

**Subha Xavier**  
**French Literature**  
**Fall 2016**  
**French 331: Women Writing War: Land and Body Politics**

*After taking the Piedmont Workshop in May 2016 in hopes of rethinking a graduate class on literature and war in the Democratic Republic of Congo that I am teaching in Fall 2016, I was challenged to incorporate issues of sustainability not only into that graduate class, but into all my classes. I thus began redesigning my undergraduate course as well in light of sustainability and this is what I came up with. The initial focus of this class was body politics in texts by women writers across the centuries. Now this class is about the relationship between women's bodies and the land. The goal is to read violence against women in parallel with environmental injustice during times of war. As I reread the texts and rethought the class, some of the overlapping questions that emerged were the following:*

- 1. How does land expansion and redrawing of political boundaries make its mark on women's bodies?*
- 2. What is the relationship between religion, land and female bodies?*
- 3. How have male attitudes towards land ownership and possession differed from female ones throughout different historical periods and in different cultural contexts?*
- 4. How do female characters negotiate landmarks and frontiers in times of war?*
- 5. How are environmental disasters experienced by human bodies, male and female?*
- 6. What is the relationship between sexual and gender violence and environmental violence?*

**Subha Xavier**  
**Emory University**  
**Department of French and Italian**  
**300 level course**

FREN 331 Temporalities  
**Women Writing War: Land and Body Politics**

Tuesday/Thursday 10-11:45am

This course will examine the French literary legacy of female writers of war. From religious battles to colonial and postcolonial ones and the world wars, students will analyze the works of women writers who take on the subject of war. In the portrayal of female characters as warriors, victims of aggression, and mediators of peace, women writers from varying time periods and parts of the globe, write about the politics of war through its effects on the land and the body. Students will reflect on

the role of writing in war narratives and the complicated gender dynamics of war and historical fiction as manifest in land and body politics.

This course will begin with Assia Djebar's retelling of the stories of women contemporary with the Islamic prophet Mohammed, and then consider Christine de Pisan's epic poem celebrating the exploits of Joan of Arc. Moving on to Mme de Graffigny's epistolary account of a young Incan Princess' story of abduction to Europe during Spanish Colonial Conquest, we will then turn to Shan Sa's account of the Sino-Japanese war through the story of a forbidden love affair and Marguerite Duras' love story set in the aftermath of the second world war. Finally we will end the course with an examination of poetry by Marie Louise Mumbu set during the recent Congo wars.

Some of the questions we will endeavor to answer in this course are the following:

1. How does land expansion and redrawing of political boundaries make its mark on women's bodies?
2. What is the relationship between religion, land and female bodies?
3. How have male attitudes towards land ownership and possession differed from female ones throughout different historical periods and in different cultural contexts?
4. How do female characters negotiate landmarks and frontiers in times of war?
5. How are environmental disasters experienced by human bodies, male and female?
6. What is the relationship between sexual and gender violence and environmental violence?

#### REQUIRED TEXTS:

Assia Djebar, *Loin de Médine*

Mme de Graffigny, *Lettres d'une péruvienne*

Shan Sa, *La Joueuse de Go*

Marguerite Duras, *Hiroshima mon amour*

#### TEXTS AVAILABLE VIA COURSE RESERVE

Christine de Pisan, *Ditie de Jeanne d'arc* (excerpts)

Marie Louise Mumbu, *Kinshasa la belle* (excerpts)

#### GRADING BREAKDOWN

Participation/preparation (active engagement with texts and discussion)	20%
Research and Brief Writing Assignments on Class Wiki	20%
Essays	30%
Midterm Exam	15%
Final Exam	15%

## COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance:** Students are expected to attend every class period. The reason for missing class is irrelevant; students must be in class to do the work for the class. Missing a class does not excuse you from turning in the work assigned for that day, whatever the reason for your absence.

**Participation:** Active engagement in class means that you are willing to do the assigned readings ahead of time, discuss the assigned materials with your professor and peers, work with others and evaluate the work of others when necessary.

**In-class behavior:** Please arrive on time with cell phones turned off. Please refrain from eating and drinking in class. You may not leave the classroom during class or use your smart phone, Ipad, digital notebook or computer to call, text or email while class is going on. All of this type of behavior adversely affects the classroom learning environment and will incur grade penalties. Laptop computers can only be used for specific in-class writing assignments.

