

6TH SEMESTER BA ENGLISH

CALICUT UNIVERSITY

The logo of CPA College of Global Studies is a shield-shaped emblem. It features a banner at the top with the text "equipping with excellence". The center of the shield contains a stylized graphic of three white, wavy lines on a yellow and orange background. At the bottom, the text "CPA COLLEGE OF GLOBAL STUDIES" is written in a semi-circle.

equipping with excellence

Voices of women

(2019 Admission)

PREPARED BY

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Asst Professor

Dept of English

COURSE CODE: ENG6B11
TITLE OF THE COURSE: VOICES OF WOMEN
NO. OF CREDITS: 4
NO. OF CONTACT HOURS: 90 hrs (5 hrs per week)

AIM OF THE COURSE: To introduce students to experiences unique to women and to the fundamental

precepts of the feminist movement and to identify the polyphonic quality of women's voices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE:

- a. To equip students to steer clear of misconceptions regarding women and to evolve a human perspective about them.
- b. To arouse a keen interest in analysing critically the diversity of women's experiences across the world and to marvel at their creative skills.
- c. To perceive gender as a social construct.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

A. COURSE SUMMARY:

Module 1: 18 hrs

Module 2: 18 hrs

Module 3: 30 hrs

Module 4: 12 hr5

Evaluation: 12 hrs

Total: 90 hrs

B. COURSE DETAILS:

Module 1: Essays

1. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: We Should All Be Feminists
2. Virginia Woolf: Shakespeare's Sister

Module 2: Poetry

1. Eunice D Souza: Bequest
2. Amy Lowell: Vintage
3. Sappho: To Anactoria in Lydia
4. Inez Hernandez Avila: To Other Women Who Were Ugly Once
5. Judith Wright: Eve to her Daughters

Module 3: Fiction

Novel: Kate Chopin : The Awakening

Short stories

1. Clarice Lispector : Preciousness
2. Alice Walker: The Flowers

Module 4: Drama and Film

Thozhilkendrathilekku

At Five in the Afternoon : dir. Samira Makhmalbaf

Mustang : dir Denize Gamze Erguven

READING LIST:

CORE TEXT: A text containing the above lessons will be made available.

FURTHER READING:

Kamala Bhasin---What is Patriarchy?

Nivedita Menon--Seeing like A Feminist

Naomi Wolf--Beauty Myth

Alice Walker ---Color Purple

Caryl Churchill---Vinegar Tom

Deepa Mehta's films---Earth, Fire, Water

Rina Das' Film---The village Rockster

MODULE 1: ESSAYS

1. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: We Should All Be Feminists

- Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is the author of novels, short stories, and non-fiction. She was born in Enugu, Nigeria. Her most recent novel is *Americanah*.
- In *We Should All Be Feminists*, Adichie draws on her personal experiences growing up in Nigeria, as well as her thoughts on what it means to be a feminist, and how gender roles and norms are detrimental to both men and women.
- In the first story, Adichie recounts a conversation with her friend Okoloma, who died in 2005. She and Okoloma, close friends, enjoyed debating with each other about challenging topics, including politics, books, culture, and religion. In a heated debate, Okoloma had called her a feminist.
- Many strangers approached Adichie after the publication of her novel to tell her that despite her obvious interest in women's rights, she shouldn't call herself a feminist. According to these men, feminists could never be married, and so, would never find happiness.
- Adichie examines how gender roles and gender norms in Africa and beyond are detrimental not only for women but for men as well – by limiting the roles that each gender can play in society, everyone loses.
- At the end of the essay, Adichie defines feminists for herself, saying that in her mind, feminism is the act of admitting that there is something wrong with gender as it stands in the world today; feminists are the people who are interested in talking and doing something about it.

2. Virginia Woolf: Shakespeare's Sister

- Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) is recognised as one of the most innovative writers of the 20th century.
- Her 'stream of consciousness' technique enabled her to portray the interior lives of her characters and to depict the montage-like imprint of memory.
- *Shakespeare's Sister* is an extract taken from "A Room of One's Own." In "Shakespeare's Sister", Virginia Woolf explores the plight of women in society in England during the 15th and 16th centuries.
- Virginia Woolf is shocked to know about the real plight of women from Professor Trevelyan's historical records. Disturbing facts about the status of women came to light as the writer continued reading Trevelyan's book: such as, girls who refused to marry a person of her parent's choice were locked up and beaten.
- women in fiction or in works of literature are endowed with strong personalities. But, in reality, the rights of women were trampled upon and they were "locked up, beaten and flung about the room", as Professor Trevelyan points out.
- Woolf wonders what would have happened to a talented woman if she were born in the age of Shakespeare. Since facts about women were difficult to obtain, the writer reflects upon what would have happened if Shakespeare had a highly gifted sister.

