

ENGL 7/865 Topics in Lit as Genre: Women Writers and Filmmakers of the 20s and 30s
Fall 2014
Tom Slater

Required Texts: Course Packet from Copies Plus.

Delafield, E. M. *Diary of a Provincial Lady*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Pr., 2002 (1931).

Gibbons, Stella. *Cold Comfort Farm*. London: Penguin Classics, 2006 (1932).

Hammill, Faye. *Women, Celebrity, & Literary Culture Between the Wars*. Austin: U of Texas Pr., 2007.

Kennedy, Margaret. *The Constant Nymph*. London: Virago Pr., 2013 (1924).

Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. London: Liveright, 1998 (1925).

Mayne, Judith. *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*. Bloomington: Indiana U Pr., 1995.

West, Mae. *Three Plays: Sex, The Drag, The Pleasure Man*. New York: Routledge, 1997 (1926-28).

Course Goals: The first four decades of the twentieth century are thought of as a time when popular culture turned decidedly masculine. With the onset of the industrial and technological revolutions, the growth of major cities with their phallic skyscrapers, the new art of motion pictures heavily dominated by male producers and directors, and the great success of writers such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway, women's influence is considered as negligible. That's a convenient narrative that has dominated our sense of history and our academic institutions, two realms that have been dominated by men (not surprisingly). But like most convenient narratives, this one is also not very accurate.

For example, most people don't know that during the teens and twenties, there were more women writers, producers, and directors in the movie industry than at any other time until extremely recently. They also don't know about the tremendous literary success of women such as Anita Loos, Margaret Kennedy, and others. Most importantly, they don't recognize that the extremely popular works produced by these women have been unfairly dismissed, sometimes by the women artists themselves, simply because of their great popularity. The significance of that fact is that it means that the ideas and insights these women offered have been unfairly dismissed as well, thus warping our understandings of our past, ourselves, and the relevance of their ideas to us now.

In this class, we will explore what these very successful and now largely forgotten women offered us in the twenties and thirties and continue to offer now. We will work to grasp an understanding not only of their works but of the times they were responding to. I hope the course structure will provide the opportunities and resources for each of you to pursue the particular interests in this area of your own.

Assignments & Grades: Free Writing Responses and class discussion, 20%. For most classes, I will ask you to have a free-writing of approximately one page (single spaced) ready for the beginning of class. One or two class members will be asked to use their writing to define the important points of the material and lead the discussion (with my assistance). Before doing the writing, I'll provide topics and questions to consider. Don't feel pressured because everyone will have a different perspective and there's no right or wrong.

Two short essays, 15% each. For these assignments, I will provide some choices for you to choose from. Each essay should be approximately six pages long (double spaced). You may use material from your free writings, the texts we've studied and used, or ideas presented by anyone in class to complete these essays. You will not need to do any additional research for them.

Major Research Paper, 40%. This will be produced in a three-step process. First, you should provide a short proposal including a topic, a statement of what you want to explore, the means of study you're considering, why you chose the topic, and a short bibliography. The written portion should be approximately two pages (double spaced) and the bibliography have at least three sources (5%).

Second, you should provide three pages of a rough draft including documentation of any material you've used from sources (5%).

Finally, the complete draft is due on December 3. It should be approximately ten pages, double spaced, though slightly shorter or longer to provide your complete argument should you feel you need the extra space is fine. Use at least four secondary sources (which means that the film or original lit you're focusing on does not count as one of these) (30%).

Final Exam assignment, 10%. This may be either an in-class essay or a take-home essay assignment accompanied by class discussion.

Assistance: Please contact me to set a conference time any time you feel like you'd like to discuss the course material, a rough draft of an essay, or your research. You can reach me by email at tslater@iup.edu or by my office phone 724-357-4879. I will have regular office hours on MW, 1-3 and T **or** R, 11:45-1:45 (depending on days on which I may have a department or committee meeting scheduled, please check with me).

Assignment Schedule:

8/27 Films: *A Bear, A Boy, and a Dog* (Nell Shipman, 1921) and *The Girl From God's Country* (Nell Shipman, 1919).

9/3 Reading: *The Girl From God's Country* material by Kaye Armatage in course packet. Discussion of Shipman films. Film: *The Love Light* (Francis Marion, 1921).

9/10 Reading: Cari Beauchamp material from course packet. Discussion of *Love Light*. Film: *The Blot* (Lois Weber, 1921).

9/17 Reading: "*The Blot*" essay in course packet. Discussion of *The Blot*. Film: *The Red Kimona* (Dorothy Davenport Ried, 1923).

9/24 Reading: Hammill, 1-54; Parker pieces in course packet. Discussion of *Red Kimona* and Parker work. Assign short essay 1.

10/1 Reading: Hammill, 55-75; Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Discussion. Short essay 1 due.

10/8 Reading: Hammill, 76-99; West, *Three Plays*. Discussion.

10/15 Reading: Hammill, 100-23; June Mathis screenplay excerpts. Discussion. Proposal for research paper due.

10/22 Reading: Hammill, 124-51; Kennedy, *The Constant Nymph*. Discussion. Assign short essay 2.

10/29 Reading: Hammill, 152-78; Gibbons, *Cold Comfort Farm*. Discussion. Short essay 2

due.

11/5 Reading: Hammill, 179-212; Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Woman*. Discussion.

11/12 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *The Wild Party* (Dorothy Arzner, 1929). Rough draft of research paper (three pages) due.

11/19 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *Christopher Strong* (Dorothy Arzner, 1933).

12/3 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *Dance, Girl, Dance* (Dorothy Arzner, 1940).

Complete research paper due.

Final Exam period: Wednesday, Dec. 10, 5-7 pm.