### **Research and Brief Writing Assignments:**

Students will collaborate on class wiki pages researching the impact that each of the wars we are studying has had on the land. Then they will make connections to the literary accounts of war and examine the effects as narrated through the perspective of women.

### **Essays:**

Students will write 2 essays of 3-4 pages in length analyzing the relationship between body and land politics as manifest in one of the works studied in class this semester.

*Late work:* No late work will be accepted.

**Exams:** Each exam will cover all reading materials discussed up that point and all class lectures.

## **RESOURCES**

The French and Italian Department: <http://french.emory.edu>  
Consult the French Department website for information on additional resources related to the study of French culture, literature and language as well as African culture and literature.

The Institute for African Studies: <http://www.ias.emory.edu/home/>  
Consult the IAS website for information and additional resources related to the study of African and African-American culture, history and politics.

EDUCO : <http://french.emory.edu/overseas/educ.html>

EDUCO, a consortium of Emory, Duke, Cornell, and Tulane Universities, offers unparalleled academic and cultural immersion through semester-long or year-long programs in Paris. Students have the unique opportunity to take courses through direct enrollment at the University of Paris as well as those offered at the EDUCO Center. Selected students may study at the renowned Institut des Sciences Politiques (Sciences Po). In addition, participants enjoy group excursions to the theater, art museums, and gastronomical tastings.

Paris Summer Program: [http://french.emory.edu/overseas/summer\\_paris.html](http://french.emory.edu/overseas/summer_paris.html)  
 Emory strongly encourages students to take advantage of the variety of opportunities for study abroad. The Paris Summer Program is open to students who have completed French 101 and 102 (or the equivalent), and offers a variety of courses in language, conversation, culture and literature as well as excursions in France.

The Emory Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.emory.edu/> The Emory Writing Center offers 45-minute individual conferences to Emory College and Laney Graduate School students. It is a great place to bring any project—from traditional papers to websites—at any stage in your composing process. Writing Center tutors take a discussion- and workshop-based approach that enables writers of all levels to see their writing with fresh eyes. Tutors can talk with you about your purpose, organization, audience, design choices, or use of sources. They can also work with you on sentence-level concerns (including grammar and word choice), but they will not proofread for you. Instead, they will discuss strategies and resources you can use to become a better editor of your own work. The Writing Center is located in Callaway N-212. Visit [writingcenter.emory.edu](http://writingcenter.emory.edu/) for more information and to make appointments.

## CALENDAR

Week	Unit	Readings	Assignments
I Aug 25	Introduction	<i>Loin de Médine</i>	
II Aug.30-Sept. 1	Woman, War and the Expansion of Islam	<i>Loin de Médine</i>	Wiki page
III Sept. 6-8		<i>Loin de Médine</i>	Wiki page
IV Sept 13-15		<i>Loin de Médine</i>	Wiki page
V Sept 20-22		<i>Loin de Médine</i>	Wiki page

VI Sept 27-29	Woman, War and the Expansion of Christianity	<i>Ditie de Jeanne d'arc</i>	
VII Oct 4-6		<i>Ditie de Jeanne d'arc</i>	<b>Essay 1</b>
VIII Oct 13	Woman's Bodies in Colonial Conquest	<i>Lettre d'une péruvienne</i>	Wiki page
IX Oct 18-20		<i>Lettre d'une péruvienne</i>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
X Oct 25-27	Female sexuality in the Sino-Japanese War	<i>La Joueuse de go</i>	Wiki page
XI Nov 1-3		<i>La Joueuse de go</i>	Wiki page
XII Nov 8-10		<i>La Joueuse de go</i>	Wiki page
XIII Nov 15-17	Love, War and Nuclear Disaster	<i>Hiroshima mon amour</i>	Wiki page
XIV Nov 22		<i>Hiroshima mon amour</i>	Wiki page
XV Nov 29-Dec. 1	Woman and Violence in the Congo	<i>Kinshasa la belle</i>	<b>Essay 2</b>
XVI Dec 6-8	Conclusion		<b>Final Exam</b>