

Women in Literature: Dissenting Women

ENGL 210:09 (Spring 2020)

MWF 1:30-2:30 pm

Kiernan Hall 113

Contact Information

Dr. Shannon Draucker
(pronouns: she/her/hers)
Email: sdraucker@siena.edu

Office Location: Kiernan Hall #226
Office Hours: MWF 11:30 am-12:30 pm
W 3:45-5:45 pm
& by appointment

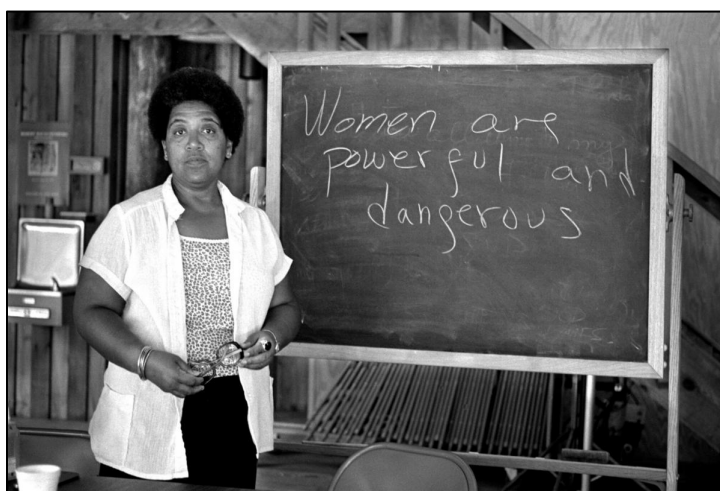


Image: Poetry Foundation/Getty Images

Course Description

“It was in this world of woman speech, loud talk, angry words, women with tongues quick and sharp, tender sweet tongues, touching our world with their words, that I made speech my birthright – and the right to voice, to authorship, a privilege I would not be denied. It was in that world and because of it that I came to dream of writing, to write.”

-bell hooks, Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black (1989), p. 6

Welcome! This semester, we will explore texts by female, trans, and non-binary writers who “touc[h] our world with their words.” We will explore works from a variety of genres by authors from a range of time periods, geographic locations, and literary traditions. Our focus will be on texts whose authors dissent against various forms of injustice in their worlds, including sexism, classism, racism, xenophobia, homophobia, imperialism, colonialism, and transphobia.

We will also ponder questions such as: what is “women’s writing?” Is “women’s writing” necessarily *feminist* writing? How do writers seek to capture “women’s experiences,” if at all? How do these texts explore the intersections of gender with other vectors of

identity, such as race, class, and sexuality? How might we put pressure on concepts of “womanhood” altogether? These are just a few of the questions that will motivate our readings and discussions in this course. I urge you to find and share the lines of inquiry that you consider most compelling. I look forward to learning together this semester.

Learning Goals

Our consideration of the above questions will require us to draw upon our most fundamental close reading, critical thinking, and communication skills. Successful completion of this course means you will:

- Improve your abilities as a close reader of texts from a variety of genres, including novels, short stories, poems, graphic narratives, songs, music videos, YA fiction, and critical theory.
- Hone your voice as a scholar who enters critical conversations about literature and social issues.
- Think intersectionally about the relationships among gender, race, class, sexuality, and other vectors of identity.
- Become an active participant in class discussions by respectfully listening to and engaging with your peers’ ideas.
- Develop as a writer who recognizes the importance of revision and engages meaningfully with feedback.
- Ponder deeply the connections between the material in this course and the “real world.” How does analyzing “women in literature” help us to better grapple with issues in our own time?

Required Texts

The following course texts are available at the Siena Bookstore, online retailers, and local independent bookstores such as the Book House of Stuyvesant Plaza or Market Block Books in Troy (<https://www.bhny.com/>). **You are required to use *THESE EDITIONS* of the texts and bring them to class on the days we are discussing them.** If you do not bring the correct edition of the book to class on the day we are discussing it, you will be marked absent for the day. You may search for the correct edition online by using the ISBN-13 numbers listed below. Please consult with me if you have difficulty accessing any of these course texts.

