

# Florence Feminism & English Literature and Film

UPDATED: April 9, 2018

## Course Description

- **ENG 39995 Special Topics in Cultural Studies**  
(Repeatable for credit when topic varies) Study of selected topics in cultural studies organized around a particular mode or methodology of cultural analysis. Prerequisite: ENG 21011 or HONR 10297. 3.000 Credit hours
- **WMST 40195 Special Topics in Women's Studies III**  
Repeated registration permitted when topic varies. Informed study of critical issues in women's studies from an international or global perspective. Prerequisite: WMST 30000 or WMST 30001. 3.000 Credit hours

Florence has long been a haven for British and American feminist discourse and debate over questions ranging from gender roles to sexuality, from anti-feminism and anti-anti-feminism to male-centricity and womansim. This course will explore the feminist debate through stories, plays, novels, autobiographies and films—some composed by women and others composed by men, all composed in English by British, American, or Italian artists. The course will cover movements and genres from the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the 18th – 21st centuries.

## Required Texts and Films:

- Several works made available online (PDFs)
- Several films and/or parts of films made available online or in class
- Ross, Sarah Gwyneth. *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England*. Cambridge and London: Harvard U P, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-674-03454-9 (**available on Kindle**)
- Eliot, George. *Romola* (**available on Kindle**)
- Forster, Edward Morgan. *A Room with a View*. (**available on Kindle**)
- Beevor, Kinta. *A Tuscan Childhood*. Vintage, 2000. ISBN: 0375704264 (**available on Kindle**)
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. "Casa Guidi Windows" in *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Aurora Leigh, The Battle Of Marathon, An Essay On Mind, Casa Guidi Windows and More*. (**available on Kindle**)
- Sobel, Dava. *Galileo's Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love*. Bloomsbury: Book Club Edition, 2011. ISBN: 0802779654 (**available on Kindle**)
- Mayes, Frances. *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Broadway Books, 1997. ISBN: 0767900383 (**available on Kindle**)

# Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to understand the unique historical development of feminist theory and feminism by British and Italian women.
- Students will appreciate the historical differences between the medieval anti-feminist and anti-anti-feminist debate and the modern (post-medieval) concept of feminism.
- Students will develop an understanding of feminist theory, including in light of adaptation theory (literature into film).
- Students will comprehend the relationships between feminist literature and film.
- Students will understand the unique geographical influence of Florence over feminist thought, literature, and film.
- Students will master skills in applying feminist critiques of literature and film.

# Writing Assignments and Exams

- **Journal (40%; 400 points):** You will keep a journal for four weeks, with each week holding five entries. Each entry is worth 2% (20 points) and should be roughly 100-200 words long. Alternatively, students may choose to compose one long entry for each week, which would be worth 10% (100 points) and should be roughly 500-1000 words long. Most of the focus is on the weeks' readings and viewings (4/5 of the focus); another part of the focus should be an attempt to tie that unit to your touring experiences (1/5 of the focus). The purpose of the journal is two-fold: to prepare your thoughts for the exams, but also to tie your course and touring experiences together. The central question you are exploring is how does history stand within the geographical presence? More detailed directions will be provided at the start of class.
- **Exams (40%; 400 points):** There will be four exams, one for each unit, each worth 10% (100 points). Each will be an essay style exam that will require you to put together that unit's readings and viewings in light of particular topic questions. These will be open-books and open-notes exams that are focused upon your ability to apply knowledge toward deeper thought about the subject matter.
- **Research or Creative Project (20%; 200 points):** You will be provided with a list of possible topics from which to choose. These topics will direct you into deeper research of a small concept that ties all four course units together in some way. This concept might be an aspect of feminist theory, a small piece of history that develops from medieval times into the contemporary age, a narrative theme, or a motif. There are several types of projects; you will choose one and develop it according to the directions. Below is an overview of the possible types of project; more detailed directions will be provided at the start of class:
  - **OPTION #1:** Generate a traditional research paper: the paper must be 2000 to 3500 words long and make use of at least ten quality sources that you find on your own.
  - **OPTION #2:** Generate a multimedia work that must make use of at least ten quality sources that you find on your own. You will have to propose the medium, or media, that you plan to use. For example, you may make a video (such as with your smartphone) that is 10-20 minutes long, or you may do a combination video and written work (such as a blog with videos and/or other supplemental media).
  - **OPTION #3:** Generate a multimedia work that is an expansion beyond the first three weeks of your Journal Work, an expansion of the fifth (touring) applications of each week. There are several ways you might do this: expand the fifth day into a blog that includes pictures and/or videos that you make yourself and also cite from online sources. Remember: the question you are exploring is how does history stand within the geographical presence?
  - **OPTION #4:** Generate historical fiction: a graphic novella, a series of three short stories, or something similar. It should be clear how this work of fiction parallels historical reality.

