluation

Your final course grade will integrate your able fulfillment of the following requirements—

1. **Completion of reading assignments**,
2. **Prompt attendance** of class,
3. **Thoughtful, involved, and respectful class participation**,
4. **Timely submission** of written work and projects,
5. ***Congeniality! *How you regard your peers* and your literary surround with the strength of your *imagination*, *intuition*, and *nature* is *as* significant as the compassion and discernment with which you approach literature.**

I will heed all genres of your self-expression in my final assessment. The required components above will not be designated numeric values, but you will receive grades on your written submissions, which will alert you to your standing in the course. **Your final grade will predominantly take into account (a) your absorption of the thematic and argumentative concerns of the course and (b) the evolution of your (verbal & written) analytic skills over the arc of the term**.

Belatedness

As a general rule, I will dock late work a third of a letter grade for every day that it is late. For example, if you hand a B+ paper in a day late, its grade will drop to a B. *Formal papers and projects are requirements of the course, and you must complete them in order for you to receive credit for this course*. In special circumstances, I am flexible about the due dates of longer assignments (i.e. essays) so long as you make your request to me *early* and *in person*. ***Extensions will NOT be granted the day before an assignment is due.***

Faux Pas

Computers & phones will not be permitted in the course. The only exception to laptop use will be for purposes of delivering in-class writing assignments. On these rare occasions, I will explicitly instruct you to use them.

Plagiarism

…is simply not allowed as it dishonors not only the efforts of your cohort and our collective aims to learn together, but also because it negates your own singularity. There is a marked (not subtle) difference between drawing from the consciousness (thoughts, ideas, persuasions) of another in order to expand your own and the act of appropriating one's imagination and calling it your own. The former is crucial for the act of learning; the latter is theft. ***Reach out to me fearlessly if you are having trouble with an assignment, and we will find a happier alternative.*** For the best possible experience at CA, observe common trust in all your interactions with the CA community.

I expect you to apprise yourself with the Chicago Manual of Style method of citation and formatting. Despair not! I will methodically teach you how to cite your sources before the submission of your formal essays.

Contact

E-mail (sabrina_sadique@concordacademy.org) is the best way to set up a meeting. Send me a message *two days in advance of your preferred time of appointment*. We will typically meet at my office (Room 341a, English Department, South School) during **C, D, or E** block unless I inform you of an alternate time or venue.

SCHEDULE

Note that the numbers below (1, 2, and so on) per week correspond to the number of times we will meet as a class. Generally, we will convene thrice a week (with few exceptions to integrate holidays)—twice for roughly 75 minutes and once for approximately 40 minutes. Presentations and assignments are marked in red with two emboldened asterisks (**). Please note the tentative due dates on your calendars and prepare accordingly. Starting February 4, you will be required to (a) respond to a prompt on given texts/poets and (b) engage with your peers' responses on discussion threads in Schoology. Please check the **Schoology page for the course** by 5pm on the day before class.

Week 1—January 8-11
1. **Elizabeth Bishop**, "One Art"
2. **Elizabeth Bishop**, "One Art"

Week 2—January 14-18
1. **Marianne Moore**, "To A Chameleon"
2. **Emily Dickinson**, "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died"
3. **Emily Dickinson**, "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died"

Week 3—January 22-25
1. **Emily Dickinson**, "The Zeros taught Us—Phosphorus—"
2. **Emily Dickinson**, "The Zeros taught Us—Phosphorus—"

Week 4—January 28-February 1
1. **Virginia Woolf**, *The Waves* (opening) **(Presentation 1**)**
2. **Virginia Woolf**, "A Room of One's Own"
3. **Elizabeth Bishop**, "Sestina" **(Presentation 2**)**

Week 5—February 4-8
1. **Elizabeth Bishop**, "Sestina"
2. **Gertrude Stein**, "Objects" from *Tender Buttons* **(Presentation 3**)**
3. **Gertrude Stein**, "Objects" from *Tender Buttons*