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (Vintage / ISBN-13: 978-1400033430)

Nella Larsen, *Quicksand and Passing* (Rutgers / ISBN-13: 9780813511696)

Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Mariner / ISBN-13: 978-0544709041)

Akwaeke Emezi, *Pet* (Make Me a World / ISBN-13: 978-0525647072)

Canvas

On our Canvas site, you will find a copy of this syllabus, links to course readings (those labeled “C” on the syllabus), and prompts for the writing assignments (which I will also hand out in class).

Meeting with/contacting me

Office hours (listed at the top of the syllabus) are periods of time each week when I am in my office and available to meet with anyone who stops by. You are welcome to come to office hours at any time (no appointment needed!) to ask questions, go over a paper draft, talk about the reading, or just chat. This is *your* time, so please take advantage! If you’d like to meet with me outside of office hours, please email me, and we can set up a mutually convenient time.

Our primary mode of communication outside of class and office hours will be email, so please check your email regularly for updates from me. Feel free to email me at sdraucker@siena.edu at any time. I will respond within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on weekends.

Course Requirements

In order to make the most out of this course, you will do a good deal of reading and writing and engage in a variety of class activities. Specific course requirements include:

- **Reading:** In order to participate fully in this class, you must complete the assigned reading *before* the class meeting. I will expect you to *study*, not just read, the assigned texts. *Studying* can include, but is not limited to: re-reading key passages, annotating your books, taking notes, and jotting down questions.
- **Discussion:** You should come to class prepared to discuss the works we read, share your ideas, and/or participate in small group activities. Active, thoughtful, and respectful participation is the cornerstone of our course.
 - In addition to your daily class participation, you will also have a formal discussion requirement: the **Mini Presentation and Discussion Starter** assignment. This exercise will consist of a 10-minute presentation in which you discuss the author and historical background of the text for that class and begin the day’s discussion. You will soon receive a more detailed handout for this assignment and will sign up for your date in class.
- **Writing:** You will complete a variety of low- and high-stakes writing assignments throughout the semester. These are designed to help you practice analyzing texts, crafting arguments, organizing your ideas, engaging with primary and secondary sources, and revising your prose. To this end, you will complete the following: **two close reading papers** (2 pages each), an **Intersectionality essay** (3-4 pages), and a **Final Paper/Project** (approx.. 4-5 pages). You will receive detailed handouts for all of these assignments as the time approaches.

Extra Credit

I believe that some of the most exciting and generative intellectual experiences occur when we are able to connect what we are learning in the classroom with the wider world. To that end, I would like to encourage you to attend events on campus and in the community, particularly those that have to do with gender, race, equity, and social justice. These can include (but are certainly not limited to) performances, lectures, discussion groups, gallery exhibits, protests, and community service events. If you have a question about whether an event is appropriate for this assignment, please check with me.

This semester, you may write a **two-paragraph reflection/response to up to three of such events**. You may earn **up to three points of extra credit for each response you complete**. In your response (which should be in the form of a **Word .doc or .docx**), you should:

- a) Include a picture that proves your attendance at the event (this can be a photo of a ticket stub, a picture from the event, or a “selfie” of you at the event – have fun with this! Kudos for especially creative photos 😊)
- b) Give a brief summary of the event
- c) Reflect on how the content of the event may (or may not) intersect with something we have read or discussed in this class.

You may **email me** your reflections at any time throughout the semester; you must turn in all extra credit work to me **before class on Monday 5/4 (the last day of classes)**.

I will try to let you know of events as I hear of them as the semester progresses. I will keep a **shared Google Doc for all of my classes (on Canvas under “Files”)** with a list of events; please add to the list if you hear of a great opportunity on or off campus – or if you are involved in a group that is performing or sponsoring an event!

Please note: While the point of this exercise is meant for you to be out in the Siena and wider communities, I know that life circumstances (work, families, etc.) may prevent some of you from committing to events outside of class. If this is a problem for you but you still wish to earn some extra credit points, please talk to me; we will likely arrange for you to attend an event virtually.

