

## LITT 3217-001 Fall 2005

### Special Topics in American Literature—Contemporary Domestic Fiction

MWF 2:10pm-3:25pm, Room B-012

**Instructor:** Dr. Kristin Jacobson

**Office phone:** (609) 626-5581 **Office Location:** J-236

**Email:** Please use our course's WebCT email

**Office Hours:** Mondays 3:30-5:30; Wednesdays 1pm-2pm; and by appointment

**Mailbox:** Arts and Humanities, K-150

#### Required Texts:

- *Little Women*, Louisa May Alcott
- *Housekeeping*, Marilynne Robinson
- *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros
- *The Corrections*, Jonathan Franzen
- *Paradise*, Toni Morrison
- *A Gesture Life*, Chang Rae-Lee
- *Gardens in the Dunes*, Leslie Marmon Silko
  
- **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition**
- **WebCT:** <http://webct.stockton.edu:2083/webct/public/home.pl>

#### Additional Resources:

- **Stockton Libraries:** <http://library.stockton.edu/>
  - **Periodical Databases:**  
[http://library.stockton.edu/Library\\_Databases/Dbases\\_table.html](http://library.stockton.edu/Library_Databases/Dbases_table.html)
  - **Language and Literature links:**  
[http://library.stockton.edu/Web\\_Resources/lang.html](http://library.stockton.edu/Web_Resources/lang.html)
- **Domestic Fiction:** <http://www.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/domestic.htm>
- **Waterboro Public Library Site on Domestic Fiction:**  
<http://www.waterborolibrary.org/bklistdom.htm>

**Course Description:** This course explores the premise that novels, like people, are assigned gendered identities based on an author's gender, subject matter, and primary readership. Domestic fiction, typically associated with novels focused on the domestic sphere and written by and for women, is perhaps one of the best-known gendered genres—today sometimes included in the broader category of “chick lit.” This class will explore the construction of domestic fictions' gendered identities in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century by surveying domestic novels written by both men and women. Throughout the course we will discuss the aesthetic, thematic, and contextual factors that contribute to a novel's gendered identity. We will also consider how domestic fiction has changed in the past 100 years. If in the nineteenth century men's fiction desired an escape from the domestic sphere, as Nina Baym contends, and primarily engaged domesticity in terms of property, and women's fiction primarily consisted of sentimental tales about women seeking home and security in marriage, we will consider whether or not there remains distinctly gendered ways of writing about the home in contemporary fiction.

**Course Requirements:** You will be expected to:

- (1) **Attend class meetings and be prepared.** That means DO THE READING; this is a discussion-based class and if you haven't done the reading, you won't be able to contribute and the class (as well as your grade) will suffer accordingly
  - a. The instructor reserves the right to impose graded pop quizzes if the class fails to keep up with the reading;
  - b. **Attendance**—you are allotted three absences during the semester for fatigue, burnout, cocktail flu, personal reasons, malfunctioning alarm clocks, etc. For

each absence after your first three, your final grade **will be reduced five points per additional absence**, down to and including "F." Regular class attendance is a crucial component to passing this course.

- (2) **Participate in large and small group class discussions.** This course is what you make of it and will work *only* if everyone participates;
- (3) **Complete all assignments.** Passing the course requires timely completion of ALL of the assignments, long and short, in-class and out-of-class.

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#### Grades

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|---|------------|
| • Talking Points Assignment (100 points each)                           | <b>200</b> |
| • Final Paper   | <b>300</b> |
| • Reaction Papers (50 points each; 10 total; 5 before midterm; 5 after) | <b>500</b> |
| <b>Total – 1000</b>   |            |
- Regular, spirited class participation may assist borderline final grades.

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#### Grading Scale

100-95: A	89.9-87: B+	79.9-77: C+	69.9-67: D+
94.9-90: A-	86.9-83: B	76.9-73: C	66.9-63: D
	82.9-80: B-	72.9-70: C-	62.9-60: D-
			59.9 & below:

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#### Assignments

- **Talking Points Assignment** (100 points each): For this assignment you will sign up for two different class periods. On those days you will be responsible for crafting 4 discussion questions based on the day's reading. These questions will be distributed to the class and instructor via WebCT at least 24 hours in advance.
- **Reaction Papers** (50 points each; 10 total; 5 before midterm; 5 after): These papers will present a focused, critical discussion of a week's assigned reading. Due on Fridays or Wednesdays, as noted on the syllabus. You may complete no more than 1 reaction paper per week. You **MUST** write at least one reaction paper on each assigned novel. 1-2 typed pages each, or 250-500 words. See assignment sheet for more details.
- **Long Paper**: The long paper requires the use of outside research in the form of peer-reviewed articles or books. 8-10 typed pages, or 2000-2500 words. **Option 1**: Discuss how one of the novels this semester supports, refutes, or otherwise complicates some specific aspect of gender identity, such as Judith Butler's notion of gender performance, biological research into gender identity, sociological or psychological studies in gender identity, gendered space, etc. **Option 2**: Compare and contrast the domestic spheres in two of the novels we read this semester. Construct an argument about the (social/historical/literary) significance of your observations.

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#### Email Policy:

1. Use WebCT email for all course correspondence.
2. I check my email each day in the morning. Please plan your email questions accordingly.
3. I will not respond to email questions about class content if you were absent; please contact a classmate with these queries. After chatting with a classmate, visit office hours with specific questions about missed material.
4. I will not discuss grades over email. Grades should be discussed in person during office hours or other arranged meetings.

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**Accommodation for Students with Special Needs:** Stockton College complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students with disabilities who seek accommodations should contact the Learning Access Program located in the West Quad Building, Suite 110 or by call 652-4988. Additional information on the program may be obtained from Stockton web site <http://www2.stockton.edu/wellness/lap.html>.