Woolf names the hypothetical sister as Judith. Shakespeare, being a man had the privileges of education and entertainment. He went to seek his fortune in London. He worked in the theatre, became successful as an actor, and lived in the centre of activity in the famous city of London. In the meantime, his highly talented sister, one may suppose, stayed at home.

- Woolf reinforces the point that any woman who had extraordinary talent in the sixteenth century, would have either gone crazy, or committed suicide, or lived in isolation outside the village. Isolated because of her genius, she would have been regarded as a half-witch, half wizard, and people would have either feared her or made fun of her. Even nineteenth-century women writers had to adopt male pseudonyms, such as Currer Bell, George Eliot and George Sand.
- In the concluding section of the essay, Woolf says that Judith, the talented poet who could not express herself in writing and was buried in the crossroads, still lives on. With deep empathy for women whose rights are denied, the writer says that Shakespeare's sister lives on in women of today, and in women who efface themselves to nurture their families.
- Shakespeare's hypothetical sister Judith emerges as a symbolic figure of a woman of genius, seeking to come to life in a conducive atmosphere for appropriate self-expression. The writer calls for a change of attitudes in society, whereby one can find parity between men and women, whereby women find space, courage and liberty to express themselves.

MODULE 2: POETRY

1. Eunice D Souza: Bequest

- "Bequest" is written by the feminist poet Eunice de Souza in which she talks about how patriarchy shapes the destiny of women. She talks from the perspective of a woman speaker (probably representing the poet herself) whose mind is shaped by the authoritarian regulations of the phallogocentric society. Her tone remains a bit lost and reflects a sense of pain. This painful soliloquy is not only a confession of a single woman out there. It is an agonized monologue of all those women whose unique voices are either subdued or hued with the essence of patriarchy.
- Through this piece, de Souza reveals how a woman speaker's mindset is shaped, revised, and amended from an early age. The way she learns everything naturally is also monitored to shape her mind according to the patriarchal structure. She used to think showing one's true emotions is symbolically portrayed by the image of Christ holding his heart. But she tried to follow the same, society made her follow the standards. Finally, as a grown-up woman, she thinks she is like a "plastic flower", devoid of truthfulness, selfhood, and most importantly her true identity.

2. Amy Lowell: Vintage

- In this poem one could see a persona who is so enraged that she prepares a drink that is so colourful and she will also add the cold scorn of her beloved into it. It means that her beloved is worth nothing and she adds her beloved is like ice added to a drink. She

continues that this scorn she is drinking is alive and is like some sort of evil. She states that this drink contains a darkness which is the scorn. She is drinking away the pain from the cold scorn she received from her beloved. In this poem one could assume that the persona must have received some sort of debilitation from her beloved. And being a female, she is trying to get away from those dark scorn. Major Themes in this poem are: drinking, love, women.

3. Sappho: To Anactoria in Lydia

- This poem is written by a Greek Lyric poet named Sappho somewhere in the early 6th century. Most of her work was lost or is present in fragments. This lyrical song written by Sappho is known as the 16th fragment of Sappho or The Anactoria Poem, where Anactoria is her love and the poem is addressed to her.
- The magical image viewed in the poem is the earth which is viewed from the space and everything that one loves is beautiful. Sappho emphasizes Helen's beauty in the poem and brings up the idea of how the most stunning Helen abandons her family and moves to Troy for love. Moreover, Sappho relates to her personal life where she recalls her love for Anactoria.
- Whatever one finds the most beautiful is whatever you love; beauty is a function of love. Sappho then goes on to show this to be true using the example of Helen of Troy. Though her physical beauty was allegedly the greatest, Helen herself did not think so, and left her life in order to cavort with Paris, to wander with longing.
- Sappho reveals her taste in beauty at the end of the poem, saying that what she loves best is this woman, that Sappho would rather see Helen's glittering face than all of the power in the world. This is a philosophical poem that turns into a love poem.

4. Inez Hernandez Avila: To Other Women Who Were Ugly Once

- Inés Hernández-Ávila is professor of Native American Studies at University of California at Davis and one of six co-founders of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. She is a poet, visual artist, and cultural worker.
- The poem speaks for all of us in that we tend to see ourselves through the lens of "others" and in particular, in the powerful images of the magazines that seem to hold such power in their spaces. This is especially true in our youth while we're discovering who we are and what others think of us.
- In this poem, Inés elaborates on a special time, perhaps, ceremony, whereby her family recognizes her through "name-giving."
- The striking feature of this poem is the absence of the mention of culture or manifestations thereof, and the Spanish language. It is about someone, a female, that has feelings toward another, perhaps, male.