Grading

I will outline specific criteria for each graded project on individual assignment sheets. Here is the overall points breakdown for the course requirements:

- Mini presentation and discussion starter: 50 points
- Close reading #1: 50 points
- Close reading #2: 75 points
- Intersectionality essay: 100 points
- Final Paper/Project: 125 points

-Attendance, Participation, and Engagement: 50 points
=450 points total

Here are the letter grade conversions based on a 450-point scale:

>=423 = A
405-422 = A-
392-404 = B+
378-391 = B
360-377 = B-
347-359 = C+
333-346 = C
315-332 = C-
302-314 = D+
288-301 = D
270-287 = D-
<=269 = F

Attendance Policy

As this is a seminar-style course, your regular attendance and active participation are essential to your success in the course *and* your classmates' learning experiences. Missing **more than three class sessions** will lower your final grade ***by three percent (rounded to the nearest whole point)*** for each additional day missed (days 4 and beyond). **Missing more than six class sessions will automatically result in an F for the course.**

This means you have three "free" absences to use for anything from oversleeping to illnesses, holiday travel, religious/cultural observances, extracurricular commitments, or emergencies. If a long-term illness or family emergency arises, contact me and the VPAA Office (academicaffairs@siena.edu), and we will work it out.

Please also note that **three late arrivals** (10 minutes late to class or more) will constitute an absence. I take attendance at the beginning of class, so if you arrive late, it is your responsibility to see me when class is over so that I record your attendance.

Participation and Engagement

Discussion is the cornerstone of any literature class. I expect everyone in this class to come to each meeting prepared and eager to participate in the conversation. However, I am aware that "participation" and "engagement" can take many forms. Talking more than everyone else does not guarantee you an "A" participation grade. In my classroom, listening attentively and responding to your classmates' ideas is just as important as sharing your own. I am aware that everyone participates differently and that some are more comfortable than others talking in class. To this end, I will incorporate a variety of small-group discussions, written responses, and other in-class

activities to reward multiple forms of participation. Please contact me if there are ways I can help you engage more actively in class.

A word about technology: It is crucial that our classroom feels like a community in which we all contribute thoughtfully, think critically, and listen carefully to each other's ideas. This is extremely difficult to do if we are all behind our laptop screens. Moreover, recent studies* have shown that we listen best and recall information most effectively when we take notes by hand. However, I am also committed to practices that foster sustainability and accessibility. For these reasons, I permit laptops in class on days when I assign readings posted to our course Canvas site. There are also days when I will invite you to bring your laptops for in-class work or peer review. I expect that on these days, you will use your laptops *only* for course-related activities. I ask that you close out of email, Facebook, Instagram, Apple Messenger, WhatsApp, and the like for the duration of our class period; you might even consider downloading the readings and turning off the WiFi on your device entirely. ***Students who use technology for other purposes during class may be marked absent for the day.*** Note that there will be "closed-laptop days" when I specifically ask you to put away your computers for discussion, so please always be prepared with a pen/pencil and paper for note-taking purposes. *Phones must be kept on silent and out of sight at all times.* Please discuss any specific accessibility needs regarding technology with me at the beginning of the semester (see "Accessibility Statement" below).

*See, for example: Mueller, Pam A. and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, "The Pen is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking." *Psychological Science*, 2014, pp. 1-10.

Academic Citizenship

Siena College's Mission Statement reads, "Siena fosters the rigorous intellectual development of its students through a healthy exchange of ideas both inside and outside the classroom...It develops in each individual an appreciation for the richness of exploring knowledge from a variety of perspectives and disciplines." To this end, my expectation is that we will work together to make this classroom a safe, supportive, and inclusive space for the dynamic and respectful exchange of ideas. I ask that we all approach the diverse perspectives offered by our authors and each other with respect, sensitivity, interest, and engagement. The ability to engage in healthy intellectual debate and disagreement is one of the greatest affordances of a liberal arts education, but such debates should never consist of disrespectful comments, hurtful remarks, hostile actions, or personal attacks.