- **OPTION #5:** Is there something that we did not read or view that you would like to further discover, something that ties directly to this course's focus? Write a report (not quite the same as a research paper) that includes the following:
  - A summary of the work
  - A review of the work's qualities
  - An analysis of the work in light of this course's focus.
- **OPTION #6:** Generate a combination of two or more of the above ideas, with approval.

## Regarding Missed, Late, or Incomplete Work

Late work will be accepted for a period of time after the due date; however, points will be deducted for late submissions. For each day the work is late: 3% (3 out of a possible 100 points or 1.5 out of a possible 50 points) will be deducted from the grade. No work will be accepted after June 28, 2018.

## Course Grades

No grade ever goes above the level of an A+ (never above 100/100 possible points, for example); likewise, no graded work ever goes below the upper level of an F points (never below 55/100 points, for example); however, if an assignment is never submitted, or is submitted too late to be graded, it will receive ZERO points. If your final course score is 64-63%, you will earn a D for the course; if your final course score is 62-60%, you will earn an F for the course. All assignments will be weighted according to the percentage value. All assignments will be evaluated on a 100 point scale as follows:

Letter Grade	20 Point Scale	100 Point Scale	Final Grade Conversion
A+	—	100-98	4.0
A	20	97-94	3.7
A-	—	93-90	3.3
B+	—	89-88	3.0
B	18	87-84	2.7
B-	—	83-80	2.3
C+	—	79-78	2.0
C	16	77-74	1.7
C-	—	73-70	1.3
D+	—	69-68	—
D	14	67-64	1.0
D-	—	63-60	—
F	12	55	0.0

## SAS: Student Accessibility Services

Kent State University recognizes its responsibility for creating an institutional climate in which students with disabilities can succeed. University policy 3-01.3 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability, you may request accommodations to obtain equal access and to promote your learning in this class. Please contact the disability coordinator on campus, Elaine Shively, office 205F in the Learning Center, Classroom/Administration Building, (330) 675-8932 or [eshively@kent.edu](mailto:eshively@kent.edu) to verify your eligibility. After your eligibility for accommodations is determined, you will be given a letter to provide to the class instructor to make arrangements for any necessary classroom adjustments.

# Cheating and Plagiarism

University policy 3342-3-01.8 deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided for in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. If you have questions, please read the policy at [http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?custome1\\_datapageid\\_1976529=2037779](http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/policydetails.cfm?custome1_datapageid_1976529=2037779) and/or ask your instructor.

