



## Periods in American Literature: Women Naturalists & the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Novel

According to critic Lisa A. Long, “(Re)defining the parameters of existing literary genres is crucial work, for it determines who will be read (and who will not be read), and how what is read will be measured” (173). This is an upper division survey of women writers who use Naturalism in their novels as an attempt to redefine the genre and explore American Literary trends with a perspective from which it is not usually explored. Women as writers are not commonly associated with the Naturalist movement; women show up all over the place as foils in Naturalism, or as victims of it, or as creators of the tragedy. But how do women authors deal with the genre? Famous Naturalist authors include Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, Stephen Crane. Occasionally, people throw out Edith Wharton as a Naturalist.

Why is this discrepancy between genders and use of Naturalism? Were there women who used this theory of literary evolutionism in their writing, and why are they not included in the great “Canon” of Naturalist writers? Do women writing in this genre have a different agenda than their male counterparts? Can Naturalism be said to be an inherently *feminist* idea why or why not?

### Grading:

Annotated Bibliography & Proposal 10%

Critical Essay: 30%

In-class report of critical article with handout: 20%

Daily Reading Journals: 20%

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Final Week Oral Reports: 10%

### Final Project: Original Research Project, Critical Essay

Your final assignment for this class will be an essay on your research for the semester. The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to produce a potentially publishable essay reporting on research that you have conducted this semester. The final paper should be at least 15 pages in length (double-spaced, typewritten, 1" margins, 12-point font, and documented using the 6th edition of the *MLA Guide*). The draft of this paper must include a recognizable beginning, middle, and end; be proofread carefully; and be at least 12 pages in length.

### Daily Reports:

A one-page summary of a scholarly article or book chapter is due each day. Sign up for your report in the first class meeting. You should bring a print copy AND post your summary on your Blog.

You should have a handout for each member of the class summarizing the main points of the article/chapter you read/report.

### Required Texts

Kate Chopin *The Awakening* 1899

Edith Wharton, *House of Mirth* 1905

Edith Summers Kelley *Weeds* 1923

Ellen Glasgow, *Barren Ground* 1925

Nella Larsen *Passing* 1929 get the Norton Critical Edition, please

Ann Petry *The Street* 1946

Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* 1970

Dorothy Allison *Bastard Out of Carolina* 1993

### Reading Schedule:

Week One *The Awakening* pages 1-66

Week Two *The Awakening* pages 66-end  
 Week Three *House of Mirth* sections 1-16  
 Week Four *House of Mirth* sections 17-end  
 Week Five *Weeds* pages 1-162  
 Week Six *Weeds* pages 163-end  
 Week Seven *Barren Ground* pages 1-270  
 Week Eight *Barren Ground* pages 271-end  
 Week Nine *Passing* pages 1-83  
 Week Ten *The Street* pages 1-122  
 Week Eleven *The Street* pages 123-end  
 Week Twelve *The Bluest Eye* pages 1-100  
 Week Thirteen *The Bluest Eye* pages 100-216  
 Week Fourteen *Bastard Out of Carolina* pages 1-150  
 Week Fifteen *Bastard Out of Carolina* pages 150-end  
 Week Sixteen watching movie of *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1996)



### Selected Critical Readings

Campbell, Donna M. *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism In American Fiction, 1885-1915*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997.  
 Campbell, Donna M. "The 'Bitter Taste' of Naturalism: Edith Wharton's *the House of Mirth* and David Graham Phillips's *Susan Lenox*." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 237-59, 2003. xv, 416.  
 Conder, John J. *Naturalism in American Fiction: The Classic Phase*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984.  
 Cowley, Malcolm. "'Not Men': A Natural History of American Naturalism." *Kenyon Review* (1947). Rpt. in Becker 429-451.  
 Dudley, John. *A Man's Game: Masculinity and the Anti-Aesthetics of American Literary Naturalism*. Tuscaloosa, AL : U of Alabama P, 2004.  
 Edwards, Tim. "Oppressive Bodies: Victorianism, Feminism, and Naturalism in Evelyn Scott's *the Narrow House*." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 289-303, 2003. xv, 416.  
 Edwards, Tim. "Oppressive Bodies: Victorianism, Feminism, and Naturalism in Evelyn Scott's *the Narrow House*." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 289-303, 2003. xv, 416.  
 Elbert, Monika M. "The Displacement of Desire: Consumerism and Fetishism in Mary Wilkins Freeman's Fiction." *Legacy: A Journal of American Women Writers* 19.2 (2002): 192-215.  
 Fetterley, Judith, and Marjorie Pryse. *Writing out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture*. Urbana, IL: U of Illinois P., 2003.  
 Fleissner, Jennifer L. "The Work of Womanhood in American Naturalism." *Differences* 8.1 (Spring 1996): 57+.  
 Fleissner, Jennifer L.. *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Naturalism*. Chicago, IL : U of Chicago P, 2004.  
 Goodling, Sara Britton. "The Silent Partnership: Naturalism and Sentimentalism in the Novels of Rebecca Harding Davis and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 1-22, 2003. xv, 416.  
 Hakutani, Yoshinabu, and Lewis Fried, eds. *American Literary Naturalism: A Reassessment*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975.  
 Hapke, Laura. "No Green Card Needed: Dreiserian Naturalism and Proletarian Female Whiteness." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee

- Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 128-43, 2003. xv, 416.
- Kaplan, Amy. "Naturalism with a Difference." *American Quarterly* 40.4 (Dec. 1988): 582+.
- McKay, Nellie. "Ann Petry's *The Street* and *The Narrows*: A Study of the Influence of Class, Race, and Gender on Afro-American Women's Lives." *Women and War*. Ed. Maria Diedrich and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung. New York: Berg, 1990.
- Miller, Elise. "The Feminization of American Realist Theory." *American Literary Realism* 23.1 (1990): 20-41.
- Morgan, William. *Questionable Charity: Gender, Humanitarianism, and Complicity in American Literary Realism*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2004.
- Nettels, Elsa. *Language and Gender in American Fiction: Howells, James, Wharton, and Cather*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1997.
- Pizer, Donald. "Is American Literary Naturalism Dead? A Further Inquiry." *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*. Ed. Mary E. Papke. Tennessee Studies in Literature (Tstl) Number: 40: U of Tennessee P, Knoxville, TN Pagination: 390-404, 2003. xv, 416.
- Schor, Naomi. *Breaking The Chain: Women, Theory, And French Realist Fiction*. New York : Columbia University Press, 1985.
- Studies In American Fiction* 22.2 (Fall 1994). Special issue on "The Genders of Naturalism."
- Walker, Nancy A. "Women Writers and Literary Naturalism: The Case of Ellen Glasgow." *American Literary Realism* 18 (1985): 133-146.