Many of our course texts deal with topics such as gender discrimination, sexual violence, racism, xenophobia, illness, suicide, and death. Much of this material can be emotionally and intellectually challenging. I will do my best to offer a "heads up" about particularly graphic or intense content so that we can all engage safely, carefully, and thoughtfully with the material. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Late and Missed Assignments

Unless you have extenuating circumstances and make specific arrangements with me in advance, graded assignments (signaled with an asterisk[*] on the syllabus) will be penalized **by five percent (rounded to the nearest whole point)** for each 24-hour period they are late. If you are habitually late with your assignments, you will be unable to engage fully in the class, and this will also affect your participation and attendance grade. ***Please note that I will not accept any late work for the course after Friday 5/8 at 11:59 pm EST.***

Submitting Written Work

You will submit all of your written work on our course Canvas site (under “Assignments”). Please note: I will **ONLY** accept papers as **Microsoft Word .doc or .docx attachments** (NOT Google Docs, Pages, or other formats – Canvas will restrict the file type). This will facilitate my full engagement with your work, specifically, my ability to include in-text comments. Siena has a campus agreement with Microsoft for the Office Suite, which makes Office 365 available to our community at no cost. Please see the following site to download Microsoft Office:

<https://itsfaq.siena.edu/display/XenFAQ/Microsoft+Office>

Here’s your Easter egg: before next class, send me an email with the subject line “Hazel” (the name of my brand-new puppy) and any questions you might have about the syllabus after your careful read-through.

Papers must be written in **12-pt. font** (Arial, Times New Roman, or Garamond), be **double-spaced**, and have **1” margins**. All papers must adhere to **MLA-style citations (8th edition)**. Here are my favorite resources to consult for MLA citations:

-Purdue Owl MLA Formatting and Style Guide:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

-MLA Handbook, 8th Edition (available at Standish Library)

Plagiarism & Academic Integrity

According to Siena’s Statement on Academic Integrity, “The concept of academic integrity lies at the heart of any college. This is particularly true of Siena with its strong Franciscan tradition and its dedication to fostering sound moral growth. In such an environment, academic dishonesty cannot be tolerated. Students who commit such acts subject themselves to sanctions as severe as dishonorable dismissal from the College. Academic dishonesty can take different forms, including, but not limited to: cheating [dishonesty in a test situation], plagiarism [dishonesty in the presentation of materials in a paper or report], and failure to report known instances of academic dishonesty.”

Please note that academic dishonesty and plagiarism are serious offenses and can result in failure of the assignment and/or course as well as disciplinary action at the college level. Cases of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the disciplinary procedures described in Siena College's Academic Integrity Policy, the full version of which can be found online:

<https://www.siena.edu/offices/academics/academic-policies-and-procedures/academic-integrity-policy/>

In this class, we will discuss conventions for using and citing sources in academic papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, I invite you to speak with me.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, located in Library 09, provides free one-on-one writing support to all members of the Siena College community. Trained peer consultants assist students at all levels with writing assignments in a variety of subjects. Professional tutoring services and English language support are also available, as well as a long-term Mentor Program for weekly meetings. The Writing Center consultants work with writers from all levels of experience, ability, and expertise. I encourage you to make use of this invaluable resource at least once for each major paper this semester. To learn more and make an appointment, please visit:

<https://www.siena.edu/offices/writing-center/>

Chosen Name and Gender Pronouns

I aim to create an inclusive learning community that supports all students, including students of all gender expressions and identities. I will invite you early in the semester to tell me which set of pronouns (she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/their/theirs, etc.) you feel best fits your identity, if you wish to share. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Accessibility Statement

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Siena College is committed to fostering an accessible learning environment for all students. Students with particular needs should also contact the Office of Accessibility (Foy Hall 109), which is responsible for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. All information disclosed is private and will not be released without your written permission. More information can be found here:

<https://www.siena.edu/offices/accessibility/>

We all learn in different ways, and I am committed to supporting your learning needs. If you have specific accommodations, please let me know at the beginning of the

semester so that I can help you get the most out of this class. Any information about your accessibility needs will be treated with the utmost discretion.

