

ENGL 7/865 Topics in Lit as Genre: Women Writers and Filmmakers of the 20s and 30s
Fall 2014
Tom Slater

Required Texts: Course Packet from Copies Plus.

Delafield, E. M. *Diary of a Provincial Lady*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Pr., 2002 (1931).

Gibbons, Stella. *Cold Comfort Farm*. London: Penguin Classics, 2006 (1932).

Hammill, Faye. *Women, Celebrity, & Literary Culture Between the Wars*. Austin: U of Texas Pr., 2007.

Kennedy, Margaret. *The Constant Nymph*. London: Virago Pr., 2013 (1924).

Loos, Anita. *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. London: Liveright, 1998 (1925).

Mayne, Judith. *Directed by Dorothy Arzner*. Bloomington: Indiana U Pr., 1995.

West, Mae. *Three Plays: Sex, The Drag, The Pleasure Man*. New York: Routledge, 1997 (1926-28).

Course Goals: The first four decades of the twentieth century are thought of as a time when popular culture turned decidedly masculine. With the onset of the industrial and technological revolutions, the growth of major cities with their phallic skyscrapers, the new art of motion pictures heavily dominated by male producers and directors, and the great success of writers such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway, a convenient narrative that has dominated our sense of history and our academic institutions, two realms that have been dominated by men (not surprisingly). But like most convenient narratives, this one is also not very accurate.

women writers, producers, and directors in the movie industry than at any other time until we know about the tremendous literary success of women such

extremely popular works produced by these women have been unfairly dismissed, sometimes by the women artists themselves, simply because of their great popularity. The significance of that fact is that it means that the ideas and insights these women offered have been unfairly dismissed as well, thus warping our understandings of our past, ourselves, and the relevance of their ideas to us now.

In this class, we will explore what these very successful and now largely forgotten women offered us in the twenties and thirties and continue to offer now. We will work to grasp an understanding not only of their works but of the times they were responding to. I hope the course structure will provide the opportunities and resources for each of you to pursue the particular interests in this area of your own.

Assignments & Grades: Free Writing Responses and class discussion, 20%. For most classes, I will ask you to have a free-writing of approximately one page (single spaced) ready for the beginning of class. One or two class members will be asked to use their writing to define the important points of the material and lead the discussion (with my assistance). Before doing the writing, I'll provide topics and questions to consider. Don't feel pressured because everyone will have a different perspective and there's no right or wrong.

Two short essays, 15% each. For these assignments, I will provide some choices for you to

due.

11/5 Reading: Hammill, 179-212; Delafield, *Diary of a Provincial Woman*. Discussion.

11/12 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *The Wild Party* (Dorothy Arzner, 1929). Rough draft of research paper (three pages) due.

11/19 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *Christopher Strong* (Dorothy Arzner, 1933).

12/3 Reading: portions of Mayne. Film: *Dance, Girl, Dance* y