



ENGL 1250-880: Introduction to World Literature by Women Grace Rexroth

TTH 2:00-3:15 in Kittredge Central KCEN S163

In 2011, Jhumpa Lahiri wrote that **“Fiction is an act of willfulness, a deliberate effort to reconceive, to arrange, to reconstitute nothing short of reality itself.”** Over the course of this semester, we will examine how women from diverse cultural contexts have taken up that charge: using literature to “reconceive” and “reconstitute” the world around them. We’ll also ask: how have the politics of authorship, production, and publication shaped those acts of creation?

Beginning in the Romantic period, we’ll examine women’s writing in the archive and consider how women participated in literary culture as authors, editors, and printers. Students will have the chance to learn about how early books were printed, bound, and sold. They will engage directly with rare materials from Norlin Library’s Special Collections, including the “Women Poets of the Romantic Period” archive, to think critically about how the material histories of books illuminate questions of gender, labor, and authorship. Archival work is exciting because it allows us to encounter literature not only as narrative or theme, but as a material artifact—shaped by the hands, economies, and histories that brought it into being.

From there, we will move forward in time and across the globe, tracing how women writers have continued to navigate and redefine autonomy—political, creative, and bodily—in their work. Together we will ask: How do women’s writing practices reveal the constraints and possibilities of their historical moments? And how do those questions continue to shape global literary production today? Readings will include poetry, short fiction, and novels by writers of British, Indian, Argentinian, Korean, Canadian, Native American, and South African heritage.