Many difficulties (medical, emotional, financial, cultural, and familial) can affect our abilities to perform academically. Siena provides several support services that are available to all students, including the Office of the Dean of Students, Student Academic Success and Engagement (SASE), Health Services, the Counseling Center, the Title IX Office, and the Department of Public Safety. I am happy to provide more information or connect you with these services throughout the semester.

Office of the Dean of Students: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/dean-of-students/>

Student Academic Success and Engagement (SASE):

<https://www.siena.edu/offices/student-academic-success-and-engagement/>

Health Services: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/health-services/>

Counseling Center: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/counseling-center/>

Title IX/EEO Office: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/title-ix-eeo/>

Department of Public Safety: <https://www.siena.edu/offices/public-safety/>

Please do not hesitate to contact me with ideas or suggestions for making this class more inclusive and accessible. I am committed to supporting your learning in any way I can.

Pandemic & Emergency Preparedness

You are instructed to bring all texts and a copy of the syllabus/course schedule home with you in the event of a College Closure. If your situation permits, you should continue with readings and assignments to the best of your ability, per the course schedule. I will give you instructions via email regarding how to deal with assignments and deadlines. If possible, I will set up online office hours so that you can “check-in” with any questions you may have. If you do not have internet, we will find another method of communication. Stay connected with information regarding the College’s status and reopening schedule by monitoring the Siena website.

Course Schedule

*Please note: readings are listed on the day they are due. Items marked “C” are available on our course Canvas site. Items listed in **bold** are things that you need to do in advance of or bring to class (other than the reading); these are shorter assignments that will count towards your participation and engagement grades. **Items listed in bold with an asterisk (*) are formal, graded assignments, which are to be submitted via Canvas in .doc and .docx formats (see “Submitting Written Work” above).***

You must bring the reading (correct editions only) to class on the day it is assigned, or you will be marked absent for the day.

This schedule is subject to change as needed. I will provide updates in class and via email.

Unit 1: Thinking Intersectionally about Women’s Writing

- W 1/22: Introductions & syllabus
Genny Lim, “Wonder Woman” (in class)
- F 1/24: Read syllabus carefully & send email to Dr. D
Read article you were assigned in class (one of the following, handed out in class) & be prepared to summarize for your classmates:
- George Eliot, from “Silly Novels by Lady Novelists”
 - Virginia Woolf, from *A Room of One’s Own*
 - Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, from *The Madwoman in the Attic*
 - Adrienne Rich, “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision”
 - Alice Walker, from *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*
 - Joyce Carol Oates, “Is There a Female Voice?”
 - bell hooks, “Talking Back”
 - Gloria Anzaldúa, “Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to Third World Women Writers”
 - Nellie Wong, “In Search of the Self As Hero: Confetti of Voices on New Year’s Night, A Letter to Myself”
- M 1/27: Watch Kimberlé Crenshaw, “The Urgency of Intersectionality” (C)
Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I A Woman?” (C)
- W 1/29: Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (C)
Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” & “Who Said It Was Simple” (C)

- F 1/31: Jo Carillo, "And When You Leave, Take Your Pictures With You"
(C)
Watch Jillian Christmas, "Black Feminist" (C)

Unit 2: Indigenous Women's Writing (in preparation for Siena's MLK Lecture)

- M 2/3: Winona LaDuke, "Mothers of Our Nations: Indigenous Women
Address the World" (C)
Chrystos, "I Walk in the History of My People" (C)
Leanne Simpson, "i am graffiti" (C)
Barbara Cameron, "Gee, You Don't Seem Like An Indian From the
Reservation" (C)

- W 2/5: Leslie Marmon Silko, "Lullaby" (C)

***This evening (2/5) at 7 pm** is Siena's MLK Lecture Series on Race and Nonviolent Social Change. Historian and Dakota Access Pipeline Activist LaDonna Brave Bull Allard will be speaking in the Sarazen Student Union (Room 240). You may write a two-paragraph response to this event as one of your three extra-credit options (see above).*

- F 2/7: *NO CLASS – Dr D. at Capital District Feminist Studies Conference
Let Dr. D know if you are interested in attending!*