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**Academic Dishonesty:** Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and risk failing the course. Other sanctions may also apply.

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### Syllabus—LITT 3217—Fall 2005<sup>1</sup>

#### Week 1: Introductions & *Little Women*

- **Sept 7:** Introduction to course, students and instructor.
- **Sept 9:** *Little Women* (1-68, chapters 1-7)

**Reminder:** 1<sup>st</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, September 23.

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#### Week 2: Conventional Domestic Fiction—*Little Women*

- **Sept 12:** *Little Women* (69-145, chapters 8-14)
- **Sept 14:** *Little Women* (146-217, chapters 15-23)
- **Sept 16:** *Little Women* (221-295, chapters 24-31)

**Reminder:** 1<sup>st</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, September 23.

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#### Week 3: Conventional Domestic Fiction—*Little Women*

- **Sept 19:** *Little Women* (296-365, chapters 32-38)
- **Sept 21:** *Little Women* (366-449, chapters 39-47)
- **Sept 23:** Complete *Little Women* Discussion. Begin *Housekeeping* (3-28, chapter 1)

**Reminder:** 1<sup>st</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, September 23.

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#### Week 4: From Conventional to Contemporary Domestic Fiction—*Housekeeping*

- **Sept 26:** *Housekeeping* (29-75, chapters 2-4)
- **Sept 28:** *Housekeeping* (76-108, chapters 5-6)
- **Sept 30:** *Housekeeping* (109-142, chapter 7)

**Reminder:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, September 30.

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#### Week 5: From Conventional to Contemporary Domestic Fiction—*Housekeeping*

- **Oct 3:** *Housekeeping* (143-175, chapter 8)
- **Oct 5:** *Housekeeping* (176-219, chapters 9-11)
- **Oct 7:** Complete *Housekeeping* Discussion. Begin *House on Mango Street* (3-34)

**Reminder:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, October 7.

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#### Week 6: From Conventional to Contemporary Domestic Fiction—*House on Mango Street*

- **Oct 10:** *House on Mango Street* (35-71)
- **Oct 12:** *House on Mango Street* (72-110)
- **Oct 14:** Complete *House on Mango Street* Discussion. Begin *The Corrections* (3-66)

**Reminder:** 4<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, October 14.

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#### Week 7: Masculine Domestic Fiction?—*The Corrections*

- **Oct 17:** *The Corrections* (67-167)
- **Oct 19:** *The Corrections* (168-268)
- **Oct 21:** *The Corrections* (269-369)

**Reminder:** 5<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, October 21.

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#### Week 8: Masculine Domestic Fiction?—*The Corrections*

- **Oct 24:** *The Corrections* (370-455)
- **Oct 26:** *The Corrections* (459-566)
- **Oct 28:** Complete *The Corrections* Discussion. Begin *Paradise* (3-49)

**Reminder:** 6<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, November 18.

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<sup>1</sup> Class Schedule subject to changes with notice. Readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due.

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**Week 9: In Search of *Paradise***

- **Oct 31:** *Paradise* (53-138)
- **Nov 2:** *Paradise* (141-217); **NOTE:** If you are completing a Reaction Paper for week 9, the paper is **due today, Wednesday, November 2.**
- **Nov 4:** Final Paper Research Day

**Reminder:** 6<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, November 18.

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**Week 10: In Search of *Paradise***

- **Nov 7:** *Paradise* (221-266)
- **Nov 9: Preceptorial Advising (No Classes)**
- **Nov 11:** *Paradise* (269-318)

**Reminder:** 6<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, November 18.

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**Week 11: Suburban Domesticity—*A Gesture Life***

- **Nov 14:** Complete *Paradise* Discussion. Begin *A Gesture Life* (1-96, chapters 1-5)
- **Nov 16:** *A Gesture Life* (97-176, chapters 6-8)
- **Nov 18:** *A Gesture Life* (177-240, chapters 9-11)

**Reminder:** 6<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, November 18.

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**Week 12: Suburban Domesticity—*A Gesture Life***

- **Nov 21:** *A Gesture Life* (241-305, chapters 12-14)
- **Nov 23:** *A Gesture Life* (306-356, chapters 15-17)
- **Nov 25:** NO CLASSES—THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

**Reminder:** 7<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Wednesday, November 23.

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**Week 13: Returning to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—*Gardens in the Dunes***

- **Nov 28:** Complete *A Gesture Life* Discussion. Begin *Gardens in the Dunes* (13-64, Part 1)
- **Nov 30:** *Gardens in the Dunes* (67-149, Parts 2-3)
- **Dec 2:** *Gardens in the Dunes* (153-197, Part 4)

**Reminder:** 8<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, December 2.

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**Week 14: Returning to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—*Gardens in the Dunes***

- **Dec 5:** *Gardens in the Dunes* (201-267, Parts 5-6)
- **Dec 7:** *Gardens in the Dunes* (271-330, Part 7)
- **Dec 9:** *Gardens in the Dunes* (333-378, Part 8) **FINAL PAPER DUE**

**Reminder:** 9<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, December 9.

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**Week 15: Returning to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century—*Gardens in the Dunes***

- **Dec 12:** Extended Class Meeting—2:30-5pm; Complete *Gardens in the Dunes* (381-477, Parts 9-10)
- **Dec 14:** No Class Meeting—Extended Class Schedule
- **Dec 16:** Final Class Discussion—Conclusions about Contemporary Domestic Fiction.

**Reminder:** 10<sup>th</sup> Reaction Paper Due no Later than Friday, December 16.