5. Judith Wright: Eve to Her Daughters

- Judith Wright was an environmentalist. Many of her poems speak of the natural beauty of Australia and condemn the European imperialism of natural Australian lands. In many ways, Wright was very critical of white Australia's apathy towards the environment and the treatment of the Aboriginal people.

- Wright uses the biblical characters of Adam from the Garden of Eden to represent European imperialism. Wright uses the biblical characters of Adam and Eve to represent European colonisers extending their European ideals through invasion.
- The speaker, Eve, talks to her daughters after her and Adam's fall from Eden. She claims it was not she who is to blame for getting them thrown out of Paradise, however then lists the ways in which life has become so much harder for them: draughty shelter, hunger, labour, whining children – yet she is willing to cope. It is Adam who can't seem to accept their new status, becoming intent on making the world a new Eden. Not content with their lot he aspires to become master and have dominion over the whole world.
- The message of the poem "Eve to Her Daughters" is that when man believes that he himself is God, the world will be led astray from faith. Eve warns her daughters not to be "submissive" but rather to help man see that God can still exist in the face of mechanization and scientific advancement.

MODULE 3: FICTION

1. Kate Chopin: The Awakening

- The Awakening, novel by Kate Chopin, published in 1899. Originally titled A Solitary Soul, the novel depicts a young mother's struggle to achieve sexual and personal emancipation in the oppressive environment of the postbellum American South. When it was first published, it was widely condemned for its portrayal of sexuality and marital infidelity. Today it is considered a landmark work of early feminist fiction.
- The Awakening is the story of Edna Pontellier's gradual understanding of herself as an autonomous person with wants and desires, and her struggle to achieve those desires in a world where they are not valued.
- First, Edna realizes that her husband sees her as a possession that he has control over, not a person. In the first few chapters, Edna notices a distinct contrast between how Léonce and Robert treat her that causes her to question her marriage. Edna has fallen in love with Robert and misses him, her initial forays into exploring her own autonomy back in New Orleans have little to do with romance. Edna begins painting again, a self-expressive act, and neglects the role of society housewife, instead socializing with pariahs like Mademoiselle Reisz and Alcée Arobin. Alcée creates a second awakening in Edna because he teaches her the difference between love and desire.
- When Edna returns from visiting Adèle at her sick bed, she sees that Robert has left her. He believes that sparing Edna the scandal of leaving her husband for another man is an act of love. In this sense, Robert chooses what he believes is best for Edna instead of accepting her at her word. Edna returns to Grand Isle, where she first swam in the sea on her own and discovered her autonomy. The meaning of her suicide remains ambiguous, whether she drowns in defeat in the current of society or joins the freedom of the sea in a kind of ascension and triumph.
- In the end, she keeps to the vow she made upon moving into the pigeon house: she will "never again belong to another than herself."

- Edna's story is laden with symbolism. The sea is perhaps the most important symbol in the novel. It variously represents baptism, cleansing, and rebirth. In *The Awakening*, Chopin constructs the sea as a space of freedom—a space outside and away from patriarchal society. For Edna the sea serves as a source of empowerment and a place of refuge. In the beginning it entices her with its “seductive odour” and “sonorous murmur.” Its entreaties are loving but imperative.

2. Clarice Lispector: *Preciousness*

- Clarice Lispector (December 10, 1920 – December 9, 1977) was a Ukrainian born Brazilian novelist and short story writer acclaimed internationally for her innovative novels and short stories. Born to a Jewish family in Podolia in Western Ukraine, as an infant she moved to Brazil with her family, amidst the disasters engulfing her native land following the First World War. She grew up in Recife, the capital of the north eastern state of Pernambuco, where her mother died when she was nine. The family moved to Rio de Janeiro when she was in her teens.
- "*Preciousness*" is told in the persona of a fifteen-year-old Rio school girl. She is up early to make her long commute to school. A focus of the story can be seen as the girl's awakening sense of her sexuality. As she makes the commute, she sees herself as "not pretty", she fears men in the bus will look at her. She also has a sense of class consciousness, she comes from an affluent family with a maid and the men on the bus are working class. She seems to dread her sexual development, talks almost of becoming a nun to avoid sex. There are a few brief lines in her conversation with the maid that are just so amazing. They are almost a history of race relations in Brazil. Long story short, maids and workmen are dark, the affluent lighter skinned. Brazil hid from its African roots for generations and this is buried deep in this story.
- The story *Preciousness* depicts gender discrimination. What difference does it mean to be a girl and a boy? Yes of course this story in particular and the society in general proves this question to be right. As a fact we all know that all are born from the mother's womb. And we all die one day or the other and vanish to a place unknown. But still in the time gap of this worldly life, we categorize human beings as male and female.
- The fact is that woman and man are part of the society and each have their own roles to play in building up the society. The only fact is that we all are equals, though there are biological difference.