Unit 3: Marriage

- M 2/10: **Close reading #1 due* (before class, submit via Canvas)**
- W 2/12: Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (C)
- F 2/14: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" & "Why I Wrote
The Yellow Wallpaper" (C)
- M 2/17: Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (C)
- W 2/19: Sandra Cisneros, "Woman Hollering Creek" (C)
Gloria Anzaldúa, from *La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New
Consciousness* (C)
- F 2/21: Jhumpa Lahiri, "A Temporary Matter" (C)

Unit 4: Sexuality: Desire, Pleasure, Violence, Identity

- M 2/24: Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" & "Recreation" (C)
- W 2/26: H.D., "Sea Poppies" (C)
Adrienne Rich, "Twenty-One Love Poems (The Floating Poem, Unnumbered)" (C)
Lucille Clifton, "To A Dark Moses" (C)
Rupi Kaur, "the very thought of you," "you wrap your fingers," & "he moved her hand" (C)
- F 2/28: Carmen Maria Machado, "The Husband Stitch" (C)
- M 3/2: **Close reading #2 due* (before class, submit via Canvas)**
In class:
Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*
Jack Halberstam, from *Female Masculinity*
Adrienne Rich, from "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence"
- W 3/4: Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home*, chs. 1-4 (pp. 1-120)
- F 3/6: *Fun Home*, chs. 5-end (pp. 121-end)
Watch "Ring of Keys" Tony Awards clip (C)
- M 3/9-F 3/13: **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

Unit 5: Race

WEEK OF 3/16: Meet with Dr. D about Intersectionality Essay (sign-ups in class); bring thesis statement and one analysis paragraph to meeting

- M 3/16: Nella Larsen, *Passing*, Part One (pp. 143-178)
- W 3/18: *Passing*, Part Two (pp. 179-210)
- F 3/20: *Passing*, finish (Part Three, pp. 211-end)
- M 3/23: **Intersectionality Essay due* (before class, submit via Canvas)**
Bring Toni Morrison, *Sula* to class
- W 3/25: Toni Morrison, *Sula*, 3-48
Morrison, from *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary*

Imagination (C)

- F 3/27: *Sula*, 49-85
- M 3/30: *Sula*, 86-137
- W 4/1: *Sula*, 138-end
- F 4/3: Beyoncé, "Formation" (C)
bell hooks, "Moving Beyond Pain" (C)

Unit 6: Imperialism, Colonialism, and Immigration

- M 4/6: Fatimah Ashgar, "For Peshawar," "Partition," "Ghareeb,"
"Microaggression Bingo," & "If They Come for Us" (C)
- W 4/8: **"Comments on Comments" for Intersectionality Essay due***
(before class, submit via Canvas)
Warsan Shire, "Home" (C)
- F 4/10 & M 4/13: *NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK*
- W 4/15: **Paper/project proposal due* (before class, submit via Canvas)**
Jenny Zhang, "We Love You Crispina" (C)
- F 4/17: Wang Ping, "Immigrant Can't Write Poetry"
Watch Denice Frohman, "Accents" (C)

Unit 7: Questioning "Womanhood:" Trans & Non-Binary Narratives

- M 4/20: Ursula Le Guin, "Coming of Age in Karhide" (C)
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (C)
- W 4/22: Ryka Aoki, "The Woman of Water Dreams" & "To the New World"
(C)
- F 4/24: Akwaeke Emezi, *Pet*, 1-70

***WEEK OF 4/27: Meet with Dr. D about final papers/projects (sign ups in class);
bring thesis and analysis paragraph to meeting***

- M 4/27: *Pet*, 71-134
- W 4/29: *Pet*, finish (135-203)

- F 5/1:* NO CLASS – ACADEMIC SHOWCASE
- M 5/4:* *Last day of classes*
Present final projects in class
All extra credit responses due by today* (before class, via email)
- W 5/6:* **Final paper/project due* (by 11:59 pm EST, submit via Canvas)**
- F 5/8:* ***Last day to turn in late work for this class. I will not give any credit to work submitted after 11:59 pm EST.***