Week 6—February 11-15
1. **Gertrude Stein**, "Objects" from *Tender Buttons*
2. **Denise Levertov**, "Everything That Acts Is Actual" **(Presentation 4**)**
3. **Denise Levertov**, "Everything That Acts Is Actual"

Week 7—February 19-22
1. **Alice Walker**, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" **(Presentation 5**)**
2. **Gwendolyn Brooks**, "the mother" & **Anne Sexton**, "Unknown Girl in the Maternity Ward," "In Celebration of My Uterus"

Week 8—February 25-March 1
1. **Anne Sexton**, "Unknown Girl in the Maternity Ward," **Lucille Clifton**, "the lost baby poem," and **Danez Smith**, "Dinosaurs in the Hood" **(Presentation 6**)**
2. **Sylvia Plath**, "The Colossus" & "Mirror" **(Presentation 7**)**
3. **Patricia Klindienst**, "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours"

Week 9—March 4-8 **(Major Assignment—Sestina/Villanelle due**)**
1. **Adrienne Rich**, "Diving into the Wreck" **(Presentation 8**)**
2. **Adrienne Rich**, "Diving into the Wreck"
3. **Adrienne Rich**, "When We Dead Awaken"

SPRING BREAK—March 8 @ noon—March 24

Week 10—March 25-29
1. *Departmental Retreat*
2. **Adrienne Rich**, "When We Dead Awaken," "Planetarium"
3. **Adrienne Rich**, "Orion"

Week 11—April 1-5
1. **Audre Lorde**, "The Women of Dan Dance with Swords in Their Hands to Mark the Time When They Were Warriors" **(Presentation 10**)**
2. **Cammy Thomas (guest)**, "Can I Get Up" & **Gwendolyn Brooks**, "The Boy Died in My Alley"
3. **Audre Lorde**, "Coal"

Week 12—April 8-12
1. **Muriel Rukeyser**, "Myth" and **Sylvia Plath**, "Elm" **(Presentation 9**)**

2. **Hélène Cixous,** "The Laugh of the Medusa," and **Robin Coste Lewis**, "Prologue" through "Catalog 2: Ancient Egypt" and "Mother Church No. 3" from *VOYAGE of the SABLE VENUS*
3. **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**, "The Yellow Wallpaper" **(Presentation 11**)**

Week 13—April 16-19
1. **Charlotte Perkins Gilman**, "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper?"
2. **Virginia Woolf**, "A Room of One's Own" (selections)

Week 14—April 22-26
1. **Virginia Woolf**, "A Room of One's Own" (selections)
2. **Clarice Lispector**, "The Smallest Woman in the World" (trans. Elizabeth Bishop) **(Presentation 13**)**
3. **Teach each other Anne Carson**'s "Every Exit is An Entrance" in *Decreation*

Week 15—April 29-May 3
1. **Clarice Lispector**, "The Hen" (trans. Elizabeth Bishop) or "A Chicken"
2. **Clarice Lispector**, "The Hen" (trans. Elizabeth Bishop) or "A Chicken"
3. **Marge Piercy**, "The Moon is Always Female" **(Presentation 13**)**

Final Project ABSTRACT due

Week 16—May 6-10
1. *Genesis* 1-3 & **Simone de Beauvoir**, selections from *The Second Sex* **(Presentation 14**)**
2. **Simone de Beauvoir**, selections from *The Second Sex*
3. **Marge Piercy**, "Postcard from the Garden" **(Presentation 15**)**

Week 17—May 13-17
1. **Anne Carson**, "Every Exit is An Entrance" from *Decreation* **(Begin Final Project**)**
2. **Anne Carson**, "Every Exit is An Entrance"
3. **Audre Lorde**, "Power"

Week 18—May 20-22
1. **Marianne Moore**, "Poetry"
2. **Marianne Moore**, "Poetry"