3. Alice Walker: *The Flowers*

- Alice Malsenior Tallulah-Kate Walker (born February 9, 1944) is a well-known American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist. She became the first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, for her novel *The Color Purple* in 1982.
- In Alice Walker's short story '*The Flowers*,' the author tells the story of a 10-year-old girl named Myop growing up in a day. The story begins with the child happily exploring a forest. But when she literally stumbles over the body of a dead man, her life will never be the same.
- The setting is just one feature of '*The Flowers*' that conveys its central idea or **theme**. This coming-of-age story expresses the theme of loss of innocence. The story begins

much as childhood begins, merrily without a care in the world. The narrator defines the time in the first sentence as, 'the days had never been as beautiful as these.' Myop plays with the chickens and 'felt light and good in the warm sun.' She feels the excitement and exuberance of youth. She collects flowers and even goes her own way along the stream.

- Then things change. She literally gets snagged by a dead man's body. She steps on his decaying face, lodging her foot in it. As if this were not gruesome enough, she notices his teeth have all been broken, and his head is separated from his body. Nearby, she finds a noose, most probably the tool used to kill the man.
- Myop is no longer frolicking gaily in fields. She has been stopped dead by the violence of this man's death. She lays down her flowers near the man, setting aside her fun. The last line, 'And the summer was over,' completely ends her innocence. Summer and her unmarred childhood have come to an end. Now a harsher, more aware experience will take its place for Myop.

MODULE 4: DRAMA AND FILM

1.Thozhil Kendrathilekku

- Thozhilkendrathilekku,' the historical play that had been written and performed by a group of Namboothiri women more than half a century ago as part of the struggle for their own emancipation, is being brought to life again. The play narrates the life story of Kavunkara Bhargavi who left her marital home to reach the 'Thozhil Kendram,' - work place, in literal translation - which was a sort of the first free commune of women who gathered at Cheramangalathu Mana, Lakkidi in 1948 seeking the freedom to make a living for themselves by finding work.
- This documentary very clearly portrays the rights of women and those discriminations that women face due to the cause of being a female. Women were in general and are in particular are forbidden from doing many things. The only reason is that she is a woman. This documentary very beautifully criticizes all women's right of being the part of the working-class community. Women have always been chained inside the four walls of her home. This documentary puts lights on how women can be empowered. Our history and culture have a list of strong hold women. Though many of them have crossed the boundary of life their footsteps still remain in the soil for us to remind ourselves.

2. At Five in The Afternoon

- Samira Makhmalbaf is currently the most visible member of the formidable Makhmalbaf Film House – the Iranian family of filmmakers. At Five in the Afternoon is her third feature and the second to win a prize at Cannes (after Blackboards in 2000). Ms Makhmalbaf was just 18 when she first presented *The Apple* (1998) to international audiences at various festivals.
- At Five in the Afternoon is an Iranian film made in Afghanistan. A young woman and her parents arrive in ruined Kabul. The young woman attends a newly opened school and she takes part in an exercise in which she argues her case to become the next president of the country. She meets various people, including a photographer, a poet and a French peacekeeping soldier. Her conservative father is troubled by his

daughter's assertiveness. When she is out of his sight, she lifts her veil and puts on a pair of Western court shoes.

- The heart of the film is in the way in which Noqreh moves between the interaction with her father and sister-in-law (the traditional Afghanistan) and a very different interaction with the poet and the soldier (the prospect of democracy in Afghanistan). The sequences in the school are somewhere between the two. There are several occasions when the struggle to define the possibilities for Afghan society are encapsulated in specific actions – eg. when the photographer tells Noqreh to pull down her veil. He believes that this image of the ‘covered woman’ is the correct one for a candidate for the presidency.

4. Mustang

- Mustang is a 2015 Turkish-language film co-written and directed by Deniz Gamze Ergüven in her feature debut. Set in a remote Turkish village, Mustang depicts the lives of five young orphaned sisters and the challenges they face growing up as girls in a conservative society. The event that triggers the family backlash against the five sisters at the beginning of the film is based on Ergüven's personal life. Mustang is an international co- production of France, Germany and Turkey.
- Early summer in a village in Northern Turkey. Five free-spirited teenaged sisters splash about on the beach with their male classmates. Though their games are merely innocent fun, a neighbour pass by and reports what she considers to be illicit behaviour to the girls' family. The family overreacts, removing all "instruments of corruption," like cell phones and computers, and essentially imprisoning the girls, subjecting them to endless lessons in housework in preparation for them to become brides. As the eldest sisters are married off, the younger ones bond together to avoid the same fate. The fierce love between them empowers them to rebel and chase a future where they can determine their own lives in Deniz Gamze Ergüven's debut, a powerful portrait of female empowerment.