

**Self-Revelation in Women's Writing:
Zora Neale Hurston and Forugh Farrokhzād**
MES 342 (40845), AFR 372E (30697), WGS 340 (46085), CL 323 (34117)

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American prose fiction and Persian lyric poetry are two of the most vital literary traditions in world literature. This course deals with one prominent figure in each, the American fiction writer Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) and the Iranian lyric poet Forugh Farrokhzād (1934-1967).

A three-fold rationale accounts for the comparative pairing of these two writers in this course. First, both have special and similar relationships to the literary traditions in which they wrote because of their gender and because of Farrokhzād's lack of participation in Muslim culture, on the one hand, and Hurston's African ancestry, on the other. Second, Farrokhzād and Hurston exhibit similar subject matter interests and points of view, presumably in part because of their modernist perspectives and similar removes from mainstream cultural and social power bases. Third, they use prose fiction and lyric poetry, respectively, as vehicles for self-revelation and self-realization. Such self-revelation has particular significance both because of its cultural unexpectedness from "minority" writers in their respective traditions and because of mixed consequent mainstream reaction to it.

The core course activities are close readings and group discussion of the chief writings of Hurston and Farrokhzād in the contexts, respectively, of the crafts of prose fiction and lyric verse, the practice of autobiography, American culture, Iranian culture, and women's participation in American and Persian/Iranian literatures. Students leave the course well acquainted with the lives and works of two prominent writers and with literary modernism and are better prepared thereafter to read and analyze works of prose fiction and lyric verse in vacuo and in their cultural contexts.

The required course texts are: (1) Joanna Russ's *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1983); (2) Zora Neale Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), (3) *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) and the feature film of the same name (2005), (4) *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), and (5) *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948); (6) Michael Hillmann, *A Lonely Woman: Forugh Farrokhzād and Her Poetry* (1987, available in the course Dropbox folder); (7) *A Voice and Sounds That Remain: Forty Poems by Forugh Farrokhzād in English Translation* (2018, in the course Dropbox folder); and (8) "Self-Revelation in Women's Writing: A Course Packet" (in the course Dropbox folder) containing chronologies, biographical sketches, a handful of critical essays, Hurston's short story called "Drenched in Light" (1924), and the course bibliography.

Course grades are based on: (1) class participation, e.g., discussion of assigned readings [20% of the course grade]; (2) two oral presentations: a report on an assigned primary course (i.e., a poem or a short story or a discrete part of a novel), and a report on an assigned secondary source (i.e., a biographical or literary critical study) [15% of the course grade each]; (3) a review test on the third to the last day of the course [25% of the course grade]; and (4) a term paper [25% of the course grade] on a subject chosen in discussion with the instructor. The course has no final examination. The grading scale is: A (93–100), A- (90–92), B+ (87–89), B (83–86), B- (80–82), C+ (77–79), C (73–76), C- (70–72), D+ (67–69), D (63–66), D- (60–62), and F (0–59).

Information about class attendance, religious holidays and holy days, plagiarism, and accommodations for students with disabilities appears in the course Dropbox folder.

Self-Revelation in Women's Writing Course Schedule

- 1 Th Aug 30 • Discussion of course goals, activities, and assignments and the significance of the notion of self-revelation.
- 2 T Sep 4 • Self-revelation in Hurston's "Drenched in Light" (1924) and Farrokhzād's "The Sin" (1954).
- 3 Th Sep 6 • *How To Suppress Women's Writing* (1983) by Joanna Russ 1.
- 4 T Sep 11 • *How To Suppress Women's Writing* by Joanna Russ 2.
• A thumbnail sketch of Zora Neale Hurston's life in the context of African-American history.
- 5 Th Sep 13 • Ideas about autobiography and autobiographical writing
Chapter 1. *Reading Autobiography* (201) by Sidonie Smith and Julie Watson.
- 6 T Sep 18 • Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) 1.
- 7 Th Sep 20 • Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine* 2.
- 8 T Sep 25 • Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) 1.
- 9 Th Sep 27 • Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* 2.
• *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (feature film, 2005)—www.youtube.com.
- 10 T Oct 2 • Hurston's life and *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942) 1.
- 11 Th Oct 4 • Hurston's life and *Dust Tracks on a Road* 2.
- 12 T Oct 9 • Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948) 1.
- 13 Th Oct 11 • Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* 2.
- 14 T Oct 16 • Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* 3.
- 15 Th Oct 18 • Self-revelation in Hurston's writing and prose fiction as autobiography.
- 16 T Oct 23 • Farrokhzād's life—*A Lonely Woman*, Chapters 1 and 2.
- 17 Th Oct 25 • Farrokhzād's "Captive," "The Wall," and "The World of Shadows."
- 18 T Oct 30 • Farrokhzād's "Call to Arms," "To My Sister," "Divine Rebellion" and "A Poem for You."
• *A Lonely Woman*, Chapter 3.
- 19 Th Nov 1 • Farrokhzād's "Friday" and "The Windup Doll."
- 20 T Nov 6 • Farrokhzād's "Conquest of the Garden" and "Green Delusion."
- 21 Th Nov 8 • *A Lonely Woman*, Chapter 4.
- 22 T Nov 13 • Farrokhzād's "Another Birth."
- 23 Th Nov 15 • Farrokhzād's "Someone Who Is Not like Anyone Else"
and "I Feel Sorry for the Garden."
- 24 T Nov 20 • An interpretive documentary film on Forugh Farrokhzād (2018) by Makez Rikweda.
- 25 T Nov 27 • *A Lonely Woman*, chapter 5.
- 26 Th Nov 29 • Review Test.
- 27 T Dec 4 • Farrokhzād's "Those Days" and "It Is Only Sound That Remains."
- 28 Th Dec 6 • Self-Revelation in Farrokhzād's poems and lyric verse as autobiography.