## General Course Plan

**NOTE:** a more detailed Course Plan will be made available on the first day of class.

- **Unit One (June 4-7): Boccaccio and Chaucer and the Medieval Anti-anti-feminist**
  - Giovanni Boccaccio's influence on Geoffrey Chaucer (Boccaccio was an Italian Humanist from Florence); Chaucer visited Italy several times. We will also examine contemporary filmmaker Pier Paolo Pasolini and his cinematic adaptations of works by these two medieval authors. The exploration will be of the medieval debate between anti-feminists and anti-anti-feminists—a debate that anticipates the founding of feminism during the Renaissance.
  - Reading and Viewing Requirements:
    - A Packet of articles on relevant theory and criticism [PDF]
    - Selections from *The Decameron* (Giovanni Boccaccio) [PDF]
    - Selections from *The Canterbury Tales* (Geoffrey Chaucer) [PDF]
    - Selections from *The Legend of Good Women* (Geoffrey Chaucer) [PDF]
    - Selections from *Il Decameron* (*The Decameron*: [film](#) adaptation by Pier Paolo Pasolini)
    - Selections from *I racconti di Canterbury* (*The Canterbury Tales*: [film](#) adaptation by Pier Paolo Pasolini)
- **Unit Two (June 11-14): The Birth of Feminism and Shakespeare & Zeffirelli and the Influence of Feminism**
  - Italian filmmakers' fascination with English language works goes far beyond so-called "Spaghetti Westerns". Franco Zeffirelli, who was raised by British Female ex-patriots in Florence, makes for a fascinating case study of British feminist and Shakespearean influences over this Italian's aesthetics and ideas of womanhood. But the case is more complex than that: European feminism was founded in Renaissance England and Italy, and the ties to both Shakespeare and Zeffirelli's works make for a fascinating study.
  - Reading and Viewing Requirements:
    - Ross, Sarah Gwyneth. *The Birth of Feminism: Woman as Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England*. Cambridge and London: Harvard U P, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-674-03454-9 ([available on Kindle](#))
    - *Romeo and Juliet* (William Shakespeare, play; Franco Zeffirelli, [film](#) provided by instructor)
    - *Taming of the Shrew* (William Shakespeare, play; Franco Zeffirelli, [film](#))
    - *Tea with Mussolini* (Franco Zeffirelli's semi-autobiographical [film](#))
- **Unit Three (June 18-21): Adoption and Adaptation: British Feminism and Womanhood in Florence (and Italy in General)**
  - Armed with an appreciation for how feminism was both anticipated and developed in British-Florence works, this unit will focus upon how women were portrayed by men and by women. It will note where feminism thrives, as well as where it is virtually non-existent. An appreciation for adaptation theory will enhance an understanding of how cultural perspectives of feminism are adapted into various media, or not adapted. The key question will be with regard to how a medium (a novel, a short story, a play/musical, or a film) adopts feminist or counter-feminist perspectives, as well as how that work is adapted into alternative media to either further or curb

the adoption. Finally, this unit will consider the concepts of adoptions and adaptations in terms of Florence and feminism specifically.

- Reading and Viewing Requirements:
  - Packet of articles on relevant theory and criticism [PDF]
  - Eliot, George. *Romola* (**available on Kindle**)
  - Forster, Edward Morgan. *A Room with a View*. (**available on Kindle**)
  - “A View without a Room” (E.M. Forster, Short Story) [PDF]
  - *A Room with a View* (**film** by James Ivory)
  - Beevor, Kinta. *A Tuscan Childhood*. Vintage, 2000. ISBN: 0375704264 (**available on Kindle**)
- **Unit Four (June 25-28): Contemporary Florence Feminist Discussions**
  - This unit continues the discourse over adoption and adaptation that is begun and developed in the previous unit. It concludes with an American adoption of Florence feminist adaptation: both the novel and the adapted film.
  - Reading and Viewing Requirements:
    - Packet of articles on relevant theory and criticism [PDF]
    - Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. “Casa Guidi Windows” in *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning: Aurora Leigh, The Battle Of Marathon, An Essay On Mind, Casa Guidi Windows and More*. (**available on Kindle**)
    - Sobel, Dava. *Galileo’s Daughter: A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love*. Bloomsbury: Book Club Edition, 2011. ISBN: 0802779654 (**available on Kindle**)
    - Mayes, Frances. *Under the Tuscan Sun*. Broadway Books, 1997. ISBN: 0767900383 (**available on Kindle**)
    - *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Frances Mayes, Novel/Memoir; Audrey Wells, **film**)